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# **Social Entrepreneurship in the Colombian**

## **Chocó:**

### **An Investigation into the Processes, Obstacles and Impacts of the Commercialization of Smoked Fish**

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## **Abstract**

This study looks at the commercialization of smoked fish on the Pacific coast of Colombia. Innovative individuals have identified this historical process of fish preservation as a social development tool, and through this are attempting to alleviate prevailing local social problems. These processes, however, do face certain obstacles, and the impacts of these processes are felt in various layers. Through fieldwork carried out in 2009, a qualitative investigation was carried out in three certain areas: Impacts of the establishment of smoked fish operations; obstacles to production and sustainable commerce; and future goals in the commercialization of smoked fish. This study will show the impacts in the form of provision of employment, wealth creation, and the effects on relationships. I will move on to highlight the obstacles they face in access to fish, capital, infrastructure, industrial fishing, arrival of floating cocaine, and market trends. The study caps off with the emergence of future goals in the acquisition of a motorboat, increased capital, improved production and business processes, and enhanced group dynamics. This investigation serves as a platform into the exploration of social entrepreneurship operations in the Colombian Chocó, specifically those of smoked fish commercialization, and how we can better understand these obstacles and the future needs practitioners and local citizens are facing.

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## **Chapter I. Introduction**

The Pacific coast of Colombia is an extremely isolated region, largely untouched by the vast amenities of modern capitalist society. The lack of infrastructure in the transportation, security, and energy sectors provides a setting in which economic development and the attraction of substantial investment is difficult. With this deficiency in transportation, as air and sea travel are the only forms of connection to major cities, the communities of the region retain their traditional cultural structures and preserve a lifestyle that has had little influence from mainstream Colombia. As a result, there exists an economy that is very much based on conventional hierarchies, in that men work in fishery and agriculture, while women bear and raise children, maintain the home, and prepare familial meals. That said, however, roles are beginning to change. The modernization of these villages comes with the introduction of different lifestyles via the recent trends of the arrival of migrating Colombians from the interior of the country, contact through tourism, and the effects of mass media.

In this societal setting, unemployment is extremely high. Many of those working in fishery and agriculture do so on a subsistence level, while selling or trading any surplus they may obtain. The females in these villages have been traditionally non-existent in the workforce, as the majority of their activities are centred on the family and in the home. Women have recently entered the workforce, however, as teachers, waitresses, and restaurateurs, among others, although these represent only a fraction of the female population. In the later part of the 20th century, tourism on Colombia's Pacific coast was relatively thriving,

with the influx of national and international tourists. This era saw the construction of many hotels and restaurants, built to serve the growing tourist market.

Beginning around the mid 1980's, tourists began arriving in large numbers. With this arrival, the previously isolated region opened its doors to these newfound guests, and in the process formed an economy around their presence. Several Eco-resorts were built on the main beach of Playa Almejal, and a tourism centre was established in the village. A multitude of tourism services were created to serve this new market, resulting in the stimulation of economic growth. Local citizens began being employed in positions previously unavailable, such as tour guides and porters, exploiting the natural beauty of their surroundings, and displaying their famed hospitality.

Traditional sectors, such as fisherman and launch operators, were seeing a great increase in the demand for their products and services, as the arrival of tourists brought an increase in village commerce with additional food and supplies needed to sustain the increased population. Fish sales and prices steadily rose, as the local cuisine is a major attraction of the region. As a result, fishing became a more profitable industry, thereby generating increased income for local fisherman. As this type of retail-based economy was relatively new to the coastal community, Colombian migrants from the interior of the country saw an opportunity to establish themselves as merchants and hotel proprietors in these villages. These developments helped to provide the economies and their residents with a sustainable source of income, while generating sound employment.

In the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, Colombia's brutal civil war severely devastated the tourism industry in Bahia Solano, as violent clashes be-

tween the army and guerrilla forces stained its idyllic image of tranquillity. These incidents left the beaches deserted, and the economy that was based upon the presence of tourism was left stagnate. A major tourism publication reports in its Colombia guidebook: "Pre-2001 this was a major tourist destination. Then La Violencia (the violence to which Colombia is prone, which comes and goes at various times in various areas) came to the Chocó, substantially destabilizing the area. Consequently dozens of hotels and resorts are empty, begging for guests" (Porup et al.). As the residents of Bahia Solano have been adapting to the extreme lack of tourism, they have been looking to take advantage of any local opportunities and resources they can identify. As a result, commerce in fisheries has increased heavily, with the rich waters of Bahia Solano providing a seemingly endless supply of fish to be sent to the interior cities of Colombia. The Colombian cartels have begun to exploit the isolation of the region, using its coastal waters and secluded beaches as both staging grounds and transit ways for illicit drug trafficking. Their arrival has provided local residents of Bahia Solano an alternative, albeit illegal, form of income generation by providing employment in one of many careers in the narcotics business.

The small percentage of residents in the legitimate labour force has created an economy with very little earned-income, leading to a shortage in the circulation of hard currency. Through the arrival of retail shops, restaurants, police and military installations, and the migrant workers who operate many of these businesses, there has been a transformation from a historic barter system to a modern economy based on the transfer of cash. With the forced acceptance of living in a cash-based financial system with extremely limited employment op-

portunities, the people of the region look to exploit their local resources, and take advantage of the abundance of natural wealth that surrounds them.

With hopes of combating these social problems of unemployment and currency shortage, innovative individuals are capitalizing on the strengths and richness' inherent in the region, through the commercialization of agricultural and maritime products. Historically, the process of smoking fish has been a traditional form of fish preservation in communities on Colombia's pacific coast, as electricity and frozen storage facilities are luxuries that have only just arrived, and yet are still merely available to small segments of society. The quality and uniqueness of this product has been identified, and recently introduced to the markets of the interior of Colombia. Through local production and packaging efforts, smoked sailfish and smoked tuna began being sent directly from Bahia Solano in coastal Chocó, serving the consumer markets in the cities of Cali, Bogota, and Medellin, Colombia's principal cities. This has provided employment possibilities in the capture, production, packaging, and shipment of smoked fish that were otherwise unavailable. These employment opportunities have, in turn, provided a source of earned income to local residents, effectively injecting revenue into their economies.

This study looks at social entrepreneurship efforts on Colombia's pacific coast, focusing specifically on the socio-economic landscape in the Municipality of Bahia Solano, Chocó. Through work conducted from March to July of 2009 with the development organization El Achanti, an analysis was undertaken of their social business operations in the production of smoked fish, conducted in collaboration with the group Brisas del Mar. This dissertation will exam the

processes of smoked fish operations carried out by El Achanti and Brisas del Mar, investigating the obstacles that threaten the viability of these social entrepreneurship endeavours, and evaluate the economic and commercial impacts upon the constituents involved.

This thesis is divided into 5 chapters. In the first chapter, I present a description of the dynamic history, abundant natural setting, and unique community structure of the Municipality of Bahia Solano, in order to provide the reader with a glimpse into local circumstances. The second chapter introduces the history and structure of both El Achanti and Brisas del Mar, and their stakeholders, thereby grounding my work in established community development organizations. I move on to detail the research methodologies employed in this study, as to inform the reader on how the data was gathered and subsequently analyzed.

The third chapter delves into the realms of social entrepreneurship. It provides a review of the literature around the subject, its academic arguments, and theoretical evolution. This is offered so as to provide the reader with a foundation with which to place the topic of social entrepreneurship in a social development setting and its use as a development tool. Furthermore, I develop a definition of social entrepreneurship as it applies to my specific research project. In the fourth chapter, I move on to present the findings of the field research conducted in Colombia. Through participant observation, as I lived and worked in the community of El Valle, and a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with the members of Brisas del Mar and El Achanti, a rigorous undertaking in data collection was carried out. I employ emergent research methods as I embark on the analysis of this data, and attempt to generate theory that helps to

explain the research situation at hand, with hopes of further investigation into the topic, and increased implementation of more socially sustainable economic activities. In the fifth chapter, I provide concluding remarks, as I summarize the research findings and tie the whole of the dissertation together.

Although social entrepreneurship is a relatively new concept, it has played a vital role in ameliorating adverse social conditions in the world, especially those in underdeveloped and emerging economies (Prahalad). If entrepreneurs and businessmen alike can better view their ventures not only as avenues of financial sustainability, but simultaneously as social development tools, we will have the opportunity to create a business climate in which monetary exploitation is not as ever present, and profits can be made alongside societal progress.

Phenomena such as these are driving fundamental changes in communities around the world, and investigations into this theme are long over due. Plans must be designed to capitalize on the potential of social entrepreneurship while increasing its global awareness, and it is essential for development practitioners and academics alike to engage further investigative and empirical focus into this region and the social difficulties it is facing. It is vital that we employ greater investigative efforts into this topic in order to better understand the situations social entrepreneurs are facing, thereby allowing us to operate from a framework that can produce more pointed results.

## Chapter II: The Municipality of Bahia Solano



This chapter introduces the region in which this investigation was undertaken, the Municipality of Bahia Solano, in the Department of Chocó, on the northern Pacific coast of Colombia. The geographic setting and its inhabitants are described in order to provide the reader with insight into the social, economic, environmental, and cultural backdrop in which this study was conducted.

## **The Environment**

Occupying a small sliver of land from the southern Pacific coast of Panama, down the entire Pacific coast of Colombia, into the northern Pacific reaches of Ecuador, is a region called the Chocó. This region has been labelled one of the most biologically diverse places in the world (Myers, 187-208), is home to an abundance of animal species, both in the sea and on land, and appears to contain the highest number of plant species in the world (Gentry, 208). The landscape is made up of various mountain ranges and chains of hills that isolate the coast from the interior. The district of Bahía Solano, which will be the focus of this study, lies on the north Pacific coast of Colombia in the, appropriately named, state of Chocó. This district is surrounded by the steep, jungle covered hills and mountains of the Serranía del Baudó, a 375-kilometer long chain of hills with heights between 600 and 1,200 meters (Martinez, 112). This chain is mainly of volcanic origin, with black sand beaches and volcanic rocks dominating the coastline.

Adjacent to this coast are the tropical rainforests of the Chocó. These rainforests form a seemingly impenetrable blanket over the hills and mountains of the Serranía, and lay claim as home to the most humid locations on earth. They lie in the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone, ICTZ, which is an equatorial zone where the trade winds of both hemispheres meet, forming an extremely cloudy band with intense precipitation, measuring between 8 and 12 meters per year (Cantera, 15). This fresh water source forms a foundation of the livelihood of the inhabitants of the Chocó, as the steep slopes of the Serranía receive massive amounts of rainfall, thereby forming a vast array of streams and rivers.

These rivers are generally fast running and relatively short, transporting large quantities of sediment from the interior to the coast, in turn adding to the creation of sandy, sometimes muddy beaches (Cantera and Contreras, 66). The harnessing of rain and stream water provides drinking and washing water for the residents of the district of Bahia Solano, as this water is of potable quality, and one does not have to travel far to access it. The rivers of the region provide the backdrop to the overwhelming majority of farm cultivation. People use these rivers as access to the interior from the coast, thus being able to create arable land in the river valleys. These rivers are used as a source of irrigation and as a drainage outlet, as well as a transportation system with which crop yields are transported to villages in order to be sold. Coastal river mouths are home to the greater part of the population in coastal Chocó, as is the case with the villages in the district of Bahia Solano. The vast majority of the Indigenous villages are of the Embera tribe, and are located a few kilometres upriver, on the interior hill-sides of the rainforest.

The ocean is the principle source of meat and protein for the people of Chocó, as the abundance of fish and other seafood provides a continuous food supply. Different species of fish have their respective migrational routes, however the waters of Chocó have a year-round supply of fish that is far more than sufficient to sustain the relatively small coastal populations. In addition to sustenance, the abundance of fish and the numerous species provide a great economic resource for the people. As fish is sold both locally as well as to markets throughout the interior of Colombia, these sales revenues provide a primary in-

come source for a great many in coastal Chocó. However, much will be elaborated on this topic in the coming chapters.

Another aspect of the Pacific Ocean, unique to Colombia, is its use as a transport passage for cocaine and other drugs produced in Colombia, such as heroin and marijuana. Much of the production takes place in the interior jungles of the Amazon basin, and the lower Andean regions of Southern Colombia, and is then transported via land, air, and river to the Pacific coast. From the coast, it is then transported by boat, and the recent introduction of semi-submersibles, up the Pacific Ocean to Central America and Mexico, eventually bound for the massive consumer market of the United States. This transport up the Pacific coast has had a profound impact on the economy and livelihood of a great number of coastal villages, including those of the municipality of Bahia Solano. This too will be expanded upon in the coming chapters.

As mentioned above, arable land is cultivated where found, in both the river valleys and in most areas of quasi-flat land. In this climate, the main cultivated crops are yucca<sup>1</sup>, plantain<sup>2</sup>, pineapple, papaya (pawpaw), sugarcane, maize, and rice, among others. These crops are grown for familial consumption as well as for sale in local markets. Recent initiatives have yet to be taken to increase production to levels needed to ship produce to the interior markets of the country, as current yields are just enough to support the existing local populations. That said, however, throughout the 1950's to the 1980's rice was grown in

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<sup>1</sup> A type of cassava root, used as food in tropical countries of the Americas

<sup>2</sup> A type of banana containing high levels of starch, cooked as a vegetable in the tropics

great quantities in Bahia Solano, in sufficient amounts to be shipped throughout Colombia and even exported to Panama (Field notes).

### **The Community**

The coastal communities of the district of Bahia Solano, as well as the whole of Chocó, are predominately comprised of Afro-Colombians<sup>3</sup>. In addition to these Afro-Colombians, there is a small minority population of Mestizo-Colombians<sup>4</sup> who are originally from the interior of the country, coupled with an even smaller minority population of Embera Indians.

The Amerindian settlements in the Municipality of Bahia Solano, as well as the whole of Chocó, are made up solely of the Embera tribe. The vast majority of the Embera live in their homogenous native communities known as *resguardos*<sup>5</sup>. These communities are located on riverbanks, in the interior of the jungle, several kilometres upriver from the sea. The Embera primarily live through a means of subsistence agriculture, maintaining livestock, and local game hunting, however some live amongst the Afro-Colombian coastal communities, often working in produce and handy-craft sales.

The first Afro-Colombian settlers arrived to the Bahia Solano area in the nineteenth century, and were the descendants of African slaves the Spanish had

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<sup>3</sup> Afro Colombian refers to Colombians of Black African ancestry, and the great impact they have had on Colombian culture (Arocha).

<sup>4</sup> Mestizo is a Spanish term that was used in the Spanish Empire to refer to people of mixed European and Amerindian ancestry in Latin America. The term continues to be used today in the Americas (Arocha).

<sup>5</sup> Government allocated and demarcated Indigenous Amerindian reservations found throughout Colombia.

brought to the region to work in the gold and platinum mines. Mining was the dominant activity developed on the Pacific Coast during colonial times. In the early seventeenth century, the Spanish began developing these mines exploiting indigenous labor. Overworked, malnourished, and attacked by illnesses from the old world, the indigenous populations soon succumbed, and in less than a hundred years after mining started, the Indians' numbers had been reduced by ninety percent (Rueda, 464). As these Indian populations diminished, the Spanish were forced to bring in slaves of Afro-descent to carry out the mining operations.

In the late eighteenth century, the mining industry declined all over the Pacific Coast. Due to decreases in international mineral prices, and the rising costs of extraction (essentially due to the high cost of slave imports), profits began to drop. This decline in mining profitability corresponded with the eruption of riots and protest movements by the black population against colonial abuses. Though numerous slaves escaped, many others bought their freedom through the means of manumission put in place by the Spanish royalty. Manumission was an important social safety valve, and by the early nineteenth century at least a third of the blacks had used it to gain their freedom (Sharp, 407). Both escaped and freed slaves moved into the jungles where they together searched for alternative ways of living, far from the colonial bureaucracy. They began to establish themselves in small villages by river mouths along seashores where they could fish and cultivate land, utilizing technologies that often persist to this day (Sharp, 414).

As the nineteenth century progressed, two consecutive production booms helped to further increase settlement in the region. The gathering and export of Tagua nuts (*Phytelephas seemannii*) began in the region in 1840 (Ocampo, 99-

100). Another driving factor in the settlement of the region was rubber (*Castilla elastica*). Rubber began to be used in massive quantities as world demand for the product rose sharply in the mid-1800s as it was used in the production of waterproof materials as well as wheel covers. The extraction of rubber on Colombia's Pacific coast was at its peak in the 1860s, however it dropped significantly two decades later when the industry moved to the Amazon, and subsequently to South-East Asia (Ocampo, 383-389).

Those who moved to the region throughout, and in the wake of, these extractive booms remained even after their decline. The present day demographics of the area show that about 83% of the population is Afro-Colombian, 14% Indigenous, and 3% white or Mestizo (Alcaldia Municipal de Nuqui, 29). This, however, does fluctuate from village to village, depending on geographic location and the size of population and industry.

We have seen here the storied history of the region and its inhabitants. The Afro-Colombians arrived under extreme circumstances, only to adapt to a Native Amerindian people that too had overcome great hardship. As they sought a life of amity and solitude, they learned to live in peaceful co-existence with each other as well as the natural environment on which they so heavily depend. In later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, settlers from the interior of Colombia began arriving. They effectively helped create a commerce-based economy, and further initiated the exchange of people, ideas, and trade with the rest of the country. This has created the current landscape of today, in which this study was conducted.

### **Chapter III: The Research Project**

This chapter introduces the organizations El Achanti and Brisas del Mar, through which I conducted the fieldwork of this study. For the duration of my stay in the Municipality of Bahia Solano, I worked as an active member of El Achanti, working in the areas of education, monitoring and evaluation, and organizational analysis. Having had an association with a well-established organization, and its general coordinator Angel Villa, was vital to my introduction into the region on both a personal and professional level. As a member of El Achanti, I was immediately integrated into its operations with Brisas del Mar. Brisas del Mar produces the smoked fish El Achanti markets and sells in the interior of Colombia, making up a vital aspect of El Achanti's income generating undertakings.

This section is provided to give the reader a sense of my position in the community thereby imparting upon the study firm scaffolding around which the project was based, as I present the organizations I worked with during my time in the field and the research methodologies used in the study. I provide a historical background of El Achanti and Brisas del Mar, as well as reference my connection with the organizations, thereby establishing the necessary personal background element in this study. I move on to provide the methodology that was used in this project, as it demonstrates the systematic processes and proven technical references that were employed. This is presented in order to assure maximum validity and scientific underpinning.

## **Organizations in Focus**

El Achanti is an organization that develops projects in the areas of education, health, sports, and productive activities<sup>6</sup>. It is based in the Pacific coast village of El Valle, in Northwest Colombia's Chocó state, however maintaining a vision encompassing other communities of the Colombian Pacific. El Achanti is integrated for those interested in contributing to the improvement of the conditions of the lives of the communities situated in the Pacific coast region (El Achanti<sup>7</sup>). El Achanti's mission is to be an organization of enterprise character that contributes to the generation of alternative forms of economic and social development, within an environmentally sustainable framework, while being culturally respectful to the communities of the Colombian Pacific (*Ibid.*). El Achanti's vision is to become the principal social enterprise in the Colombian Pacific, generating economic alternatives for the societies of Chocó, contributing to the conservation of its natural biodiversity and cultural richness (*Ibid.*).

El Achanti was born in September 2000, in El Valle, Colombia. El Valle is a small Afro-Colombian fishing village on the Pacific coast of Colombia, located within the Municipality of Bahía Solano, in the state of Chocó. The founder of El Achanti, Angel Andres Villa Restrepo, is a Colombian native from the city of Cali, who has spent much of the last 10 years in the Municipality of Bahía Solano. Angel is a marine biologist by trade, and has worked in various sectors in the re-

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<sup>6</sup> Directly translated from the Spanish words "actividades productivas," though in the context of El Achanti, it is in reference to the income generating operations of the organization such as the production of fish and borojó derivatives, as well as ecotourism.

<sup>7</sup> Paraphrased from the website of El Achanti, and translated by the researcher.

gion, including nearby Ensenada Utria National Park, as well as research projects in collaboration with the Universidad del Valle, in Cali (*Ibid.*).

In its beginning stages, the focus of El Achanti was principally social as it fortified the areas of education with the inauguration of a public library, short courses in English, informatics, technical studies and lectures, and guitar lessons. Other aspects of the organization include the development of sport training in the areas of volleyball and chess. Additionally, it endorsed the fishing industry in the town of El Valle, especially through “*Los Piqueros*,” a local association of traditional fisherman whom have a long-standing relationship with El Achanti (*Ibid.*). Later, with the incorporation of the paramedic Joaquin Emilio Bernal to the team, El Achanti was able to strengthen the area of health care as Joaquin gave classes of vital support and aquatic rescue, thereby giving important contributions to the area of education as well. Soon after, income-generating activities were implemented in the areas of eco-tourism and in the commercialization of native products, those being smoked fish as well as products derived from the endemic fruit borojó<sup>8</sup>. This is when and where the characteristics of a social enterprise were given to the organization (*Ibid.*).

In an interview I conducted with Angel Villa, a question asked: “When and why did you begin these activities [productive, income generating, activities]?” Angel went on to indicate that El Achanti began with these activities about 5 or 6 years ago, inaugurating with the organization of a national level, beach volleyball doubles tournament in El Valle. El Achanti organized the tournament, bringing

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<sup>8</sup> Borojó...“is a mid sized (3 to 5m) Tropical forest tree that belongs to the Rubiaceae family. It grows in the northwest area of Colombia in the Chocó Department, in areas of high humidity (over 85%) and an average temperature of 28°C, both in the wild and on local farms” (Robbrecht and Puff, 1986).

both athletes and tourists to the village to hold this event. The reception of these tourists marked the organizations initial experience in social business, with this income-generating venture in tourism. He indicated that around this same time, El Achanti began the production of smoked fish and borojó products (Angel Villa).

As to why he began these social businesses, he stated simply, “ Because the money ran out.” With this he went on to elaborate, indicating that after a few years, as the initial investments were put into purely social missions, soon these resources ran out. At that moment, he was faced with two options, finish working until the money ran completely out and close El Achanti, or focus on activities that were still in line with the philosophy and spirit of the organization, however were able to generate economic resources. In the face of these options, he chose the later, and began projects in eco-tourism, and the sale of smoked fish and borojó products (*Ibid.*).

At present, there is an office located in the city of Cali that is coordinated by Magda Julieth Villa, the sister of Angel Villa. In an interview with Angel, he stated that the Cali office is “vital to the organization, as it permits a connection to the city” (*Ibid.*). It is through this office that a great majority of the marketing activities in the eco-tourism branch of El Achanti are undertaken. It is through this office, too, that the smoked fish and borojó products are marketed and distributed to their customers in Cali, and/or shipped on to other destinations in Colombia.

Over the years, El Achanti has established work agreements with the groups “Los Piqueros<sup>9</sup>,” “Amplio de Mujeres de El Valle<sup>10</sup>” and “Grupo Brisas del Mar,” as well as hotelkeepers, restaurants, and transporters connected to the ecotourism industry in the area. In the short term, El Achanti projects the inauguration of offices in the cities of Bogota and Medellin (El Achanti).

Brisas del Mar currently consists of a group of 6 women in Bahia Solano, Colombia, which specializes in the production and sales of smoked fish, in addition to other fish products such as chorizo, steamed fish, and fish burgers. Current president Teodora founded Brisas del Mar more than 12 years ago, in an effort to stimulate income generation, along side hopes of combating traditional female unemployment in the area. Teodora worked 4 years with the nongovernmental organization (NGO) AquaChoco, learning the processes of steaming and smoking fish. As the operations of AquaChoco came to an end and the organization left the area, Teodora was left with the knowledge and experience she had gained over the years. She realized the economic and social potential of this work, and began recruiting women in her neighbourhood to join her in carrying on the trade she had learned (Amanda; Teodora).

Teodora is from the neighbourhood of Chambacú, in the town of Bahia Solano. This neighbourhood is predominately comprised of fishermen and their families, hence the women and people of the area are historically rooted in the fishing industry. Teodora began her mission by going around her neighbourhood and speaking with the husbands, asking permission for their wives to be

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<sup>9</sup>“Los Piqueros” is a group of artisanal fisherman in El Valle.

<sup>10</sup> “Grupo Amplio de Mujeres de El Valle” is a group of women in El Valle that produces sweets, confectionaries, marmalades, etc., with specialization in the use of borojó.

part of the organization and work with her. She first organized 16 women from the village, forming the initial Grupo Brisas del Mar some 12 years ago. Teodora and her colleagues began collecting wood from the surrounding jungle, and built a hut to work from on community land in their neighbourhood. They began their trade smoking fish that was caught by their husbands on an open fire underneath their thatch hut they had built.

Over the years, as Teodora attended many capacity-building workshops along the Pacific coast of Colombia, she began to expose her colleagues to the skills she had gained, and made crucial contacts in the social development sector (Teodora). These contacts came to realize the organization and commitment of Teodora and her colleagues to their operations, and began coming to Bahia Solano to hold workshops with the entire group. Technicians were brought in by the Ministry of Agriculture, and further taught the members of Brisas del Mar the processes of smoking fish, making fish sausages, steaming fish, among other fish products. In addition, they were taught the implementation of quality control measures to ensure preparation of the highest quality fish.

As time went by and the organizational capacity of Brisas del Mar evolved, their productivity improved while their reputation in the village grew. In light of this, Martin Hernan from the Ministry of Agriculture donated 5 million Colombian pesos (approx. \$2,500USD) to Brisas del Mar for the construction of a new building from where they could work (*Ibid.*). With these funds, they constructed a new building of half cement, half lumber, that included a proper oven for fish smoking. With this infrastructure, they were able to increase production capacity, while working in more comfortable conditions. Teodora made contact

with the NGO Natura, which began working closely with Brisas del Mar, providing additional equipment to the group, as well as organizational and management training. With the help of Natura, they were put in contact with the Inter-American Development Bank, which financed the provision of vacuum-sealed packaging equipment, and a walk-in freezer with a 5 tonne capacity. At this point Brisas del Mar had the comprehensive infrastructure to increase capacity dramatically. Natura, in light of this, wanted to hand over all operations to Brisas del Mar, leaving them 100% autonomous (Amanda).

Angel Villa and El Achanti identified the newly independent group, and the great potential their training and infrastructure provided. It was at this point that El Achanti began heavily focusing on income generating activities from an organizational stand point, and one of their new ventures was that of the commercialization of Brisas del Mar's smoked fish. Angel began marketing their product in his hometown of Cali, in addition to the cities of Bogota and Medellin. Over time, he began putting in orders ranging from 10 to 100 pounds of smoked sailfish and albacore tuna, exponentially increasing Brisas del Mar's production. The orders requested by Angel, in addition to the local demands of the village, produced an upward evolution in the demand for Brisas del Mar's products over the last few years.

Teodora's entrepreneurial spirit initiated the creation of Brisas del Mar, and helped to form a dedicated group of working women from an Afro-Colombian fishing village. With the resources, training, and infrastructure provided by various NGO's and government entities, Brisas del Mar was able to evolve into a productive business unit that creates jobs and provides income in

their community. They have been able to capitalize on the quality and quantity of tuna and sailfish inherent to the region, offering a unique product intrinsic to coastal Chocó for sale to local markets. In collaboration with El Achanti, they have been able to expand the offering of this product to markets throughout the rest of the Colombia, with future hopes of selling their product to the international market (Angel; Teodora).

### **Methodology**

The fieldwork phase of the research project was designed in which I would spend five months in El Valle. The most vital and integrative method employed was that of participant observation. Participant observation is a qualitative method rooted in traditional ethnographic research, whose objective is to help researchers learn perspectives held by populations in study. It is conducted through observation and participation in the daily activities of the study population. The researcher approaches participants in their own environment, and attempts to learn what life is like for an “insider” while inevitably remaining an “outsider” (Jorgensen; DeWalt et al.).

The first one and a half months were almost entirely devoted to living in the community, building social networks among the community residents, and integrating with the culture and lifestyle of the region. The Bahia Solano area is a region that has been historically isolated, and as a result, functions in a traditional Afro-Colombian style that is unique in the whole of Colombia. It is extremely important to become connected with community members, engaging in

conversations, participating in social functions, while conveying your interest and respect for their way of life.

The initial time period, and arguably the entire five months, was used to set a foundation in the village, establish a social infrastructure, and make local contacts that could make my transition into the culture smoother. This time was designed to better understand the workings of El Achanti as an organization, visit the office in Cali, and meet constituents who are directly and indirectly involved in the organization and its projects in the Municipality of Bahia Solano. El Achanti is an organization that has been established for many years, and operates in many sectors. In light of this, it was an intricate process in coming to know each aspect of the organization and the work that it undertakes.

The remaining three months of fieldwork were spent continuing work with El Achanti, however becoming more involved with its partner organization Brisas del Mar. In addition, significant time was dedicated to writing the thesis itself, essentially beginning from the introduction, as well as designing and implementing the data collection methodology. For the purposes of this research project, I decided to focus specifically on the production and domestic sales of smoked fish undertaken with Brisas del Mar, viewing this branch of the organization as a functioning social business on which to best concentrate. After speaking with Angel, and conducting an analysis of the organization, it was evident that this aspect of El Achanti was a principal income-generating mechanism, thereby deserving the attention of this study.

I arrived in El Valle, having had previously established ties with the region and with El Achanti. I had been bouncing ideas back and forth with Angel

Villa in my final months in Cape Town, analyzing the social situations and research questions at hand. I had experience with this organization, and the work it was doing with Brisas del Mar, and I could see social implications on many levels. Initially it was thought to begin with the mission of investigating the impact of these operations upon the members of Brisas del Mar and Amplio Mujeres de El Valle. I began having informal conversations with the members of Brisas del Mar and El Achanti, and established a working relationship with these organizations and their members. We spoke about the pressing issues of the time, the social and economic situations, and the historical progression of their relationships together and their business operations.

After an extended period of time living and working with El Achanti and Brisas del mar, and engaging in probing conversations with their members, I came to find out that yes, Angel Villas' entrepreneurial attributes had helped to diversify Brisas' smoked fish operations, and El Achanti served as the dominant and in some ways sole customer of their products. However, the entrepreneur that actually brought this group to existence was Brisas del Mar's president, Teodora. Through interviews and conversations conducted with the members of Brisas del Mar, data emerged showing that the greatest social phenomena they are facing are not merely the impacts El Achanti's operations have had on their lives and community, but of vast social obstacles hindering the progression of their organization, and ultimately the improvement of their socio-economic conditions and livelihoods. In light of this emergent data, my thesis evolved to examine the processes, obstacles, and impacts of the commercialization of smoked fish.

El Achanti has been operating in this region for more than 10 years, and has created a substantial work base in which to platform this project. After many meetings and conversations with the members of Brisas del Mar, I learned that their work with El Achanti was vital to their operations. El Achanti serves as the dominant customer for their products, and at the time of writing it was actually the sole customer. In light of this, I identified an organization that depends directly on El Achanti for their livelihood, with which business operations are truly social in nature as they are not only to maximize financial sustainability, but also to provide Brisas del Mar and its members with a source of employment and earned income.

My additional form of data collection was that of semi-structured interviews. An interview is essentially a guided conversation, however with its main purpose being that of eliciting certain specific types of information (Berg; Lofland and Lofland). I had a choice between using structured or semi-structured interviewing techniques. Structured interviews utilize a pre-determined set of questions, often in a questionnaire-type format. These tend to generate a limited number of responses, confining the respondents to answer the same questions within a restricted framework. As I am investigating a phenomenon whose intricacies were the subject of my focus, I chose to employ the use of semi-structured interviews in this study. Semi-structured interviews provide a greater deal of freedom for both the interviewer and the interviewee, as only an interview guide is used. My guide included a consistent set of topics, with which I could create and word questions in different ways, cover topics in the order I deemed appropriate, adding and omitting topics/questions as I saw

fit. This gave me the ability to adapt to each interviewee and interview situation at hand.

In the field of social science, semi-structured interviewing is a common methodological tool, particularly beneficial in investigations of exploration, discovery, and analysis of social events, and when combined, as my study is, with participant observation (Fantasia; Morris; Robnett; Ray; Staggenborg). More importantly, however, the semi-structured interview has the ability to obtain rich, detailed data that is a defining goal of qualitative work, and which is simply difficult to extract from questionnaires and surveys. Semi-structured interviewing allows scrutiny of meaning, and such attention to subjective meaning is especially beneficial for understanding how participants make sense of their participation and actions (Taylor and Whittier).

Angel Villa is the General Coordinator of El Achanti, and under this title he operates the production and domestic sales functions of the social business operations of the organization. We agreed to a series of semi-structured interviews, in which information was extracted in areas such as organization history, perceived socio-economic impact, operational structure, and future direction. The interviews were undertaken in a personal, one-on-one setting, carried out by myself. As the founder and general coordinator of El Achanti, it was deduced that he would be the most valuable source of this type of information.

A series of interviews were conducted with each member of Brisas del Mar, which, as mentioned above, is directly responsible for the production of the smoked fish that El Achanti sells and distributes. It was felt that the members of this group could provide valuable insight into the impact that El Achanti's social

entrepreneurship operations have had on their lives and their community, the processes they undertake in their operations, the obstacles they face in the establishment of an economically and socially viable venture, as well as the socio-economic conditions in the region as a whole. This group has a relationship with El Achanti of more than 6 years in the making (Angel Villa), and they have been in the industry of smoking fish for more than 12 years. It was thought that with this historical background to build upon, impacts could be more pronounced and identifiable. This insight was extracted through semi-structured interviews, conducted by myself, in an individual setting with each of the 6 members of Brisas del Mar.

As I embarked upon the execution of these interviews, the journey was not without its difficulties. Primarily, I am not a native to the area, or a Colombian at all. The historical isolation of the region, and the fact that the local inhabitants are a minority group (Afro-Colombian), leads to a certain amount of mistrust in any inquisitive/interrogative settings. In addition, when asking about income levels, their personal lives, and the topic of cocaine, interviewees often become somewhat defensive to strangers and foreigners playing this role. I was fortunate to have established prior contacts, and for that matter to have made friends, amongst the local population. In addition, I had been to the region various times before, and had a professional and personal relationship with Angel Villa, who is a well respected member, albeit originally from Cali, of the community.

Another difficulty encountered, was that of the Spanish language, and in particular the extreme accent of the local population. I am a native English

speaker, however certified to the advanced level in Spanish, and I have lived extensively in Spanish speaking countries, specifically in Colombia and in El Valle itself. However in an academic setting, one must be extremely precise in vocabulary and intonation in order to maximize validity of the research process. It was for this reason that I recorded each interview conducted, and had colleagues from the region help in ensuring the accuracy of my transcription. In addition, after having spent 5 months on location, I consider my comprehension of the local accent to be more than adequate. That said, however, interpretative phenomenological analysis, like many qualitative methods, relies heavily on transcripts of interviews, and in my case interviews that have been filtered twice, once by translation and again by transcription. This can raise a myriad of validity questions about the accuracy of the translation, in addition to the timing in relativity to transcription and textual analysis (Shibusawa and Lukens).

I, in collaboration with my advisor Johann Graaff at the University of Cape Town, undertook the design and execution of all interviews. As I have a functioning ability of both the English and Spanish languages, I was able design the interviews in cooperation with my department, translate the necessary aspects, later implementing these interviews in a personal setting. The cost of hiring and training a local team of interviewers was out of the budgetary scope of this project, and was not deemed necessary for the validity of the results. As I have been trained in both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, as well as data analysis, I am therefore qualified for execution of this study.

All interviews were semi-structured in nature, designed to provide increased flexibility and personalization in the quality of information extracted.

Interviewees were chosen from each group involved, El Achanti and Brisas del Mar, in order to provide insight from each unique perspective. Informal conversations, part of the participant observation process, were held with members of all walks of society, and constituents from various sectors of the socio-economic landscape, including the groups Amplio de Mujeres de El Valle, and Los Piqueros, which have direct involvement with El Achanti, and the two fisheries of Bahia Solano, which have direct involvement with Brisas del Mar.

In the field of qualitative research, some argue that findings are discovered, and others believe they are social constructions. Underneath this partition, however, is a common layer of processes that involve pattern recognition and thematic development (Boyatzis; Ryan and Bernard). From the literature surrounding qualitative data analysis, one will discover that there is no single prescription on how to analyze data. There is an array of approaches to data analysis, and a plethora of methods to choose from, and each approach seems to allow for a multitude of techniques to be employed. The approach used in this study is that of interpretative phenomenological analysis, IPA. The literature around IPA does not prescribe a single method for working with the data either. The fundamental nature of IPA lies in its analytic focus, and that focus directs our analytic attention towards our participants' attempts to make sense of their own experiences. In light of this, IPA can be characterized by a set of common processes and principles, which are applied flexibly, according to the analytic task. This has often been described as an iterative and inductive cycle (Smith).

Within this cycle, there are numerous strategies upon which to draw. One embarks upon a close, line-by-line analysis of the transcribed data. An attempt is

made to identify emergent patterns (themes) coming out of the data, moving on accentuating commonality and difference within and among cases (data sets). From there the researcher organizes the data in a systematic way, often referred to as coding, and establishes a dialogue between the researcher, the coded data, and their knowledge about what it might mean for participants to have these concerns in this particular context. Eventually this process culminates in the development of a full narrative, evidenced by factual details from data excerpts, with a reflection of one's own perceptions, conceptions, and processes (Eatough and Smith; Larkin, Watts, and Clifton; Smith).

After transcription, my first step was to read and re-read the data set. As Smith states, "The first step of an IPA analysis involves immersing oneself in some of the original data" (Smith, 82). He moves on to iterate that "Repeated reading also allows a model of the overall interview structure to develop, and permits the analyst to gain an understanding of how narratives can bind certain sections of a narrative together (*Ibid.*). Here he shows us that by engaging with the data from the beginning, reading over the data various times, the participant is further positioned as the focus of our analysis. Throughout this process, we begin to notice chronological accounts, the development of patterns and relationships, as well as general explanations to life events.

The second step is initial noting, and this "step examines semantic content and language use on a very exploratory level" (Smith, 83). Here we begin to note anything of interest throughout the transcription, and begin to identify specific ways in which the participants talk about, understand, and approach an issue (*Ibid.*). This is somewhat of a free textual analysis, and there aren't any bounda-

ries provided to divide the text into meaning units. That said, however, we must avoid superficial reading and analysis, and be concerned as much with engaging with the text as with the outcome. There is likely to be a descriptive nucleus of comments, leading to interpretive noting that will help understand why and how the participant has these concerns.

At this point the data set will have grown considerably, as we have developed an additional level of noting alongside the now very familiar interview itself. "It is this larger data set that forms the focus of the next stage of analysis – developing emergent themes" (Smith, 91). The analyst now begins to attempt to reduce the volume of detail that came about in the processes of transcription and initial noting, while maintaining a certain level of complexity, and shift focus from the original transcript to the analysis of the initial notes. "The main task in turning notes into themes involves an attempt to produce a concise and pithy statement of what was important in the various comments attached to a piece of transcript" (Smith, 92). Themes not only reflect the participant's original thoughts, though the interpretations of the analyst as well.

As we move throughout the processes described above for each transcript, we begin looking for patterns and connections between emergent themes. In doing this, we develop a sense of what can be called a super-ordinate theme. This requires putting like emergent themes with like, under an umbrella phrase or word that is the super-ordinate theme. As the analyst moves throughout each transcript, subsequently across all transcripts involved in the study, emergent themes are identified, and connections between emergent themes are developed in the creation of super-ordinate themes. Smith has guided us through the

process of IPA, and these are the steps that I too took as I conducted the data analysis for this dissertation. It provided me with a rough, though quite detailed guide in how to begin the analytic process that is IPA, as I adapted this process to my exploratory research.

University Of Cape Town

## **Chapter IV. Social Entrepreneurship**

This chapter presents the term Social Entrepreneurship, its historical evolution from the for-profit sector, and its current stance in the development world. I begin by establishing contemporary significance of the term, moving on to the conceptualization of entrepreneurship, concluding with the current debates of social entrepreneurship by academics and development practitioners alike. This chapter is offered in hopes of unpacking the various terminologies, and solidifying the establishment of social entrepreneurship as a development tool in the social science arena.

Social Entrepreneurship is the spark that has ignited the social fire. It combines images of fighting for a social cause in the field, with the business savvy of Wall Street and Hong Kong. It holds a sense of innovation and break-through change on the backs of self-less development practitioners. While many government and humanitarian efforts have fallen far short of their expectations, and social organizations, from all sectors, are seen as inefficient and understaffed, the major social problems of our day must be tackled from a different angle, with a different approach, mixing our knowledge from past developmental experiences with the efficiency and quality-control of the private business sector.

“Social entrepreneurship is one of the most popular terms in the non-profit sector, and also one of the most misunderstood” (Light, 47). There are a plethora of definitions that have been generated in the literature and adopted by practitioners, and there still exists arguments around who and what should be included and excluded in these definitions. Table 1 below provides an overview of some of the definitions of social entrepreneurship and the social entrepreneur

that have been found in the literature and offered to the field. This is not an attempt to provide a complete listing of definitions, but a sample of the various perspectives taken when attempting to define these terms. We notice the difference between the definitions provided by leading business schools, Fuqua School, NYU Stern, and the Wharton Center, emphasizing the importance of finance and business, often mentioning the “double bottom line.” The vast majority of other definitions, however, focus on achieving social goals such as social wealth (Dees; Mair and Marti; Martin and Osberg; Mort et al.; Peredo and McLean; Reis) and the solution of certain social problems (Alford et al.; Drayton; University of Oxford Said School).

One thing most agree on, however, is the significance of social entrepreneurship to the survival and sustainability of many of the world’s development organizations, and the completion of our mission to solve the social problems of our time. As Sally Osberg and Roger L. Martin express in a recent article for the Stanford Social Innovation Review, “Social entrepreneurship, we believe, is as vital to the progress of societies as is entrepreneurship to the progress of economies, and it merits more rigorous, serious attention than it has attracted so far” (Martin and Osberg, 39).

**Table 1**<sup>11</sup>

*Definitions and descriptions of social entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurs.*

Leadbetter(1997)	The use of entrepreneurial behavior for social ends rather than for profit objectives, or alternatively, that the profits generated from market activities are used for the benefit of a specific disadvantaged group.
Thake and Zadek(1997)	Social entrepreneurs are driven by a desire for social justice. They seek a direct link between their actions and an improvement in the quality of life for the people with whom they work and those that they seek to serve. They aim to produce solutions which are sustainable financially, organizationally, socially and environmentally.
Reis (1999) (Kellogg Foundation)	Social entrepreneurs create social value through innovation and leveraging financial resources...for social, economic and community development.
Fowler (2000)	Social Entrepreneurship is the creation of viable socio-economic structures, relations, institutions, organizations and practices that yield and sustain social benefits.
Brinkerhoff (2001)	Individuals constantly looking for new ways to serve their constituencies and add value to existing services.
Mort et al. (2002)	A multidimensional construct involving the expression of entrepreneurially virtuous behavior to achieve the social mission...the ability to recognize social value creating opportunities and key decision-making characteristics of innovation, proactiveness and risk-taking
Drayton (2002)	A major change agent, one whose core values center on identifying, addressing and solving societal problems.
Alford et al. (2004)	Creates innovative solutions to immediate social problems and mobilizes the ideas, capacities, resources and social arrangements required for social transformations
Harding (2004)	Entrepreneurs motivated by social objectives to instigate some form of new activity or venture.
Shaw (2004)	The work of community, voluntary and public organizations as well as private firms working for social rather than only profit objectives.

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<sup>11</sup> Zahra, 2008

Said School (2005)	A professional, innovative and sustainable approach to systematic change that resolves social market failures and grasps opportunities.
Fuqua School (2005)	The art of simultaneously pursuing both a financial and a social return on investment (the “double” bottom line).
Schwab Foundation (2005)	Applying practical, innovative and sustainable approaches to benefit society in general, with an emphasis on those who are marginalized and poor.
NYU Stern (2005)	The process of using entrepreneurial and business skills to create innovative approaches to social problems. “These non-profit and for profit ventures pursue the double bottom line of social impact and financial self-sustainability or profitability.”
MacMillan (2005)(Wharton Center)	Process whereby the creation of new business enterprise leads to social wealth enhancement so that both society and the entrepreneur benefit.
Tan et al. (2005)	Making profits by innovation in the face of risk with the involvement of a segment of society and where all or part of the benefits accrue to that same segment of society.
Mair and Marti (2006)	...a process of creating value by combining resources in new ways...intended primarily to explore and exploit opportunities to create social value by stimulating social change or meeting social needs.
Peredo and McLean (2006)	Social entrepreneurship is exercised where some person or group...aim(s) at creating social value...shows a capacity to recognize and take advantage of opportunities...employ innovation...accept an above average degree of risk...and are unusually resourceful...in pursuing their social venture.
Martin and Osberg (2007)	Social entrepreneurship is the: 1) identification a stable yet unjust equilibrium which excludes, marginalizes or causes suffering to a group which lacks the means to transform the equilibrium; 2) identification of an opportunity and developing a new social value proposition to challenge the equilibrium, and 3) forging a new, stable equilibrium to alleviate the suffering of the targeted group through imitation and creation of a stable ecosystem around the new equilibrium to ensure a better future for the group and society.

As the world entered its current economic crisis, we have seen the resulting contraction of the budgets of private donors, funding organizations, and historically generous governments. With this contraction, development organiza-

tions are being forced into implementing earned-income strategies in order to generate a stable source of income, as traditional sources of funding are drying up (Wolverton), and even disappearing all together. In terms of El Achanti, this is precisely the situation they were up against. Financially, the organization was established with a personal loan taken by Angel Villa, in addition to smaller accumulated savings. It was initially sustained through the rigorous devotion of Angel, and on the backs of a multitude of volunteer efforts. However, as funding resources began drying up, he was faced with an ultimatum of riding out the existing capital and closing El Achanti, or begin implementing income generating measures (Angel Villa). In an interview with the Angel, I asked, "Why did you begin productive activities?" Angel replied, "Because the money finished...and from this moment on we began making an emphasis on the productive areas (income generating) in order to create respective resources" (*Ibid.*).

In the case of Brisas del Mar, and its founder Teodora, the situation was a bit different. They began unemployed and with almost non-existent financial capital. However through capitalization on acquired skills, and the determination to advance these, they made contacts with organizations who had resources to provide, and was able to further training, and receive modern equipment to increase production and quality. It was this infrastructure and human capital that El Achanti identified, and partnered with Brisas for their mutual benefit.

Social entrepreneurs have taken the role of developing innovative ideas and applying cost-effective methods of implementing these ideas, and are thus playing a critical role in improving adverse social conditions. This is particularly pronounced in emerging and underdeveloped economies where corruption in

government and even the NGO sector, coupled with the above mentioned resource scarcity, relentlessly limit the concentrated efforts given to serious social needs (Prahalad). As phrases like social entrepreneurship, corporate social responsibility, and social mission are entering the lexicon of the business world, many private enterprises are implementing elements of these phrases into their core functionality. In doing so, they are emerging as key players in the fight against the world's social problems.

Social entrepreneurship has surfaced at the crossroads of the private, public, and non-profit sectors. This is a new class of entrepreneurship that demonstrates characteristics of government, nonprofits, and business, while applying to social problem-solving traditional entrepreneurship's focus on risk-taking, innovation, and large-scale transformation. Though social entrepreneurship is not a new occurrence, it has experienced significant growth over the last twenty years. With this growth, we have seen mounting recognition from researchers, philanthropists, policymakers, and journalists, thereby positioning itself as a distinctive part of the world's social and economic environment.

The last three years have seen a dramatic advancement of social entrepreneurship into the world's spotlight, as it has made a public name through the media. In 2005, American television station the Public Broadcasting System and the Skoll Foundation created a two-part series profiling "The New Heroes," 14 social entrepreneurs from around the globe. This series was coupled with a three-year grant program used to encourage and inspire journalists, filmmakers, and documentary filmmakers to "produce work that promotes large-scale public awareness of social entrepreneurship" (Skoll Foundation).

In 2006, Muhammad Yunus and his organization, the Grameen Bank, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Wendy Kopp of Teach for America, and City Year Co-founders Michael Brown and Alan Khazei were selected among *U.S. News* and *World Report's* Top 25 Leaders. Victoria Hale of the Institute for One-World Health and Jim Fructerman of Benetech received 'genius awards' from the MacArthur Foundation. Each of these individuals are identified as social entrepreneurs.<sup>12</sup>

Since 2001, the World Economic Forum, which annually brings together national leaders, businesses, and governments who are committed to improving the state of the world, has hosted a Social Entrepreneurs' Summit. In partnership with the Schwab Foundation, the forum highlights social entrepreneurs as one of its special-interest communities, placing social entrepreneurship in the same category as international media, global growth companies, and labour leaders (Schwab Foundation).

We have seen some of the worlds most respected publications print articles on social entrepreneurship, including *The New York Times*<sup>13</sup>, the *Harvard Business Review*<sup>14</sup>, *The Economist*<sup>15</sup>, and the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*<sup>16</sup>. Social entrepreneurs can be mentioned by name in such books as David Bornstein's *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas*. They can be found in case studies by such respected academics as J. Gregory Dees, Jed Emerson, and Peter Economy. "Their work is sparked and ex-

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<sup>12</sup> I use the term social entrepreneurship to mean a person or small group of individuals who found(s) and/or lead(s) an organization or endeavour engaged in social entrepreneurship.

<sup>13</sup> Finder

<sup>14</sup> Dees

<sup>15</sup> Bishop

<sup>16</sup> Light

panded by long-standing fellowship programs sponsored by the Ashoka Society and Echoing Green Foundation...and supported by philanthropies such as the Catherine Reynolds Foundation, Draper Richards Foundation, Ewing Marion Kaufman Foundation, Skoll Foundation, and Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship” (Light, 1). And they can be found on university campuses around the world from the London Business School, to the University of Alberta’s Canadian Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, to Stanford University’s Center for Social Innovation.

With this growing popularity and attention, comes more opportunity for research into social entrepreneurship, helping us to better define what it is, and who undertakes it. This, in turn, will help to identify more social entrepreneurs, both successful and unsuccessful, and hopefully provide insight into how this can be taught and/or replicated. This study is attempting to pioneer the investigation into social entrepreneurship efforts in the Colombian Pacific. It is the hopes of the researcher that this introductory study can be the basis that leads to further investigation into this theme in a Colombian context.

This more profound research is greatly needed in the field of Social Entrepreneurship, as J. Gregory Dees notes, “Though the concept of “social entrepreneurship” is gaining popularity, it means different things to different people. This can be confusing. Many associate social entrepreneurship exclusively with not-for-profit organizations starting for-profit or earned-income ventures. Others use it to describe anyone who starts a not-for-profit organization. Still others use it to refer to business owners who integrate social responsibility into their operations” (1).

Academics, practitioners, and popular opinion differ in where social entrepreneurship can be found, and how it operates. As Martin and Osberg note, “we fear that the indiscriminate use of the term may undermine its significance and potential importance to those seeking to understand how societies change and progress” (Martin and Osberg, 39). However there are those, such as New York University’s Paul C. Light, who argue from the opposite perspective stating, “the problem with such an exclusive definition is that most nonprofits simply do not qualify as social entrepreneurs, even if they are engaged in the kind of pattern-breaking change that promises solutions to intractable problems such as poverty, hunger, and disease” (Light, 48).

I agree with Light, in that we must refrain from positioning social entrepreneurship and the social entrepreneur on such a high pedestal as to disqualify the many extremely innovative and beneficial social efforts that are taking place, simply on the basis that they are not on a large enough scale. It is my argument that Angel Villa is a social entrepreneur, in that the implementation of the production of smoked fish and borojó derivatives has been truly innovative in its delivery, and the social benefits felt in the region have been vast. Similar can be said for Teodora and her innovation as the first local female to commercialize smoked fish in her area. However when compared to Muhammed Yunus and the Grameen Bank model that has effected millions of people, the work of El Achanti and Brisas del Mar seem minute. Does this disqualify it from the realms of social entrepreneurship? In the framework of this study, the smallest social entrepreneurship efforts are as vital to social development as the largest. These help make up the building blocks on which the foundation of social entrepreneurship is formed, representing a crucial link in the developmental chain.

The following pages will provide a historical background to social entrepreneurship, as well as engage with the dominating arguments and perspectives on the topic. I feel it is essential to position the theme of this thesis, social entrepreneurship, in its historical and current context in order to give the reader a sense of the magnitude and importance of this topic, both personally and globally. This will help to solidify the foundation on which the fieldwork of this research project is based.

### **Conceptualizing Entrepreneurship**

Before we delve deep into the realms of social entrepreneurship, we must start from the roots. “Any definition of the term ‘social entrepreneurship’ must start with the word ‘entrepreneurship.’ The word ‘social’ simply modifies entrepreneurship. If entrepreneurship doesn’t have a clear meaning, then modifying it with social won’t accomplish much, either (Martin and Osberg, 30). Entrepreneurship is at the heart of this social model, as it embodies the efficiency and income-generating qualities that are so effective.

The word entrepreneur originated in economics as early as the seventeenth century, and it was French economist Jean Baptiste Say who is credited with giving entrepreneurship its specific meaning. Around the beginning of the nineteenth century Say described the entrepreneur as one who “shifts economic resources out of an area of lower and into an area of higher productivity and greater yield,” (Dees 1998, 2) essentially expanding the literal translation from the French word of “one who undertakes,” to include the notion of value crea-

tion. When examining Angel Villa and El Achanti, we see that a shift was made from investing bulk economic resources in the areas of education and sport, though these areas of extreme importance and efforts weren't abandoned, to the implementation of income-generating activities in the production of smoked fish and borojó derivatives.

With the coming of the twentieth century, arose the ideas of Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter, effectively building upon this concept of value creation. Schumpeter recognized in the entrepreneur the energy required to drive forth-economic progress, without which economies would become stagnate, structurally immobilized, and vulnerable to decomposition. Schumpeter brings about the notion of the *Unternehmer*, the entrepreneurial spirit, who identifies a commercial property and organizes a venture to implement it. Successful entrepreneurship, he argues, sets off a chain reaction, encouraging other entrepreneurs to iterate upon and ultimately propagate the innovation to the point of "creative destruction," a state at which the new venture and all its related ventures effectively render existing products, services, and business models obsolete (Schumpeter 1934, 82-85). In Schumpeter's words, "the function of entrepreneurs is to reform or revolutionize the pattern of production" (Schumpeter 1934; Dees 1998, 2). Schumpeter describes entrepreneurs as the change agents, moving the economy forward by serving new markets or devising new models of implementation. We see that El Achanti moved away from the norm of shipping fresh fish to commercial interior markets, and began using the traditional methods of smoking fish and creating borojó products, capacities inherent in the local population, and commercialized them in a way that generates eco-

conomic benefits throughout the chain, while creating employment and generating income in the local population.

Keeping with the ideas of these great economists and the entrepreneurs they have described, shows us that being an entrepreneur, and demonstrating the core qualities of entrepreneurship, is not defined by the ability to start a business. Entrepreneurs not only begin a profit-seeking venture, they serve as the “catalysts and innovators behind economic progress” (Dees 1998, 2), that fuel the evolution, expansion, and development of our economies.

In 1985, management expert Peter Drucker’s book, *Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, was pioneering in that it described entrepreneurship as a trend that extended into multiple sectors, and was not limited to profit-seeking enterprises. Drucker takes Say’s definition even further, and “does not see entrepreneurs as necessarily agents of change themselves, but rather as canny and committed exploiters of change” (Drucker; Martin and Osberg, 31). Drucker states, “the entrepreneur always searches for change, responds to it, and exploits it as an opportunity” (Drucker, 28), portraying the entrepreneur as one who sees opportunity and takes advantage of it. By shifting one’s resources to areas of higher yield, the entrepreneur sees the opportunity to create value by way of change.

Drucker further accelerates the Say-Schumpeter tradition in stating “not every new small business is entrepreneurial or represents entrepreneurship” (Drucker; Dees 1998, 2). When there is neither change being made nor innovative break-through being harnessed, simple replication or continuation does not represent entrepreneurship. This holds true for the new pizzeria on the corner, as well as the new nightclub. El Achanti is not merely another merchant sending

fish from the coast to the interior markets. They harnessed the traditional customs of the local population, and began marketing and selling a product that is rarely, if ever, seen in commercial markets. It is the only organization in Bahia Solano operating in the production of smoked fish and borojó products, innovatively offering a unique product from a little known region. Teodora founded Brisas in this light. Though they are local citizens who smoke fish for preservation as the neighbours do, and ancestors have done for centuries, they were the first to embark upon the sale of this product as a business venture, being truly innovative in their actions.

Though a solid foundation of entrepreneurship has been provided, Murray Low, a leading figure in the field of entrepreneurship, feels that the study of entrepreneurship is still in its premature stages. Murray notes, "Today, as the field struggles with the challenges of adolescence, it is time for straight talk. Students of entrepreneurship need to make something of this field, or face the reality that we have missed the opportunity" (Low, 17). While the concept of entrepreneurship has been around, arguably, since the seventeenth century, there is still considerable debate as to what characteristics define and drive an entrepreneur, as well as their entrepreneurial activities. Reasons for this are arguable and many, though what we have seen is a valiant attempt to define entrepreneurship, diffuse what drives the entrepreneur, and if/how this can be replicated and taught.

The ideas of Say, Schumpeter, Drucker, Dees, Martin and Osberg, and Light have taken us from the early depictions of entrepreneurship, to the modern day landscape of entrepreneurs of varying types. These ideas are appealing in

that their implication is as easy in the private sector as it is in the social sector. In this world of blurring sectors, this flexibility and adaptability of entrepreneurship is one of its greatest strengths

For the purposes of this thesis, a definition of an entrepreneur will be adopted that comprises elements of each of those provided above. An entrepreneur is someone who shifts economic resources into areas of higher yield, thereby creating value, and revolutionizing systems of production and implementation, while exploiting changes taking place and available opportunities. The entrepreneur undertakes these activities without being limited by current resources, with the ultimate goal of becoming self-sustaining through income generated. One does not have to be all entrepreneurial all the time, nor possess each characteristic mentioned at every moment. There are times when one expresses more of these characteristics one has, and times when one gains and/or loses some of these characteristics. This is true of Angel Villa, an example being El Achanti's operations in the area of sport. El Achanti manages projects in volleyball and soccer, through its creation of teams comprised of boys and girls of varying ages. While these projects are viewed as vital to the social and physical development of local youth, they provide no earned income as of yet.

### **Social Entrepreneurship and the Social Entrepreneur**

Though social entrepreneurship is a relatively new concept, history thrives with examples of people who can be considered social entrepreneurs. From Horace Mann's nineteenth century reformation of public education in the United

States, to Florence Nightingale's foundation of the modern field of nursing in the same century, to Bill Drayton's 1981 creation of one of the world's leading proliferators of social entrepreneurship, Ashoka.

In 1980, Edward Skloot founded a consulting firm to help nonprofit organizations interested in creating business ventures. This endeavor proved to be a pioneering establishment in the field that we today know as social entrepreneurship. In a 1983 article for the Harvard Business Review titled "Should Not-for-Profits Go into Business," (Skloot) Skloot first used the term 'nonprofit entrepreneurship' to depict the use of income-generating ventures as a means of diversifying nonprofits funding channels. As mentioned above, 1981 marked the year of the foundation of Ashoka, and founder Bill Drayton first used the term 'public entrepreneurs' to identify the people he later termed 'social entrepreneurs'.

This term that now appears relatively frequently in the academic and popular press, and implies a different approach to the solution of our social problems. It implies a solution that is not restricted by traditional methodologies and income sources, a solution that uses current resources as well as harnessing the needed resources from elsewhere, a solution that is not categorized into the traditional sectors of for-profit, nonprofit, and government, but is a blend of the three. As Dee's notes, "In addition to innovative not-for-profit ventures, social entrepreneurship can include social purpose business ventures, such as for-profit community development banks, and hybrid organizations mixing not-for-profit and for-profit elements, such as homeless shelters that start business to train and employ their residents" (1). Governments often lack the necessary skills and/or infrastructure to undertake certain public measures, and thus contract out projects to private business, nonprofits, and even social businesses.

This can be illustrated in many governments around the world, as I have seen first hand in South Africa's struggle through governmental transition.

In 1991, Sandra Waddock and James E. Post proposed that there are three characteristics essential for successful social entrepreneurs:

First, and probably most significant, is that the social problem is characterized by extreme complexity, which the social entrepreneur is somehow able to bind into a "vision" that has the potential to reshape public attitudes when implemented. Second, the social entrepreneur is an individual with significant personal credibility, which he or she uses to tap critical resources and actually build the necessary network of participating organizations. Third, the social entrepreneur generates followers' commitment to the project by framing it in terms of important social values, rather than purely economic terms, which results in a sense of collective purpose among the social entrepreneur and those who join the effort (Waddock and Post, p 394).

While this is a somewhat simplistic and even naïve definition, it provided some of the original framework on which many of today's scholars are working. Here Waddock and Post highlight some of the most essential attributes of the social entrepreneur, those being vision, personal credibility, and persuasive ability. Though these aren't typical traits given in the average study of social entrepreneurship, without these, implementation of one's idea would be distant on the horizon. After coming to know Angel Villa on both a personal and professional level, he is a person that possesses all three of these qualities. In the village he is known for his personal credibility. Among colleagues, athletes, and business associates, he is known for his ability to persuade. Among friends, he is known for his vision and foresight. Teodora of Brisas del Mar is a long-standing

figure in her community. Her persuasively ability is evident in her recruitment of 15 women over the years, in a society in which women's roles are traditionally confined to that of home make, to work with her in the production of fish products. Her vision is proven, as the last 12 years have seen consistent production and sales of this product that, before her venture began, was not marketed commercially.

Jerr Boschee and Jim McClurg, leaders in social enterprise, contend that "The most commonly quoted definition of "social entrepreneurship" today was formulated by Prof. J. Gregory Dees of Stanford University in 1998" (Boschee and McClurg, 2). Dees appears to be the modern pioneer in the study of social entrepreneurship, in that the vast majority of literature I have read on the subject reference his definitions and insights. Dees highlights 5 defining factors of social entrepreneurs: "Social entrepreneurs play the role of change agents in the social sector, by:

- Adopting a mission to create and sustain social value (not just private value),
- Recognizing and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission,
- Engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning,
- Acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand, and
- Exhibiting heightened accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created (Dees 1998, p.4)

Dees goes on to contend that this is an "idealized" definition. He argues

that leaders show these characteristics in different ways, at different times, and to different extents. There are those who will be truly Schumpeterian in that they revolutionize their field, and those who will implement only certain aspects of this definition into their venture. “The closer a person gets to satisfying all these conditions, the more that person fits the model of a social entrepreneur” (Dees 1998, 4). Hence one doesn’t have to display all five of these qualities simultaneously to be considered a social entrepreneur.

Boschee and McClurg argue that Dees definition is a bold effort, “but his essay contained a fundamental oversight. He outlines five factors that define social entrepreneurship...He never mentions earned income” (Boschee and McClurg, 2). They argue that this is not only a flaw in the definition of the term, but it cripples the psyche of social entrepreneurs as it permits them to believe they are operating entrepreneurially without engaging in sustainability or the pursuit of self-sufficiency. They end up praising themselves as social entrepreneurs, while soliciting the same donors and funding channels year after year.

I am in accordance with Boschee and McClurg, in that, in my view, earned income is at the very heart of social entrepreneurship. While the five factors Dees provides are fundamental to the concept, a core mission of social entrepreneurship is secured existence, achieving sustainability while working to break the barrier of donor dependence. Without the notion of earned income, this independent, self-sustaining status is a mere dream. El Achanti has achieved this status, as it currently operates as a development organization without the use of any external funding channels. El Achanti functions solely on the money provided by the production of smoked fish and borojó derivatives, as well as earnings in the tourism sector. That said, Angel is soliciting government and private

funding channels, as El Achanti is in the processes of establishing a structured program that trains youth athletes in the areas of volleyball, soccer, and chess. In order to undertake this two-year project, external funding will be needed. Teodora and Brisas began on with their own extremely limited funds, however through capacity-building workshops, and the donation of a vast amount of equipment and materials from government entities and INGO's, they now have the infrastructure and human capital needed to be financially self-sustainable.

As we have seen with entrepreneurship, there, too, exists a plethora of definitions for social entrepreneurship. Dees speaks for many in the field in stating, "Social entrepreneurs are one species in the genus entrepreneur" (Dees 1998, 3). In the publication *Management Decision*, social entrepreneurship is defined as a form of business entrepreneurship by contending that the characteristics and qualities of proven social entrepreneurs strongly reflect those of business entrepreneurs, however they need an additional injection of leadership, visionary ideas, and the commitment to social assistance. It is stated that social entrepreneurs are "people who realize where there is an opportunity to satisfy some unmet need that the state welfare will not or cannot meet, and who gather together the necessary resources (generally people, often volunteers, money and premises) and use these to 'make a difference'" (Thompson et. al., 328).

Martin and Osberg contend, however, "it is important to dispel the notion that the difference can be ascribed simply to motivation – with entrepreneurs spurred by money and social entrepreneurs driven by altruism. The truth is that entrepreneurs are rarely motivated by the prospect of financial gain, because the odds of making lots of money are clearly stacked against them. Instead, both the entrepreneur and the social entrepreneur are strongly motivated by the oppor-

tunity they identify, pursuing that vision relentlessly, and deriving considerable psychic reward from the process of realizing their ideas” (Martin and Osberg, 34).

Here we see that many equate the difference between the two to mere personal incentive, with commercial entrepreneurs largely driven by profits (Knight; Schumpeter; Kirzner), and social entrepreneurs having a purely social motive. And though profits, or at least some income generation, are essential to the survival of any attempt at enterprise, as history has shown, entrepreneurs are rarely fully compensated for the amount of risk and effort they have put into the process of generating this idea, formulating the implementation, and realizing a sustainable venture.

Hence we must not water down the distinction between social entrepreneurs and for-profit entrepreneurs as simply a difference between wanting profits and not. Each and every organization must generate some form of profit to stay afloat in the long term. It is what one does with those profits, however, that makes the difference. They can be paid as dividends to shareholders, they can be ploughed back into the organization, or they can be distributed directly to social causes. It is the motivation to improve, and the action of improving, social problems that breeds the social entrepreneur and social entrepreneurship. In the case of El Achanti, when profits are generated, they are used both in the fight against social problems, as well as reinvested into the organization to cover infrastructure and administrative costs.

Looking back at the literature, and the insight provided in Table 1, we see in the definitions the emphasis given to the capability of social entrepreneurs to realize and engage in social opportunities for enterprise success (Brinkerhoff;

Dees; Mair and Marti, 2006a; NYU Stern; Mort et al.; Peredo and McLean; Schwab Foundation;). In carrying out these tasks, one must realize the importance of a vast array of activities, for example the functions of accounting, IT, and marketing, in the success of the venture. However, we see most definitions provided indicate only those processes directly related to the innovative provision of products and services to address social needs (Alford et al.; Harding; Mair and Marti; Mort et al.; Peredo and McLean; Reis). Hence those who are not directly involved in these innovative operations inevitably fall, according to many definitions, outside the sphere of social entrepreneurship. Within the context of this study, each action made by the most trivial of actors is recognized and respected for the benefits they convey upon socio-economic development through their contributions in social entrepreneurship.

## **Chapter V. Research Findings**

As we have moved through the investigative process, I have taken you from project formulation and data collection, to theoretical scaffolding and data analysis. As I embarked upon the detailed procedure of analyzing the data collected, I pooled from two data sources: semi-structured interviews conducted with members of Brisas del Mar and El Achanti, and the field notes from a rigorous undertaking in participant observation. Through the investigative lens of interpretative phenomenological analysis, a series of emergent themes were extracted from the data. Further analysis of the data and the emergent themes themselves led to the creation of an array of super-ordinate themes under which the emergent themes fall.

I will use this section of the dissertation to convey to you the findings of my analysis, presenting a narrative of the data collected, the analysis performed, and the meaning of the analysis in relation to the participants and this phenomenon. The participants in this dissertation are the members of Brisas del Mar and El Achanti. Excerpts from interviews conducted with these members will provide the basis of evidence supporting the establishment and description of the super-ordinate and emergent themes, and their relevance in this study. The members of Brisas del Mar are Teodora, Amanda, Sayi, Judi, Gaby, and Luz Eneida. In terms of my research conducted with El Achanti, my primary source of data for this section is the general coordinator and founder Angel. Table 2 below provides a general overview of the super-ordinate themes and their emergent themes.

**Table 2**

**Super-Ordinate and Emergent Themes**

**I. Impacts of the Establishment of Smoked Fish Operations**

- a. Provision of Employment
- b. Wealth Creation
- c. Effects on Relationships

**II. Obstacles to Production and Sustainable Commerce**

- a. Access to Fish
- b. Capital
- c. Infrastructure
- d. Industrial Fishing
- e. Arrival of Floating Cocaine
- f. Market Preference
- g. Natural Trends

**III. Future Goals**

- a. Acquisition of Motorboat
- b. Increased Capital
- c. Improved Production and Business Processes
- d. Enhanced Group Dynamics

## **Impacts of the Establishment of Smoked Fish Operations**

My first super-ordinate theme is entitled “Impacts of the Establishment of Smoked Fish Operations.” I chose this to be opening theme, as it was the first topic I developed conceptually in the initial stages of the formulation of this research project, and the state of the current project flowered from this original thought. As I moved through the investigative process, working with Brisas del Mar and El Achanti, and later interviewing their members, I found this super-ordinate theme and its emergent themes to be dominating topics, and topics which seemed to have a profound place in their lives.

Before moving on, I want to first define this theme and the phrases that it is comprised of. For the purposes of this dissertation, the *establishment of smoked fish operations* refers to the creation of a business that produces smoked fish as a product to be marketed and sold. There are, however, two layers within this theme:

The first layer is the creation of the group Brisas del Mar that, as mentioned above, specializes in the production of smoked tuna and sailfish. Brisas del Mar was the first group or organization in Bahia Solano to actively produce smoked fish for commercial purposes. The social entrepreneur Teodora formed this group, and recruited its members to produce and sell smoked fish. The second layer is the income-generating operations of El Achanti in respect to their work with Brisas del Mar. Their business relationship began some 3 years ago with El Achanti using Brisas del Mar as a supplier of smoked fish. Brisas del Mar produces and packages smoked fish, after which El Achanti labels it, in turn marketing and selling this product in the cities of Cali, Medellin, and Bogota. We are

looking at these two incidents, the establishment of Brisas del Mar, and the commercialization of Brisas' product by El Achanti, as both having significant impacts upon the constituents involved, and this investigation attempts to bring those impacts to light.

### **Provision of Employment**

The town of Bahia Solano is a rural town, whose economy and culture is staggeringly based upon the fishing industry. In this traditional society, far removed from the mainstream cultural evolution of Colombian's buzzing cities, men work the fields and fish the waters, while the vast majority of women stay at home to tend to the family and take care of the house. Upon meeting the members of Brisas del Mar, it was surprising to see a group of workingwomen, created and led by women, as a functioning element of the fishing industry of Bahia Solano. I came to learn that Teodora created this group more than 13 years ago, after working with a NGO in Bahia Solano that taught her the process of smoking fish. "After 3 years working...I was left alone. " "I left...and asked them how I could organize a group to continue working with these products, because they are good!...they told me ok, organize the ladies and meet, and call us and we will make the training. So that's what I did" (Teodora). Here we have Teodora describing how she was left with a business idea, and through determination and an entrepreneurial spirit, she created Brisas del Mar. By using her established contacts in the development sector, she was able to secure training and capacity building for her team.

In the creation of Brisas del Mar, Teodora provided the community of Bahia Solano with a source of employment for its women. Teodora says: "So I went

to all their houses and spoke with their husbands. I collected 16 women" (*Ibid.*). We see the reference she makes to the traditional structure of their culture, in that she went to her neighbours houses and spoke to their husbands, asking if their wives could work with her and Brisas del Mar, something that was very progressive at the time. I asked each member if they had ever been employed before joining Brisas del Mar, and 5 out of 6 respondents replied no. The only lady that had been employed prior to joining Brisas del Mar was Gaby, a member of the organization who is in charge of selling smoked fish in the town of Bahia Solano. She replied that she had been working "here in my house, selling clothing" (Gaby). Each of the 5 other members indicated that this was their first form of employment, as Amanda stated, "here the women don't really work much...more with the family..." (Amanda).

In addition to the 6 jobs resulting from the creation of Brisas del Mar, the data provides us with evidence of indirect job creation. The ladies of Brisas del Mar work in the production of smoked fish, however they do not work in fish capture, as they rely on other sources for their fish supplies. The first place Brisas del Mar looks for fish is in their family. The neighbourhood in which the members live, Chambacú, is predominately comprised of fishermen and their families, with 5 of the 6 members of Brisas del Mar being from this neighbourhood and part of fishing families. Luz Eneida states: "the husband of Teo fishes, the husband of Amanda also fishes. So them, they bring fish" (Luz Eneida). Teodora iterates: "The husbands here all fish" (Teodora). Amanda further asserts that "these guys here, they have two boats and two motors, and they're the only ones that they buy their gas, and sell the fish to us" (Amanda). As a result of Brisas del Mar's operations, the fishermen of this neighbourhood have an addi-

tional market to which they sell their fish, hence providing these individuals and their families with an additional source of income.

Relative to the history of Brisas del Mar, El Achanti has only recently begun working with them, initiating operations some 3 years ago. That said, however, El Achanti has made a profound impact in the production of Brisas del Mar, as Teodora states “No in this time period we are by ourselves, we only sell our product to Angel [El Achanti]” (Teodora). My research has shown that currently El Achanti is the only buyer of Brisas del Mar’s smoked fish, as the statement above from the President of Brisas del Mar shows us that El Achanti and Angel is the only person or entity to which they sell their product. As later research will uncover, the two members of Brisas del Mar assigned to selling in the village, Gaby and Judi, have not been receiving product to be sold. Judi claims “When they make production, they bring it to us, and we sell it, we have our clients, and we split the money. But in these days there isn’t any production” (Judi). This data shows us that though the operations of Brisas del Mar does provide employment, both directly and indirectly, it is the work of El Achanti and the socially entrepreneurial spirit of Angel Villa that is currently keeping Brisas del Mar’s production afloat, hence maintaining employment for its members and the fishermen who supply their product.

### **Wealth Creation**

As the operations of Brisas del Mar, and ultimately El Achanti, provided the first and only employment for 5 of the 6 members of Brisas del Mar, it too has provided a source of income that would otherwise not exist. Judi explains her view of the organization, “Brisas del Mar is an association of women in charge of

commercializing and making fish products to sell in the municipality and outside of the municipality, to secure a market, for us, how to say, for our subsistence, to subsist” (Judi). Amanda states that “now we work here, and try to make some form of income or resource to sustain ourselves” (Amanda). Gaby moves on to iterate their original idea, “Because the idea for us was, when we were in training, was to be able to make the minimum, or not really the minimum but something like 300,000COP” (Gaby). When I asked if this work with Brisas had given the opportunity to earn sufficient money to sustain the family, Sayi replied, “A moment arrived when yes. There arrived a moment when I was earning enough” (Sayi). Judi maintains, “It’s that this work produces a lot! One working, producing, it gives a lot. It gives enough” (Judi).

Due to cultural factors and extreme lack of record keeping, I was not able to put a tangible economic figure on the amount of money earned by the members of Brisas del Mar, hence comparisons can’t be made with previous income statements. However it is apparent from the statements above that the members of Brisas del Mar are generating income from their work with El Achanti, and as a result creating wealth to assist in the sustenance of their families.

### **Effects on Relationships**

The more time I spent working with Brisas del Mar and El Achanti, socializing with the members, and living in their community, the more I began to see the effects that this new role of ‘employee’ has had on their lives and the social constructs that make up their relationships. These effects in turn impacted their personal and professional lives, and it is an aspect of this study to attempt to bring those to light. Above I have first introduced the positive impacts of em-

ployment provision and wealth creation, and the benefits they have had on the constituents involved. However, I will now expose the so-called 'other side of the coin'.

When Brisas del Mar began, Teodora was the leader of the group, while the other employees had no specific role or title. They simply worked together to make production. Teodora was the leader in that she organized workshops and travelled to other regions to be exposed to different organizations and their operations. However as they received training and assistance in the form of capital, equipment, and machinery, the organization that had been closely assisting Brisas del Mar's operations made a change in the group structure. Amanda explains "they said they couldn't be running this organization directly that this was ours, that we needed to be working toward profits, an organized group, with a manager, secretary, etc." (Amanda). Though as Gaby points out, "when we began, we were doing, and part of, the same process. We would go there and make production, then all go out and sell the product. Later, however, we began heavy training and organization, those of production, those of sales, manager" (Gaby).

The organization Natura had been working with Brisas del Mar, and was helping them to evolve into a viable business. However, as many development organizations often do, they attempted to hand over operations to Brisas del Mar after a certain time-period of assistance, so that they could become a self-functioning entity. Natura felt that to properly make this hand over, they had to establish defined roles within the group, and assign certain functions to these roles. In doing this, they provided training and workshops over the years, in order for the members to become acclimated. This, as Brisas' members describe, caused a fracture within the group. Sayi details the changes made, "We would

make our production, and then go selling it on the street. We ourselves would produce, and we ourselves would go out and sell. We had our clients in the village. But when things changed, and they took two colleagues out of the group to work in sales, everything changed, because it was different, or it wasn't the same as we were before" (Sayi). Sayi describes the turning point as when two colleagues in the group, Gaby and Judi, were assigned to sales. With this, Teodora was deemed President, Amanda as Manager, Sayi as Secretary, and Luz Eneda was assigned to production. So we see a shift from Teodora being the leader with everyone else working in similar roles within the organization, to each member having assigned roles and functions, and a status that comes with each.

When Judi and Gaby were initially assigned to sales, Brisas del Mar maintained a point of sale for their smoked fish in Bahia Solano airport that was operated by they newly assigned sales team of Judi and Gaby. This provided a glimmering opportunity in the beginning, as they were now in sales and running a new stall selling smoked fish at the airport. This opportunity, however, didn't work out as they had hoped. The airport venture was created with the close assistance of Natura, and when they handed over management of the organization to Brisas del Mar, it had to be closed soon after. When I asked Gaby why the airport stall closed, she replied: "Because it was very inconvenient with the costs. When they were here helping us, we were eating lunch, we were taking public transport, but after they had already trained us and organized everything, they left. Then it was a different situation. It was like the transport is very expensive, the food, all the costs involved were so high we essentially weren't able to cover them. If you paid to get out there and stay for the day, and then didn't sell anything, you would actually lose money" (Gaby).

With the closure of the airport stall, Judi and Gaby essentially lost their main functions in the role of sales. At that point their duty became to sell smoked fish from their homes in Bahia Solano, though only when the other members of the group brought produce to them. However, at this time they had entered into an agreement with El Achanti in which they served as the supplier of smoked fish to be marketed and sold externally, unlike times before in which they would obtain their own fish to be sold by the sales team. “So we would make it here, and then take to her to be in charge of selling. But in these days as we are without fish, Angel Villa takes it all and sells it outside” (Luz Eneda). Luz Eneda states here that they weren’t obtaining their own fish to be sold from the organization, though simply producing smoked fish directly for El Achanti.

She moves on to assert that “He buys fish, tells us how much to make, and we make it” (Luz Eneda). This situation effectively cuts the sales team out of operations, as they have no product to sell. “The truth is that the times that Angel Villa has come, I didn’t see any money. And maybe they have the right reason, because they have their contract with him, and at once they give him the production or put it straight on the boat. So if you don’t have sales going on, what I think, what I have analyzed, we are selling, and they made their contract with Angel Villa directly, so one doesn’t have a part of this” (Judi). Judi confirms this situation, and approaches it from a rational perspective in that Brisas del Mar does serve as the supplier for El Achanti, though in this manner the operations essentially do not involve the sales team. As Teodora says, “we only sell our product to Angel,” (Teodora), it is apparent that the restructuring of the organization by Natura has caused a fracture in the cohesion of the group, leaving two members out of work.

Judi and Gaby move on to infer that the decision to work with El Achanti in this way was not a collective one. Judi comments, “President Teodora, and the other Amanda, they made a production and had not invited us...they work the two themselves, and when the others of the group are needed they delegate something. This isn’t correct, because if it is a group, in terms of working, everyone must know” (Judi). We see here an exclusion of other members from the decision-making process, resulting in an unequal distribution of both power and profits amongst group members. Gaby takes the notion even further in stating, “Well, nobody is really bringing opinions, whatever the president says goes.” (Gaby).

Another phenomenon that has greatly impacted the operations of Brisas del Mar and its members is that of previous members quitting the organization only to branch out to form their own businesses. As President Teodora says, “there are some here in the village that left the group and are now smoking fish from their own house, making sausages, hamburgers, all in the house. They left the group to work from their house independently” (Teodora). This has caused polarization within the community, as the idea of starting this industry was innovative in the region, and Brisas del Mar was the first group to commercialize this product. When it became apparent that some of those who joined Brisas del Mar only did so to take their training and leave the group to begin their own business, it caused relations amongst current and former members to deteriorate.

Teodora personally recruited women from her neighbourhood, and trusted them to be part of a team and to collectively learn an industry. Judi states that “a few colleagues have left [the group], and this has me very sad be-

cause practically these were founders of the organization” (Judi). As the members who defected were original founders, it caused relations to be extremely tarnished. When I asked Teodora if the relations between Brisas del Mar and those who had left the organization were bad, she replied “Bad, bad, bad, bad. They came to learn, just to make their own business from their house” (Teodora). Additional salt was added to the wound when, after Brisas del Mar was forced to close their airport stall due to unsustainable costs, a former member quit working with Brisas del Mar and formed her own airport stall. Amanda claims, “there is another lady who also sells, who was part of the original group, but left and branched out on her own, now has a stall at the airport...She smokes it in her house and sells it in the airport” (Amanda).

In the following section, we will see how these impacts outlined above have evolved into formidable obstacles facing Brisas del Mar and El Achanti, and the smoked fish industry they have created.

### **Obstacles to Production and Sustainable Commerce**

My second super-ordinate theme is titled “Obstacles to Production and Sustainable Commerce.” As I moved throughout the investigative process, it became apparent that the over-arching topic in conversations and interviews I had with the members of Brisas del Mar and El Achanti was that of the daily obstacles they face in their business. The emergent themes that comprise this super-ordinate theme, and the data that has surfaced from my fieldwork, serve as evidence to the daily struggles they face in this midst of this social phenomenon. When boundaries are pushed, and segments of society suddenly enter the labour

force, repercussions arise. The following section will provide insight into that struggle and will examine those repercussions.

Primarily we must conceptualize this super-ordinate theme. I refer to 'Obstacles' as those occurrences that hinder the operations of Brisas del Mar and El Achanti, and make their functions more difficult in any way. 'Production' refers to the production of smoked fish as a business entity. 'Sustainable Commerce' is in reference to not only the establishment and existence of commerce, but also the ability for commerce to maintain on a functioning level that is both socially and economically viable.

### **Access to Fish**

Brisas del Mar is a locally born organization that was founded on very little capital, and continues to operate on an extremely small budget. Through assistance from various NGO's and government entities, they were able to obtain an infrastructure that is unique in the region. They have a concrete building in which they operate, an oven for smoking fish, a walk-in freezer with a 5 tonne capacity, stainless steel counter tops, along with chopping and packaging machinery that permits their production capacity and quality control abilities to operate on a professional level. As these organizations curtailed assistance and left the organization to function independently, they assumed that access to fish supplies was a given. However with no means of capturing the fish themselves, they are dependent on outside sources for their fish supplies. Sayi states, "We are dependent on other fisherman" (Sayi), while Amanda conveys, "we don't have a boat, we don't have a motor here in the organization, other organizations

do have a boat, but we don't, so we have to buy fish from the fisherman" (Amanda).

The small operating budget with which Brisas del Mar operates prohibits them from acquiring a boat and motor. Without having this asset, they must depend on their families for fish supplies, or look to purchase fish from other sources in Bahia Solano. Sayi claims "It would be different if we ourselves as an organization had our own boat. We wouldn't have to hassle with searching for or buying expensive fish. We would just send our boat out to fish" (Sayi). Teodora emphasizes that "For a long time we have wanted to get a boat and a motor. Then we would be able to fish all the time" (Teodora).

The many factors involved in acquiring fish from other fishermen or from the fisheries, as we will examine, make it vital for Brisas del Mar to have their own means of acquiring fish themselves, i.e. having their own boat. Social implications come into play as Brisas del Mar sees other organizations in Bahia Solano and elsewhere with their own boat, and the ease in which they access fish supplies. Amanda states, "The other organization has a boat, and simply what they do is find the fisherman, what they catch is for the organization, and they simply pay the fisherman the part that corresponds to them, but the fish is for the organization" (Amanda). Here Amanda is referring to another organization in Bahia Solano that works in the capture and sale of fresh fish, and their ability to secure their fish supplies through the operation of their own boat.

I asked members of Brisas del Mar why it was necessary to have a motor-boat to catch fish, as I had seen many fishermen fishing with boats they paddle, therefore eliminating the need for investment into a motor. Luz Eneida replied "Here they fish with a paddle when the fish enter closer to the coast, but when

the fish are further out those with boat and motor go to fish” (Luz Eneida). One could question the true need for this motor, in that when the fish were close they could capture as much as they could, and store the fish in their 5 tonne capacity freezer, as Judi claims that “because we have the freezer, one with money buys the fish and stocks it” (Judi). However, when I asked in an interview why they don’t stock their freezers when there is fish abundance, Amanda replied, “what is difficult for us is getting the primary material because we don’t have sufficient money to buy a good quantity of fish and put it in the freezer” (Amanda)

Teodora states that “Yes they paddle fish, but the big fish are farther out and one needs a motor” (Teodora). El Achanti only sales smoked fish filets, as Teodora claims, “Only filet for Angel Villa, only filet...the big fish however, you have to fish far out to sea” (*Ibid.*). In light of this, they must capture large fish in order to have filets of sufficient size to be smoked for El Achanti.

### **Market Preference**

To combat the dependence on large fish and their use to produce filets, Brisas del Mar stated the need to diversify production. This diversification would lead to the smoking of smaller fish, fish that can be caught closer to shore, eliminating the need for a boat. Teodora iterates, “I would like to not only work with filet, but also small fish like little pargo<sup>17</sup>, or boriqva<sup>18</sup>, small fish, to offer orders of fish from various qualities of product” (*Ibid.*). Sayi moves on to explain

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<sup>17</sup> Pargo is the Spanish term for Red Snapper

<sup>18</sup> Boriqva is a type of fish native to the waters of Bahia Solano that I have yet to find an English translation for.

that “because if we prepare platero<sup>19</sup>, this small fish, we would always be able to work” (Sayi). Sayi bases this claim on the notion that these smaller fish are much easier to come by, and one fishing from the bank or paddle fishing can easily capture this type of fish. They claim that this greater access would provide them the opportunity to exponentially increase production capacity.

A good idea to diversify business it may be, however this is not the product that El Achanti markets. El Achanti has secured a market for smoked filet, which can only be obtained from fish of a certain size. This proves difficult for Brisas del Mar, as Teodora states “The big fish however, you have to fish far out to sea, and many times they don’t catch, and we’re stuck with no work” (Teodora). In order for Brisas del Mar to work with smaller fish, a market for this product must first be found or created. A time period of trial and error, as well as market exploration, must be undertaken in order to identify a market or the possibility for market establishment.

### **Dominance of Fisheries**

A topic that was touched on time and time again in both informal conversations, as well as interviews with the members of Brisas del Mar and El Achanti was the difficulty in doing business with the fisheries. Bahia Solano is a town and municipality heavily rooted in the fishing industry, and as such maintains two fisheries in the town itself. These fisheries work in the capture and sale of fish from the Pacific Ocean. Fish is sold by these fisheries locally, and is sent to markets in the large cities of the interior of Colombia. The great majority of fish

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<sup>19</sup> Platero in this sense is a Spanish term referring to a small fish that can fit on a plate.

caught is destined for these external markets, as it brings a much higher price than local markets. As Amanda implies, “The fish that is captured is for these external markets, and if they sell fish locally for local prices they will lose potential money, hence they sell fish at above market prices, which for us is very expensive and we suffer” (Amanda). Fish prices are some 4 times higher in the interior city markets than they are in Bahia Solano, and when fisheries do sell locally they cater primarily to tourists or migrants who will pay higher prices than locals. When local citizens do purchase fish from the fisheries they have a difficult time paying a price that is financially manageable for their budget.

As Amanda goes on to explain, “the majority of the boats that are fisherman’s belong to that side, that side of the village, and on that side of the village all of the fisherman fish for the fishery, and these fisheries are the owners of the boats, so if they want to sell fish they will sell, and if they don’t want to sell they won’t, however since the boats are from the same fishery, the fish is already committed. If they do end up selling, they sell it even more expensive” (*Ibid.*). In saying “that side,” Amanda is referring to the other side of the village where the fishermen with motorboats operate. Their neighbourhood of Chambacú is where the poorer fishermen live, who fish from the shore, or in their paddle canoes. Sayi claims “of course, if we go and buy it from the fishery it is more expensive” (Sayi), while Judi confirms that “they sell outside, and if they do sell [locally], yeah, more expensive” (Judi). Here the members show us that the fisheries dominate control over most fishermen in Bahia Solano that fish with motorboats. By default, this dominance extends to the large fish located further out to sea, which can be more easily accessed by motorboat, that are needed to produce the sufficient filet size required to fill El Achanti’s orders.

Given their dependence on large fish, and the lack of motorboat to capture their own fish supplies, Brisas del Mar is forced to obtain the majority of their fish from outside sources. That said, to obtain fish from these outside sources, one must either purchase the fish outright, or use a system of credit in which they will pay for the fish after it is sold to El Achanti. Judi states that “I say that one of the problems or difficulties is the lack of money, of capital” (Judi). She further implies that “look, the fisherman, and if fish arrives here is the money. But if arrives a boat filled with fish and I don’t have money, they sell straight to the fishery” (*Ibid.*). Here we see that lack of money is a problem for Brisas del Mar, and that without capital, the fishermen will often not give you the fish on credit, they will sell to the fishery as they pay immediately.

### **Industrial Fishing**

Another obstacle facing Brisas del Mar and El Achanti, and contributing to the increasing difficulty in the capture of large fish close to the shore, is the presence of the industrial fishing industry and the large tuna trawlers plying the waters of Bahia Solano. When I asked about their presence, Judi replied, “They take all the fish, and as you know the fish is becoming in great scarcity. The sea is very big, and they prowl, hunting” (Judi).

In my time in Bahia Solano, I had various candid conversations with the captain of the Port Authority, as well as the captain of the Coast Guard. We spoke briefly about the presence of industrial fishing boats and tuna trawlers, and they conveyed to me the grave nature of the situation. Artisanal fishermen rely on these coastal waters to fish as they have for hundreds of years, to provide fish for the sustenance of their families and to provide goods with which they can trade.

However as these industrial fishing boats and tuna trawlers deplete fishing stocks more and more each year, they move increasingly closer to the shore. Colombian law states that industrial fishing boats must keep at least 12 miles from the shore, and that the waters inside this limit are reserved for artisanal fishermen (Instituto Colombiano de Desarrollo Rural). That said, nevertheless, it is extremely difficult to enforce these laws, as the Pacific coast of Colombia is vast and extremely remote. As the captains relayed to me, neither the Port Authority nor the Coast Guard have the resources and manpower to maintain a presence along the coast. Amanda states that “sometimes there are lots of Tuna ships off the coast and they catch all the fish out there, and they don’t have a chance to enter in this area close by, all of this, all of this makes it difficult, generates difficulties to capture fish” (Amanda). Without patrol from authorities, and their reaction and assistance when called, these ships will continue to deplete the fishing stocks so vital to local communities.

### **Arrival of Floating Cocaine**

A more recent phenomenon is that of the arrival of floating cocaine packages. The Pacific Ocean has become a leading transit way for cocaine shipments from Colombia to Central America, en route to the consumer markets of the United States. As high-speed boats leave destinations on the southern Pacific coast of Colombia loaded with illegal cargo, they then make their way north, passing the northern Pacific coast of Colombia (the department of Chocó, and the Municipality of Bahia Solano), and the countries of the Central American Pacific. In this journey these boats often face extreme sea conditions, mechanical problems, and encounters with law enforcement officials. Many of these incidences

involve the loss of drug cargo, as packages are lost at sea or deliberately thrown into the ocean in an attempt to avoid criminal charges. Naturally, this lost cargo finds its way to the shore.

The recent arrival of cocaine floating in the sea and washing up on the beaches of the Colombian Pacific has created a phenomenon of substantial cash infusions into their economy. When coastal residents find these packages of cocaine, while walking on the beach or fishing in the sea, they then sell them directly to local drug cartels. These cartels operate in coastal towns along the Pacific, waiting for the arrival of local residents with freshly found cocaine, who trade these packages for lump sums of cash. An article in the Colombian publication *Chocó 7 Dias* in June 2009 highlights the prevalence of floating cocaine in the coastal waters of Chocó. In the article the commander of the Naval Force of the Pacific states, “with the interdiction treaty of the United States, since the first of January [2009], we have captured approximately 47 tonnes of cocaine, in addition to 7 submarines and a very large shipyard where these vessels are made” (Golpes al narcotráfico). The newest addition to drug trafficking vessels is the use of semi-submersible submarines. These are used to transport cocaine and other narcotics, and are extremely difficult for authorities to detect.

This has become a pandemic in coastal Chocó, and as such it has directly affected the fishing industry of Bahia Solano, and for that matter life in the area, as it is known. Teodora comments on the recentness of this phenomenon stating that “The cocaine arrived in these years, in 2005 there wasn’t any of this, it must have been in 2008” (Interview with Teodora). The article moves on to claim that “the fishermen no longer go out to fish, but when they hear that we [the navy]

are pursuing vessels with drugs, they leave immediately to 'coquiar'<sup>20</sup>, to fish for one of these, because each kilo costs \$25,000USD and the drug traffickers pay the fishermen 50 million pesos (\$25,000) for each pack of 20 kilos" (Golpes al narco-trafico). The cocaine is normally packaged in packs of 20 kilos, and this is the way fishermen often find it. Hence when one of these is found, they receive \$25,000 dollars, or the equivalent of about 10 years wage as a fisherman.

When I asked members of Brisas del Mar about this phenomenon, the replies were varied: "They don't fish. They all go looking for cocaine" (Teodora). Judi states that "no one goes to fish, they find [cocaine], and already have money...they don't fish" (Judi), while Amanda iterates, "Yes, for sure, when they go out to look for cocaine nobody goes for fish. Nobody fishes. Everyone goes looking for cocaine" (Amanda). Teodora goes so far as to say that "a lot of people are searching for this...more than the other people looking for fish" (Teodora). We see by the evidence provided here, that when such a great amount of money is available, fishermen drop any fishing obligations they may have when there is news of floating cocaine, and immediately go out searching for packs of cocaine.

One of the direct effects of the fishermen not going out to fish, but going out instead to look for cocaine, is that the towns and villages along the coast are left without fish supplies. Sayi states that "they leave the village without fish to suffer" (Sayi), while Teodora claims that "the village is left without fish when the people don't want to fish. Once the village was left without any fish...a long time, about 2 months" (Teodora). This acts as yet another hurdle in their access to fish supplies. When Brisas del Mar does have capital available to purchase fish, there

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<sup>20</sup> Coquiar is a newly invented verb used to denote the action of searching for cocaine in the sea.

are often times when the town is simply without fish supplies to be sold. Amanda comments, "Sometimes it lasts woohh, more than a week! All the men will be out there in their boats looking for cocaine" (Amanda).

I asked the members of Brisas del Mar if all of the fishermen of Bahia Solano are part of this search for cocaine, and if there aren't some fishermen that still fish when there is news of cocaine floating. Amanda replied, "those who are left [fisherman] who don't want to go look for cocaine, or don't like to, they won't be able to buy gasoline for their boats. The cocaine searchers have already bought it all, and they have it stored in their house for themselves" (Amanda). Here the evidence shows us that the fishermen that choose to still go out and fish are unable to, as those in the frenzy to find cocaine purchase all of the gasoline supplies in the village. As previously mentioned, the inexistence of terrestrial transportation causes an island like situation in which all products from outside the Municipality must be imported by air or sea, and this includes all gasoline and diesel supplies. Hence when those searching for cocaine purchase all gasoline supplies, the village is truly left dry, and one must wait until the next ship arrives with gasoline stocks to replenish the town. Sayi iterates "all the gas is bought up to go search for this, and the boats that want to fish aren't able to get gas, as they already bought 20, 30, to 50 drums<sup>21</sup> of gasoline to go out searching. So the other little fishing boats can't get any gas, as the gas station is dry. This is something else that really affects the amount of fish available" (Sayi).

In the end of April 2009, I observed a brutal example when the Maritime Transportation Union of Colombia went on strike. It began with the arrival of cocaine on the beach in El Valle, and in the sea in the area of Bahia Solano. Gas

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<sup>21</sup> A drum contains 55 gallons.

was purchased in bulk quantities as the search for cocaine packages commenced. In these initial days of the search, there was little to no fresh fish to be found in El Valle, as the majority of fisherman and boats were occupied in the search for cocaine. As the days passed, supplies of gas and oil, as well as consumables such as vegetables, fruits, and eggs became extremely scarce. After three weeks of diminishing stocks, the prices of all imported products had increased significantly. The price of one gallon (3.79 liters) of gas increased from 11,000 pesos<sup>22</sup> to 25,000 pesos, and the gas being sold had been obtained from tuna and shrimp boats fishing off the coast of Bahia Solano, as it had been traded for plantains and phone cards (Field notes). Amanda comments on this incident, "There was cocaine, and all the gas was consumed by the coqueros<sup>23</sup>, we were a few weeks with no gas at all in the village, it was all used by the coqueros and there wasn't anything left for the fisherman" (Amanda). Compounding this matter, Amanda notes, is that the fisheries who have monopolized control over the fishermen and their boats are involved in the cocaine search, thereby controlling supply, and subsequently demand, of fish supplies in Bahia Solano. She states, "Listen, the fisheries, they send their own boats out to look for cocaine" (Amanda).

When asked about what has been done to prevent this cocaine search amongst fishermen, Teodora replied, "The port captain as been involved in this and they should be implementing some measures to assist. They know the problem and should be doing something about it" (Teodora), however at the time of writing there were still no apparent proactive measures being taken by the authorities.

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<sup>22</sup> Colombian peso is the currency used in Colombia. At the time of writing, the market exchange rate was 2000 pesos to \$1 USD.

<sup>23</sup> Coquero is a colloquial word referring to one that searches for cocaine.

## **Future Goals**

Above we have looked at the obstacles that the members of Brisas del Mar and El Achanti face in their attempts to create employment and generate income in Bahia Solano through the production and sales of smoked fish. In the face of such mounting hurdles, I engaged the members in how they feel they can overcome these obstacles, and what they ultimately want to accomplish as individuals and as an organization. I chose this topic as a super-ordinate theme, as each member held passionate and diverse views into the future of the organization, the industry, and themselves as members.

## **Acquisition of Motorboat**

When asking questions concerning the future needs of the organization, one of the most prevailing responses received was the need for Brisas del Mar to own a boat and motor. Sayi states, "It would be different if we ourselves as an organization had our own boat. We wouldn't have to hassle with searching for or buying expensive fish. We would just send our boat out to fish, and have product to work with" (Sayi). Through evidence provided, we have seen the great difficulties Brisas del Mar has faced in their attempts to secure fish supplies. From the fisheries monopoly of fish supplies, to Brisas del Mar's lack of capital to purchase fish when it arrives, to the desire of fishermen to search for cocaine, if these members did have their own means of fishing the seas they could have a much greater chance of guaranteeing their own fish stocks.

Teodora implores, "For a long time we have wanted to get a boat and a motor. Then we would be able to fish all the time" (Teodora). Amanda emphasizes their plight in commenting, "we don't have a boat, we don't have a motor

here in the organization, other organizations do have a boat, but we don't, so we have to buy fish from the fisherman, and that is only if the fisherman want to sell" (Amanda). This goal proves to be the most sought after for the members, as they feel with guaranteed fish supplies, they would have be able to have constant work, as Sayi claims, "because if one has fish, one is able to work, every day of the week, 3 or 4 productions" (Sayi). The most secure form in which to guarantee fish supplies is through the obtainment of their own motorboat, as that decreases dependence on outside sources. Teodora puts it simply, "Like this it's not functioning, a group like ours must have access to their own fish" (Teodora).

### **Increased Capital**

Access to increased capital would give members the opportunity to purchase fish from fishermen when needed. The way in which they now operate creates dependence on El Achanti to provide the fish that is to be processed, therefore reducing their profits as they are simply contracted for production. If they could secure fish supplies, and sell already produced fish to El Achanti, they could improve their profit margin. However with their lack of liquid capital, they are dependent on fishermen to provide fish on credit, which is a feat that proves to be extremely difficult when fisheries pay the fishermen immediately. If they could maintain liquid capital, they would be able to purchase adequate fish supplies when available, and these supplies could be stored in their enormous freezer for later production. Judi states, "because we have the freezer, one with money buys the fish and stocks it" (Judi), while Amanda confirms that "We have a freezer with a 5 tonne capacity, however for us to have a good quantity of fish, what we need is money" (Amanda).

## **Improved Production and Business Processes**

Some of the members' future goals and desires were based more on essential needs in reference to the crux of the operations. Luz Eneda simply articulates her desire to "work a lot" (Luz Eneda). Gaby states her yearning is "In the future, to make the minimum [wage], for the sustenance of the family, and function like a business" (Gaby), while Judi declares the need "For us to make a big business, to generate employment" (Judi).

This points to the core role of this social business as the creation of employment in a traditionally unemployed segment of society, and their need to generate income for familial sustenance. Amanda merely wants "to have a very good commercialization" (Amanda), while Judi doesn't want to "lose the vision to be an entrepreneur" (Judi), referring to the innovation of this business and its unique product offering. Teodora aims higher, stating "We need the orders to be bigger than what we have been doing. An order of 50, 60, or 70 [lbs.] is a good portion, but an order of 100+, or 200+, that's proper, something we need to be organizing with Angel Villa, more commerce" (Teodora), moving on to reiterate the need for diversification saying "I would like us to have more commerce, and the commerce that we have to be orders of all classes of fish" (*Ibid.*), as opposed to their dependence on the sales of tuna and sailfish only.

## **Enhanced Group Dynamics**

Finally the members addressed the need for better group relations. The social dynamics in a group setting often tend to illustrate the great importance of communication and solidarity, and for that to be achieved through the efforts of

a good leader. Judi articulates that “there needs to be a bit more cohesion in the group...you have to do things with transparency, because this isn’t a group of 1,2, 3, but an organization, an association for the benefit of all, not of 1 nor 2” (Judi). Here she highlights the lack of transparency in the group, in that some decisions are kept from the whole for the betterment of only a few. Sayi states, “For me it would be nice if the group would be better, the things were better” (Sayi), making reference to the need for improved group relations.

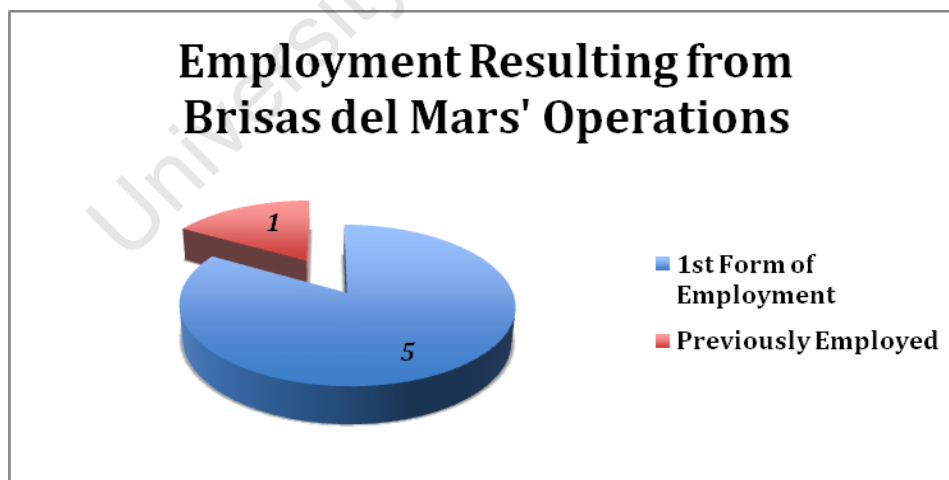
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## **Chapter VI. Concluding Remarks**

Looking back on this study, we have seen an investigation into the smoked fish industry as a medium of social entrepreneurship, more specifically the work of Brisas del Mar and El Achanti in Bahia Solano. As such, we have been introduced to the storied histories of both organizations, and their striving efforts to create employment and generate earned income in land where such undertakings are essentially unheard of for women, being very difficult at best.

My research findings have first covered the impacts upon the members of Brisas del Mar, El Achanti, their families, and the community at large. First and foremost, we see the impact of job creation. The data has shown that 5 out of the 6 members of Brisas del Mar had never been employed prior to joining the organization. Chart 1 below illustrates that Brisas del Mar provided 83% (5/6) of its employees with their first form of employment.

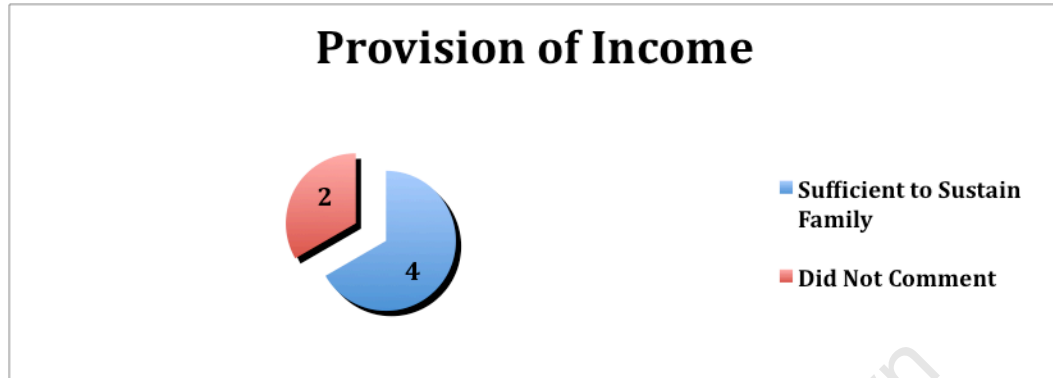
**Chart 1**



As we see in Chart 2, 4 of the 6 members of Brisas del Mar stated that this venture provides them with a sustainable source of income for their families. As this is the first and only form of employment for the great majority of members,

this income would otherwise not exist without the employment generated by Brisas del Mar.

**Chart 2**



Moving through the data, we see that during the life of the organization, as they were working with various NGO's and government entities, while receiving training and assistance from these organizations, a group restructuring occurred. As the organization Natura attempted to hand over group management and operations to Brisas del Mar themselves, they assigned each member with a specific role and function. As this redistribution of power and responsibility took place, the entire group dynamic was changed, resulting in the isolation of 2 members from to production functions of the group, and reassigned to a sales team that soon disintegrated. Throughout this power change, group members began retiring from Brisas del Mar, only to form their own independent business with the skills they had been taught over the years. These incidents caused a splintering in the group, and a fracture in the relationships of current and former members, thereby flowing out of the office and into the homes of the individuals involved.

These factors took a heavy toll on Brisas del Mars' operations and effectiveness in business, however El Achanti indentified the potential of the group, and began marketing and selling their product in the interior cities of the country. Production increased with the large orders put in by El Achanti, however these orders were negotiated directly with the production team of Brisas del Mar, effectively further isolating the sales team. With the reduction of numbers in the production team, as two members had been assigned to sales, their individuals earnings as earnings essentially increased. This increase, however, comes at the cost of the livelihoods of two members, who have, as a result, looked for other forms of employment to replace their former jobs.

The data uncovered an array of obstacles facing the group today. The greatest by far, was the obstacle of access to fish. The fisheries maintain a monopoly on fish supplies, resulting in the overwhelming majority of motorboats' fish going to the fisheries for outside sales. When fish is sold locally, it is sold a much higher price, more in line with the prices of internal markets, effectively pricing local citizens out of the market. Without their own motorboat, Brisas del Mar has, and will continue to have, dependency on outside sources for their fish supplies. Their lack of capital prevents them from contracting fishermen to fish for them directly, as providing work and product on credit is extremely rare in this region. Preference in fish type, as tuna and sailfish filets are their only options, makes constant production difficult, as these two specific types of fish aren't always available, or accessible. Intentions to diversify product offering is desired, and would help Brisas del Mar to have more consistent production.

Fish scarcity further increases difficulties in production, as tuna trawlers and industrial fishing boats ply the waters of Bahia Solano relatively unmoni-

tored. Their massive operations seriously deplete fish stocks that provide the livelihood of many of coastal Chocó's residents. Until measure are taken by the relative authorities, fish stocks will continue to be depleted as they are around the world, and artisanal fishermen will have an even greater difficulty providing sustenance to their families.

The mad frenzy of the cocaine search is a new phenomenon plaguing the fishing industry of Bahia Solano, and at times leaves these villages without fish supplies at all. The amount of money offered if and when one does happen upon floating cocaine, is so great as to keep many fishermen, artisanal or industrial, completely distracted from their career duties. Those who don't want to take part in this illegal hunt are confined to fishing from canoe or off the bank, as gasoline supplies are purchased in their entirety by those on the cocaine search. This too will continue to be a large obstacle, as the waters of the Colombian Pacific are used as transit ways for this illegal substance. It is up to the relevant authorities to patrol these waters, thereby creating a penalty and risk for those who choose to partake in the search for cocaine. If they continue to search freely and uninhibited, the possible reward is far too great to pass up.

It has been supported with evidence that Brisas del Mar is a social business that has provided employment and income to its marginalized population. El Achanti has provided a source of sales for this organization to carry on in its profitable direction, serving as a wholesale customer for their product, in addition to the provision of further support in management and marketing. Though the difficulties they face are many, these too can be overcome. As El Achanti continues to grow in its operations, those of Brisas del Mar will follow in suite. The product offered is innovative and unique and, as El Achanti has proven, does

have demand. There is a great potential for this job creation and income generation strategy to reach more and more members of these coastal societies as this model can be replicated and diversified to serve the needs of the greater coastal Chocó. When an adequate attempt is made to secure the capital needed to acquire a motorboat, and/or the ability to purchase fish supplies for themselves, they will be able to use their current infrastructure to further exploit the consumer demand that has been made apparent. This independence will make the plethora of obstacles much easier to overcome, therefore making their future desires more attainable.

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