

Professional Activities

At the end of 2007 PAC Partners and Associates organized a Presidential Panel and Professional Workshop at the 106th annual American Anthropological Association (AAA) Meetings in Washington, DC. Dr. Eva Friedlander and Dr. Beverlee Bruce organized a Presidential Panel titled *Anthropologists in the Global Arena: Dialogues for Change*. In addition, Dr. Friedlander organized a Professional Workshop, co-sponsored by the National Association of Practicing Anthropologists (APA), *Working with the UN: How to Become Engaged*, along with Dr. Pamela Punttenney of Environmental and Human Systems Management and Paul Nuti, until recently External Relations Officer of the American Anthropological Association.

The Presidential Panel featured four panelists who have worked with multilateral agencies as scholar activists, reflecting on their efforts to work together with policy makers and planners to frame sustainable interventions. The presentations led to lively discussion with the audience and between the panelists.

Dr. Mariana Ferreira from San Francisco State University and three of her students addressed the state of international human rights law in the United States with a dramatic reading about a Native American on death row. Dr. Barbara Rose Johnston from the Center for Political Ecology followed, focusing on the intersection of human rights and environmental issues. She discussed her 20-year involvement in documenting and publicizing the disastrous results of some large-scale development projects and militarism, especially with respect to indigenous peoples. In particular she addressed the issues surrounding the Chixoy Dam built in Guatemala in the 1970's and 80's, funded by the Inter-American and World Banks. Working collaboratively with the affected communities, NGOs and responsible parties resulted ultimately in the establishment of a Guatemala Reparations Negotiations Commission process that provided some remedy for those peoples displaced by the Dam. The joint efforts of the AAA, the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program and the Center demonstrated the importance of such multifaceted documentation and publicity to uncover and address the ethnocide, ecocide and genocide that occurred and that often accompany development efforts.

Securing the Peace, Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Liberia: An Anthropological Perspective by Dr. Beverlee Bruce was the third presentation. It provided a critique of four consultancies in Liberia beginning with a World Bank and UNDP funded social assessment followed by three others with the USAID Office of Transition Initiatives. The first instance led to the publication of "Community Cohesion in Liberia: A Post-War Rapid Assessment" that outlined the approaches required for the successful outcome of community driven development designed to secure the peace in a post war context and the difficulties of implementation. While efforts to establish a grant-making agency to build schools and clinics and to fund agricultural projects were laudable what finally emerged was a donor-driven development agenda where targets and outcomes took precedence over understanding the significance of local culture. Consequently each of the

consultancies faced difficulties in conveying to the policy makers rural realities, local priorities, challenges of returnee reintegration and the dynamics of conflict resolution at all levels of a post-conflict society, especially at the village level.

Dr. Anis Dani, Social Policy Advisor of the Sustainable Development Network at the World Bank was the fourth presenter, discussing Poverty Social Impact Analysis (PSIA). Utilizing a range of methodological tools that include economic and social analysis, it entails examination of policy interventions and their intended and unintended consequences. His presentation used a Hydropower Project as a case study to illustrate the PSIA's multidimensional approach as it looks at the differential impact of the project on stakeholders, examines negative and positive impacts, and the income and non-income dimensions of the intervention.

The discussion that followed and the wrap-up pointed to the different roles anthropologists can and do play in the formal development process as well as assisting in the redress of human rights that may be violated in that same process. The role of activist scholars in working with local populations to raise awareness about the broader economic, political and legal dimensions of the processes in which they are enmeshed and vulnerable was stressed as a critical professional responsibility.

The Professional Workshop – the second AAA activity - provided information to enable participants to engage with UN processes as effective advocates. Paul Nuti addressed the need for increased AAA participation as well its attendant problems. As examples of the potential for engagement he gave an overview of the four capacities in which he has been involved: 1) as an issues advocate, while an NGO program officer working to establish the International Criminal Court; 2) as a UN Volunteer at a refugee camp in Croatia where he was an election registration supervisor; 3) as a lobbyist for the World Federalist Association to strengthen the US relationship to the UN and 4) as a project partner working with UNDP/Macedonia as an NGO country director.

Dr. Friedlander provided an overview of how the UN is structured and the history of UN/civil society relations beginning with its founding through the Conference Decade of the '90s to the present. Drawing on her own extensive experience working with the UN over several decades, she discussed the opportunities for and constraints on civil society engagement. In doing so she mapped the entry points and activities through which it is possible to engage with the UN and other organizations, networks and coalitions in and around the UN. A final presentation was made by Dr. Hanchett on her experience working with UN agencies in the field on water and sanitation projects.