DRY SOLUTIONS FOR DROUGHT RELIEF:
INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION IN RELIEF DELIVERY IN
CEARÁ, BRAZIL

by

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<tr>
<td>AUMEF</td>
<td>Agency for the Metropolitan Region of Fortaleza, now SEDURB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDEC</td>
<td>State Coordinator for Civil Defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEMINAS</td>
<td>Mining Company of Ceará</td>
</tr>
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<td>COHAB</td>
<td>Ceará State Agency for Housing</td>
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<td>DAER</td>
<td>Department of Highways and Roadways</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMATERCE</td>
<td>Ceará Agency for Technical Assistance and Rural Extension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUNCEME</td>
<td>Meteorological Agency of Ceará</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAC</td>
<td>Community Action Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAI</td>
<td>Group for Inter institutional Articulation</td>
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<td>GESCAP</td>
<td>Special Groups for Aid to Victims of Public Disasters</td>
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<td>NUTEC</td>
<td>Ceará Agency for Industrial Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAPCS</td>
<td>Program for Permanent Actions to Combat the Drought</td>
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<td>PAPP</td>
<td>Support Program for Small Farmers</td>
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<td>REFSA</td>
<td>Railway Service</td>
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<td>SAS</td>
<td>Department of Social Programs</td>
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<td>SOHIDRA</td>
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<td>SUCAM</td>
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ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at how the state of Ceará, Brazil increased the effectiveness of its drought relief program in 1987. The program had traditionally been marred by clientelistic behavior of state and municipal politicians and landowners. However, in 1987 the state went beyond delivering the standard humanitarian relief and hiring a large number of unemployed drought victims to work on public works projects as it had in the past, and attacked the socio-political variables that had consistently distorted the relief delivery.

The Department of Social Programs, in charge of the relief effort, shifted some of the critical decisions regarding relief away from the larger state institutions and municipal elites, and allowed municipal committees which represented various interest groups and classes, and drought victims to select projects and beneficiaries for the employment scheme. The state also expanded the role of agricultural extension agents to include relief administration. In so doing, the state used available field agents to do a job for which they were well suited, professionally and logistically, as they already worked in the state’s most drought stricken areas. In addition to tailoring the projects more closely to local needs, and employing the neediest rural residents, these features also gave rise to accountability and precise project monitoring. Furthermore, creating these new municipal roles enhanced the flow of information regarding the relief program going to and from the central level.

Although decentralized decision making and participation are often considered risky and time consuming, the drought relief program worked well precisely because the state promoted these strategies, which allowed previously excluded or undermined players at the municipal level to take part in shaping relief.

Thesis Supervisor: Judith Tendler
Title: Professor of Political Economy
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Drought in the Northeast is not caused by a lack of rainfall.\(^1\)
Statement made by countless Cearenses

Hunger, poverty and widespread distress that exists for our class is not a result of the drought...\(^2\)
(Campones 1981)

For many rural residents in Ceará, Northeast Brazil, the explanations for the state’s persistent poverty have less to do with the state’s chronic low supply of water, and more to do with factors that thwart attempts to solve the drought problem. Rural residents consider the drought as something beyond their control. They don’t, however, accept the obstacles blocking its alleviation. They believe that the government’s attempts to increase the number of large water storage facilities and water delivery trucks in drought relief programs are futile unless the government prevents large landowners and politicians from “relief skimming”—controlling water storage facilities, and hand-picking the workers for the state’s emergency employment schemes. This thesis shows that the solutions to Ceará’s drought had less to do with the continued construction of water storage facilities or deploying an increased number of water delivery trucks, and more to do with simple institutional changes or “dry” solutions.

Admittedly, the rural, non-coastal region of Ceará (hereafter referred to as “interior”) suffers from inadequate rainfall. On average, it experiences five to ten very dry months each year, during which time even the largest rivers dry up (Hirschman 1963, 14), and four to seven humid months when 95% of the precipitation occurs (Kampen and Krantz in Carvalho 1988, 65). Only about 685 mm of rain fall during the rainy seasons\(^3\) which is adequate for temperate England, but inadequate for regions like tropical Ceará,

\(^1\)A seca no Nordeste não é por causa da falta de chuva.
\(^2\)A fome, a miséria e a calamidade pública que existe na nossa classe, não é causada pela seca...
\(^3\)The annual rainy period extends from January to May.
which experience rapid evaporation (Hirschman 1963). Ceará also experiences severe periodic droughts, during which some municipios receive as little as 1 mm of rainfall in an entire year (IPLANCE 1989, 39). Sometimes, as in the 1979-1983 drought, these extreme conditions extend over several years, offering little respite to facilitate recovery. Occasionally, as in the drought of 1987-1988, the rainfall in the state is enough to make the vegetation green, but not enough to produce a harvest. 

Ceará’s characteristics exacerbate the effect of the drought. It is one of Brazil’s poorest states and has a GDP per capita of US$1,182 (1990), 40% of that of Brazil’s average (IBGE 1990). One third of the state’s population of 6.5 million is rural, with as much as 80% of the rural population earning below the minimum wage (PNAD 1989). Adult literacy in the state is 61%, behind Brazil's average of 81%, and as much as 45% of the state’s economically active population (and most of the rural population) depend on agricultural production as their main source of income (Campos, Khan, and Fraga 1988).

Ceará has a life expectancy rate of 54 years, 10 years less than the national average, (IBGE 1990) and has an infant mortality rate of 65 per 1,000 live births (IBGE 1990), eight higher than the national average (World Bank 1992) and on par with countries such as Guatemala and Kenya. The drought worsens this condition and many rural residents attest to losing one child or more "to the drought."

The high level of dependency on agriculture in the rural area coupled with high rates of unemployment during severe droughts forces rural residents to migrate to the

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4Some say that severe droughts occur once every seven years, while others say once every three years. Hirschman (1963, 13) says once every ten years.

5Throughout the text the term município will be used to denote an administrative district, headed by an elected mayor and elected councilpersons. In Ceará, there are 178 municípios ranging in population from 5,000 to roughly 100,000 in the larger interior municípios (IPLANCE 1989). (Fortaleza is the exception with almost 2 million people). Each município has several surrounding districts, which are further broken down into communities of varying sizes (as few as five families or as many as 200). Municípios are "the only unit of local government in Brazil which generally contain both an urban and rural area (Ferguson 1990, 1)."

6This is known as the Seca Verde, or the "Green Drought."

7"Rural" in the statistical data refers to any area other than the capital city, Fortaleza, and the urban centers in the interior. For the most part in this thesis however, "rural" will be used generally to describe the interior.
larger towns in the interior (sedes),\textsuperscript{8} to Fortaleza and other capital cities in the country. In 1970 Ceará was 53\% urban and by 1990, it was 63\% urban (IPLANCE 1989).\textsuperscript{9} Between 1970 and 1980 the sedes and Fortaleza grew 5.0\% and 4.3\% per annum respectively\textsuperscript{10}

Towards the end of the five-year drought in 1983, 300,000 victims entered Fortaleza (Flichman 1977) contributing to the 600,000 social and economic "outcasts" in Fortaleza, double the number of the previous year (Foweraker 1982).\textsuperscript{11}

Since 1906\textsuperscript{12} the Federal government has funded emergency relief programs to provide humanitarian assistance to drought victims, (namely water for human consumption, and food supplies), and to create emergency employment programs so that victims could earn roughly the minimum wage while carrying out public works projects (water facility construction and highway maintenance).\textsuperscript{13} In 1983 the Federal Government allocated US$351,895 million\textsuperscript{14} for drought relief efforts to the entire Northeast region whose states experience conditions similar to that of Ceará.

Relief delivery however, has experienced many problems. First, much of the money destined for drought relief ended up in the hands of local landowners and politicians once it reached the municípios and ended up being used for non drought-related projects. Second, many of the jobs in the employment scheme went to individuals

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{8}From now on, the word sede will be used to denote the administrative center of each município. State statistics consider this part of the município "urban" when it makes a rural/urban distinction in population figures.
\item \textsuperscript{9}Officials gave the impression that the migration rate was much higher, but it is possible that these figures do not account for people who migrate temporarily when the drought is at its worst. Furthermore, these figures do not account for the fact that many drought victims migrate to cities outside of Ceará.
\item \textsuperscript{10}Other Northeast states show lower urban interior growth figures between 1970 and 1980. Piauí experienced 4.6\% growth per annum in its urban interior, and Pernambuco, 3.9\%. In terms of capital cities experiencing growth, Fortaleza was second to Teresina in Piauí (6.5\%) and greater than Recife in Pernambuco (1.2\%)(Carvalho 1988, 175). Brazil as a whole shows an urban growth rate of 3.4\%, and Mexico, 2.9\% between 1980 and 1990 (World Bank 1992). These figure do not accurately represent residents who migrate solely for the duration of the droughts.
\item \textsuperscript{11}This is not unlike the general profile of the Northeast. While in 1872 the Northeast population constituted almost 50\% of Brazil's population, by 1980 the Northeast population comprised only 29\% of Brazil's population (Carvalho 1988, 14).
\item \textsuperscript{12}For more information about the history of relief see Carvalho (1988) and Magalhães (1991).
\item \textsuperscript{13}See Thomas (1986) for a discussion of public works employment for humanitarian relief, and Clay (1986) for an overview of the employment component of Food for Work programs.
\item \textsuperscript{14}In 1987 US$. The figure was Cr$1,558,592 million in 1984 Cr$. The consumer index for 1984 was .0116, and the consumer index for 1987 was .2569. Cr$1000=Cz$1. The average conversion rate in 1987-1988 was US$1=Cz$98.09.
\end{itemize}
hand-picked by municipal landowners and politicians. Third, many of the projects that the workers in the employment schemes undertook were more appropriate for large landowners who individually owned more than ten hectares of land but constituted only constituted about one third of all farmers in Ceará (IBGE 1990).15

However, according to rural residents, in 1987 Ceará overcame many of the problems that had plagued relief delivery for decades. It did so in spite of being a poor, less developed state where large landowners and elite industrialists dominated the state's development, and where much municipal political action based itself on clientelistic motives16 (Ferguson 1990, 5), and in spite of receiving less annual funding than it had in the previous drought relief program.17 Since many public administrators in developing nations attribute the failure of government programs to a lack of financial resources, and to manipulative politicians and elites, the ways in which the government of Ceará circumvented these problems provides important lessons.

Like previous administrations, the 1987 administration believed that the drought was not only an agricultural and meteorological phenomenon, but also a social, political and economic one (Magalhães 1991, 36). The difference, however, was that none of the previous administrations had ever articulated this institutionally as the 1987 administration did. Therefore, although the special aims of the 1987 program were essentially the same as always (providing the standard humanitarian relief and creating an employment scheme under which workers engaged in projects ranging from the construction of small wells to road maintenance) the new institutional approach made a great difference to the quality of relief. It even compensated for the fact that the state

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15 Tendler (1982b) explains how elites interfere with public sector programs.

16 For example, "Clientelistic mayors customarily distribute(ed) local public works contracts as patronage, fill(ed) city halls with relatives, friends, and political allies, and (left) heavy debt, disorganized administrative systems, and broken equipment to their successors...Clientelistic politicians (kept) people isolated, refusing to deal with groups that might compete for their power. Few organizations (existed) in most small and medium-sized municipalities. Thus, clientelism (discouraged) the organization and collective action necessary for many types of local development (Ferguson 1990, 5).

17 According to state officials.
reduced employment in the scheme to representatives of 40% (235,000)\textsuperscript{18} of the 600,000 drought-stricken families (Magalhães 1991, 34,65), down from almost 100% in the previous drought of 1983.\textsuperscript{19} The major institutional differences between the 1987 drought relief program and that of pre-1987 are summarized below.

First, instead of implementing the relief program via the Departments of Agriculture and Water, the government assigned the program to the Department of Social Programs, which had supervisory responsibility of the State Coordinator of Civil Defense (the agency that deals with emergencies).\textsuperscript{20} That department also temporarily adopted various drought-associated state agencies for the emergency, and paid closer attention to the welfare aspects of the drought.

Second, the state created a program that not only encouraged formal project supervision, but also gave rise to natural checks and balances throughout the planning and implementation process through the following means:

a) The state allowed rural residents, for the first time, to participate actively in the planning stages of the relief program. The state encouraged them to select the projects that they wanted to work on and to select from among themselves the people who most needed employment.

b) The state created committees, or Community Action Groups (GACs, Grupos de Ação Comunitária) in most drought stricken municípios for the specific purpose of monitoring and coordinating the 1987-1988 drought program at the municipal level. The 12 volunteers in each committee represented various interest groups and income levels and acted as liaisons for the Department of Social Programs based in the capital city, Fortaleza.

\textsuperscript{18}This number is as much as half the number of workers assisted by USAID in the 1984 Food for Work Program in the entire India (Thomas 1986, 11).

\textsuperscript{19}People said that in comparison with the later drought relief program of 1987, the state employed more people than in the 1979-1983 period. In 1983, 3 million people were employed for the entire Northeast, whereas in 1987, only 1 million were employed (Magalhães 1991, 65).

\textsuperscript{20}From a conversation with a state official.
c) The state strengthened the role of agricultural extension agents in drought relief, utilizing their experience in the field as a vital resource.

This thesis will explain how these institutional changes had an impact on relief delivery in Ceará, Brazil.

METHODOLOGY

The research for this thesis was conducted over a three month period, from June to August 1992. I spent the first month in the capital, Fortaleza, to gain an understanding of the structure of the program from state officials. I spent the remaining two months in two municípios, Iguatu and Tauá, and traveling throughout the interior of Ceará, making brief stops along the way to meet with local officials and visit sites and buildings that had been constructed under the 1987 drought relief program and speaking with agricultural extension agents, GAC members, and farmers and their families.

I selected the two main municípios, Iguatu and Tauá as my cases for the following reasons:

a) I chose two municípios that officials had identified as "successes," since this study examined the program’s accomplishments and what state officials had "done right" in designing the program. They came closest to exemplifying the aims of the drought program. State-level officials and civil servants also noted the two GAC leaders there as outstanding, and critical to the program’s success.

b) Relative to other municípios they were similar in population size, falling in the mid-size range of municípios. Tauá has population of 51,326, and Iguatu, 75,662 (IBGE 1991).

c) Both municípios received rainfall below the average for the region; Tauá was one of the hardest hit municípios in the entire state in 1987.

Information for the paper was gathered from close to 100 respondents ranging from farmers, to state employees and government officials. The literature I surveyed
comprised government documents and books on Ceará and the drought, in addition to the more general development literature.

Like the administrators of the 1987 relief program (SEPLAN 1989, 35) I found that there were limited published details of pre-1987 relief programs; in such cases I relied on respondents. However, one of the major difficulties in the research stemmed from the fact that the 1987 drought occurred over four years ago, a short period in history books, yet a long period for those trying to remember the details, particularly since, in their estimation, severe droughts are so frequent. The majority of respondents said at various points during the course of the interviews that they simply could not remember the details.

As a result of all this, it was sometimes difficult for me to distinguish the official guidelines from what actually took place in the drought relief program. For example, there were people who argued that both past programs and the 1987 program paid workers one minimum wage and those who argued that they both, or one but not the other, paid half a minimum wage. (The discrepancy perhaps also points to a difference between the programs' intentions and the actual circumstances.) In general few were able to detail exactly how the programs were supposed to be run.

I feel that retrospect and nostalgia on the part of respondents interfered somewhat with the retrieval of critical details of the 1987 program. Many people gave their overall and positive impressions of the 1987 program in comparison with other programs, and sometimes confused the finer details of both programs. However, by cross referencing and repeating the same questions to various respondents, I got substantial data.

As a sociologist, I feel very strongly about observations. But I obviously could not observe the events of 1987 and relied heavily on people's own interpretations of the drought of 1987. In some instances I have drawn on observations from the 1990 and current 1992-93 drought relief program and the current work of extension agents to explain various points.
The remaining chapters of this thesis elaborate on these key points and show how the state changed the drought relief program of 1987-1988 and tempered the drought conditions in the interior by focusing considerably more attention on the previous obstacles of relief, and on the social welfare issues of poor residents in the interior. Chapters two and three will look at the pre-1987 and 1987 drought relief programs, and chapters four, five, and six, will look at victim participation at the stricken community level, GAC involvement at the municipal level, and EMATERCE activity throughout the municípios, including the communities.
CHAPTER TWO
DROUGHT RELIEF IN CEARÁ PRIOR TO 1987:
CENTRALIZED ADMINISTRATION, WIDESPREAD PROBLEMS

Here I will present a profile of Ceará’s drought condition and show how relief programs prior to 1987 fared, before explaining in the following chapter how the 1987 drought relief program constituted a great improvement in Ceará’s relief efforts.

Droughts and their Implications for Ceará

Droughts are different from other types of natural disasters like hurricanes and floods. First, droughts take months or even longer to develop their full effect on agriculture and nutrition. As emergencies go, droughts present substantial warning allowing authorities the "luxury" of anticipating and planning ahead. Government authorities can construct water facilities such as dams, irrigation and wells, they can encourage the production of xerophilous (drought resistant) plants\(^1\) and animals that can withstand the dry conditions.

The second difference is that droughts are prolonged.\(^2\) This means that for an extended length of time droughts affect people’s activities. As with any prolonged crisis, droughts often take their psychological toll on people.\(^3\) In the case of Ceará frustration often results in migration to larger cities in search of employment. Many families in the interior have family members living in major cities in and outside of the state.

Third, droughts disproportionately affect the poorer, subsistence agriculture families who do not have permanent structures for storing water, have less access to

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\(^1\)For example, the Ceará government has encouraged the growth of the mocó cotton tree, carnauba palm, oiticica palm, caroç cactus, and palma forrageira, a cactus (Hirschman 1963, 17).
\(^2\)In the case of Ceará, there was a five-year drought period, lasting from 1979-1983.
\(^3\)Viewpoint of a victim and coordinators of local relief efforts. I also learned this in conversations with families who were either in families that had "lost" family members to the cities or knew people who were left behind.
irrigation and who do not usually produce drought resistant crops. Furthermore, the poor are in a worse position to affect state intervention and policy regarding drought relief.

What are the implications of droughts in a state like Ceará for the approach that the government should take towards droughts? The state of Ceará focused on, first, ensuring long term benefits through the construction of water and other facilities; second, on designing projects from which the poor could benefit; third, on providing rural residents with subsistence wages to reduce the level of migration.

**Drought relief prior to 1987**

Ceará received funding from the Federal Government once it declared an emergency. The funding provided humanitarian relief, water and food, and employed drought victims to work in employment schemes and earn subsistence wages. The Department of Agriculture, and the Special Groups for Aid to Victims of Public Disasters (*Grupos Especiais de Socorro as Vítimas de Calamidades Públicas* GESCAP), an agency within the department, oversaw the projects in *municípios* and channeled money to the *municípios* for projects and wages (Campones 1981). The Agency for Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (*Empresa de Assistência Técnica e Extensão Rural*, EMATERCE), also in the Department of Agriculture, worked with GESCAP, providing technical assistance for the projects.

For the most part, as in the case of the five-year drought from 1979-1983, workers in the employment scheme prepared large private land for the upcoming agricultural season, and constructed large dams, also on private property. In exchange for providing free labor, the state required landowners to give the poor access to the dams (Carvalho 1988, 11).

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5This agency comprised agronomists, nutritionists and social workers stationed in the field.
Stories From the Field--Flaws in Program Execution.

Many factors reduced the effectiveness of the relief projects and employment schemes. Some of the more commonly cited factors and their effects are explained below.

Relief benefited the elites in the long run

Although the government intended for the poor to benefit from the projects, this was not entirely the case. For example, when the government tried to encourage small and medium sized landowners to participate by giving them relatively more assistance, large landowners simply divided their land in order to qualify for the financial assistance (Carvalho 1988, 254). Furthermore, once the dams were built, owners often denied access to workers who had built them as well as to the neighboring communities.

At the end of the drought, large landowners benefited from both the dams and the land clearance projects, and from the cheap labor that the program afforded them (Grupo 1959).5 Complaining about the government’s decision to rely on landowners and build on private land, one farmer said, "Logic would show that these facilities could never have been for the public. How could you ever have public facilities on private property?" (Campones 1981, 4). Another drought victim noted,

...these projects serve to make the people who are already rich, richer...the rich get free labor to do whatever they please on their properties. They can do whatever they want with the people employed during the emergencies (Campones 1981, 5).

Relief emphasized the traditional patron-client relationship

The large scale projects in the pre-1987 programs often required workers to live away from home and their immediate communities. Because of this, they spent most of their salary paying landowners for lodging and food that they bought on the property. Landowners established dry goods stores and took on the role of suppliers, or fornecedores, selling basic food items at inflated prices--almost 40% above normal

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5Many public works programs raise the value of the land on which projects are done, benefiting those owning the land to a greater extent than the landless (Clay 1986).
When the GESCAP agent paid farmers as many as 25 days late the farmers ended up giving all their wages to the fornecedores (Campones 1981, 5) to cover accumulated debt. This situation forced harsher conditions on many of the workers who also had to support their families at home, perpetuating the level of dependency on landowners that farmers had traditionally experienced, limiting the number of alternatives for the poor, and raising, in this author's view, the level of vulnerability.8

Inadequate supervision of landowners, funds, and workers.

Interview respondents said that they knew of cases in which landowners gained control over emergency funding allocated for salaries.9 For example, they would list 100 workers even when they really only had 30 workers and appropriate the wages of the 70 “ghost” workers. To the same effect, they would list family members as employees. In both cases, the landowner hoarded the funding and used the money, "to build their mansions in the city."10

When selecting workers for projects, landowners often selected farmers according to their political affiliation, employing workers in exchange for political support either for themselves or their political colleagues. A farmer described the highly unequal relationship between the landowners, politicians and workers as follows:

The job positions that GESCAP authorized came through the hands of (local) politicians, and in order to gain employment, workers had to appeal to the landowners who were intermediaries, and who were, many times the politicians themselves.

Those same landowners wanted facilities built on their land. Instead of the case being that the workers went looking for work, it was the landowners who supplied the land, went to the politicians and got the job slots to do the projects, or whatever they wanted to do on their land, and went to GESCAP and registered their workers. Then the workers did whatever the landowner wanted them to do on his land.

...If someone who wasn’t a prominent landowner went to GESCAP to get slots, they would send him to speak with the politicians, and simply ignore him. Everything went via the politicians or landowners. And the povo (people) accepted this as though they (the landowners) were doing them a big favor(Campones 1981).

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7Campones says that while the regular price for 1 kg of rice was CrS80, the fornecedores charged CrS110.
8For an analysis of vulnerability and disaster, see Anderson and Woodrow (1989). Also see Chambers (1986) who argues that vulnerability exacerbates poverty.
9Clay (1986) notes that the likelihood of misappropriation is greater in wide scale projects than in smaller schemes.
10Many people had stories about private buildings that were constructed with federal funding during the emergency.
Powerful municipal landowners and politicians undermined field agents

Farmers argue that GESCAP workers were in league with landowners and politicians. Supposedly, with GESCAP as mouthpieces, politicians could make decisions that disfavored constituents without jeopardizing their votes and public image (Campones 1981). In some cases, landowners got GESCAP to pay workers for doing only half the work and not to complete the work. GESCAP would then report to the state that workers could not complete a project because of insufficient funds and apply for further funding to complete the project (personal interview with extension agent).

However, a field agent speaking on behalf of both GESCAP and EMATERCE agents in an attempt to explain the apparent “partnership” between agents and landowners said,

Our hands were tied, and our roles as professionals taken away from us. It was very hard for us to report corruption in the rural area to officials in Fortaleza since there were strong links between rural and urban politicians and elites.

These powerful urban politicians, commonly referred to as coronéis (singular, coronel), themselves often undermined decisions made by drought relief administrators and technical civil servants in charge of drought relief in the field. For example, during the 1979-1983 drought when a GESCAP agent tried to discourage the construction of a water facility on the land of a particular landowner (because the dam would serve more people were it built elsewhere during the five-year drought) a coronel, an acquaintance of the landowner, transferred the GESCAP agent for having attempted to influence the decision.

Elites however, were not the only ones who had learned to manipulate the program. Some relief workers also knew how to take advantage of the program. The 1979-1983 drought relief program apparently hired a large proportion of victims\textsuperscript{11}--as much as 100% employment in some areas. This "opportunity" of unlimited employment led to many cases of absenteeism as people took for granted that the state would pay them

\textsuperscript{11}I say "apparently" because I wasn't able to get the exact figures. Some people said that there was less than 100% employment while others said that in some towns there was 100% employment.
all, irrespective of performance. One respondent noted that as long as a farmer showed up for a few days out of a week he would receive his full wages.\textsuperscript{12}

The state did not fulfill its aims in providing relief and many of the projects did not serve the poor in the short or long run. This was due to a lack of accountability both at the state and municipal level and limited supervision to ensure that workers completed their work, got paid, and benefited from the projects. For this reason, drought relief programs were ineffective, resulting in poor nutrition and starvation, and migration out of the region.

In 1987, a change in political leadership, a growing trend toward democratization and a desire and commitment on the part of political leaders towards solving the problems of the rural poor enabled the state to attack some of the social, political and economic obstacles that hindered relief efforts. The following chapter looks at the 1987 drought relief program and its institutional adjustments.

\textsuperscript{12} Whereas this may seem to contradict the story above, it is important to note that circumstances varied across municipípios and communities.
CHAPTER THREE

PAPCS. THE 1987-1988 DROUGHT RELIEF PROGRAM

Tasso Ribeiro Jereissati became Governor of Ceará in 1986, marking the end to years of authoritarian leadership. Amidst a flurry of propaganda proclaiming great mudanças (transformations) he announced that the administration would sharpen its approach toward Ceará's interior in order to alleviate the poor conditions resulting from the drought, such that the rural poor would not starve or have to migrate to the capital city, Fortaleza.

On May 29, 1987, during his first year of administration, the severity of Ceará's drought reached emergency proportions. The governor reported the emergency to the Federal Government (Telés 1988) who responded by giving Ceará US$48,302,579 for emergency drought relief which officials said was less than the state had received in the previous drought program. Over the course of the year-long drought the state government supplemented this with US$13,406,055 (Campos 1988, 17) and emergency funding totaled US$61,715,618, the largest sum that any Northeastern state spent on drought relief that year. Although ten states declared emergencies, Ceará utilized as much as a third of the total amount spent on relief in the entire Northeast that year, US$195,967,438 (Magalhães 1991, 67).

Governor Jereissati immediately applied the funding to a one-year drought relief program, PAPCS (Programa de Ações Permanentes de Combate às Sècas, Program for

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1Almost 100% of my respondents, when asked about the significance of Jereissati's administration, used this word.
2The figures stated are in 1987/1988 dollars. The conversion rate for that period was US$1=Cz$98.09 (Magalhães 1991, 67).
3Although I do not know the exact amount of money that the Federal Government gave to Ceará in the drought of 1983, state officials noted that federal funding to Ceará was considerably less in 1987 than it had been in 1983. This seems plausible, given that combined federal and state funding in 1987 (US$195,967,438) was 45% less than 1983 federal funding (US$351,895,589).
4See Magalhães (1991) for a complete table with Northeast drought relief funding.
5Minas Gerais, although not a Northeastern state, also received funding because a section of the state experiences severe drought conditions.
Permanent Actions to Combat the Drought. Apart from providing immediate humanitarian relief (water, food supplies, and milk to mothers and children), PAPCS, like past relief programs, created employment and work projects for the newly unemployed.

Of the highest funded Northeast states, Ceará spent the highest proportion of its emergency aid, 80%, on labor (Magalhães 1991, 67), with two other states, Pernambuco and Paraíba spending 55% and 65% respectively. At the peak of the relief program, Ceará employed 235,487 people, 32% of all rural workers in Ceará (Magalhães 1991), and 40% of the families that the authorities had identified as drought victims (Magalhães 1991, 34,65). Although Ceará spent a relatively large portion of its funding on employment, the level of funding determined that the state could not hire as many people as it had previously (SEPLAN 1989, 9). Rather than maintain the same number of workers as in 1983 the state reduced the number of workers so that unlike the previous administration a) it could afford to index wages according to inflation (Magalhães 1991, 66; SEPLAN 1989, 10) and b) it could present employment as a privilege, rather than a guarantee, inciting workers to perform well.

The projects that PAPCS funded covered a wide range. Table 1 shows a list of the projects.

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6Worldwide USAID-led Food for Work Programs spend a maximum of 77%, and an average of 52% of total expenditures on labor (Thomas 1986, 26). Employment Guarantee Schemes that focus on water development projects (well, tanks, irrigation channels) tend to use the highest percentage (80%) of funding on labor, as opposed to road construction, for example, which spends up to 45% on non-labor costs (Costa, 1978; D'Silva, 1983).

7Campos (1988, 10) says the state employed 232,039 rural workers.

8Ceará along with Pernambuco, hired the highest proportion of rural workers among the states with the highest number of rural workers (Magalhães 1991, 65).

9Brazil has for the past decade experienced a high rate of inflation. Between 1980 and 1990 Brazil had the fourth highest inflation rate in the world (284% per annum), behind Nicaragua, Argentina and Bolivia (World Bank 1992).

10The reduced level of employment was indicative of the entire Northeast which employed only one third (1,039,061) the number hired in 1983 (Magalhães 1991, 30, 65).
Table 1.
1987-1988 Projects. (Construction and Maintenance)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Water Storage Facilities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisterns</td>
<td>8,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wells</td>
<td>9,303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dams and River Dams</td>
<td>1,234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>19,226 units</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Facilities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Small Scale Infrastructure</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigation canals</td>
<td>9,578 meters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Irrigated area</td>
<td>4,077 hectares)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Gardens</td>
<td>573 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land prepared for agricultural production</td>
<td>79,693 hectares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highway and Drain Maintenance</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gullies/Drains</td>
<td>651 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Passage</td>
<td>11,514 meters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highways</td>
<td>2,640 kilometers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Planning and Coordination-Department of Special Programs (Magalhães 1991, 43)\(^{13}\)

Ceará aimed to increase the effectiveness of PAPCS despite the reduced funding. The state strove to create an institutional framework that would increase accountability and eliminate the leakage of funds at the local level. The state also decided to direct the funding towards projects that would serve drought victims in the long run and projects

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\(^{11}\)24 warehouses, 101 community centers, 58 production houses for cassava, 1,149 housing structures, 647 toilets, 60 schoolhouse, 18 health posts, 145 agricultural posts (Campos 1988).

\(^{12}\)These are small concrete bridges built over small rivers. The design is such that pedestrians and vehicles can pass over it, but that channels of water can pass through it to prevent flooding.

\(^{13}\)Campos (1988, 12,15) reports slightly lower figures for construction and recuperation and shows where, in April 1988 25% of the projects were still in the process of construction.
that the drought-afflicted population needed most. In this paper, I will show how the state carried out these intentions.

The Institutional Framework

The Schematic Structure of PAPCS (Magalhães 1991, 37)

A. Council of Secretaries: This council comprised secretaries from the Departments of Social Action, Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, Planning and Coordination, Industry and Commerce, Water Works, Transportation, Energy, Communication and Works, Urban Development and the Environment, Health, Education, Public Security, Justice and State, the Coordinator for Civil Defense and the governor. The group represented the state level policy making body for drought relief and set the guidelines for PAPCS.

B. The Department of Social Program (SAS), and The State Coordinator for Civil Defense (CEDEC): Coordinator of PAPCS. Centralized the relevant data and conducts exploratory field missions. CEDEC (formerly GESCAP) falls under SAS having transferred from the Ministry of Agriculture. SAS “adopted” EMATERCE from the Department of Agriculture, to assist with relief delivery.

C. Department of Planning and Coordination (SEPLAN): In charge of physical and financial planning and coordination of GAI (described below), the inter institutional body.

D. Group for Inter institutional Articulation (GAI): A group of civil servants and extension agents from the following state organs:

- SAS The Department of Social Programs
- SUCAM (Superintendência de Campanha de Saúde Pública, Agency for Public Health Campaigns)
- NUTEC (Fundação Núcleo de Tecnologia Industrial do Ceará, Agency for Industrial Technology of Ceará)
REFSA (Rede Ferroviária S.A., Railway Service)
COHAB (Companhia de Habitação do Estado de Ceará, Ceará State Agency for Housing)
AUMEF (Autarquia da Região Metropolitana de Fortaleza, Center for the Metropolitan Region of Fortaleza)¹⁴
CEMINAS (Companhia Cearense de Mineração, Mining Company of Ceará),
DAER (Departamento Autônomo de Estradas e Rodagens, Department of Highways and Roadways)
SOHIDRA (Secretaria de Obras Hidricas, Department for Water Resources)
EMATERCE (Empresa de Assistência Técnica e Extensão Rural do Ceará, Agency for Technical Assistance and Rural Extension in Ceará).
These agencies provided technical and logistic support for drought relief projects in the communities.

E. Executing Departments: The departments responsible for GAI personnel.
SUCAM
REFSA
Industry and Commerce (CEMINAS and NUTEC)
Urban Development and Environment (COHAB)
Water Resources (SOHIDRA)
Transportation, Energy, Communication and Works (DAER)
Agriculture and Agrarian Reform
Social Action
Health

F. Community Action Group, (GAC): A 12 member temporary organization created exclusively for the purpose of the 1987-1988 drought. 170 (drought stricken) municipalities formed GACs. The group's volunteer members represented their various interest groups. The standard GAC comprised:
3 representatives from various communities
1 executive member of the town hall
1 legislative member of the town hall
1 representative from the rural workers union
1 representative from the church
1 representative from the service clubs
1 representative from the landowners union
1 representative from the Department of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (an EMATERCE worker).
1 representative from the municipal Department of Education
1 representative from the municipal Department of Health

G. Target Population: Drought stricken and for the most part unemployed communities.

The Steps Leading to the Execution of Projects
(Campos 1988, Interviews)

Step 1. The Council of Secretaries outlined the aims of PAPCS and established the types of projects that workers in the emergency employment scheme would undertake.
The projects followed a general criteria, slightly different from that of past programs:
First, for the most part, the state restricted projects to public land or small private farms, (under 50 hectares) as opposed to using land belonging to large landowners
(Campos, Khan, and Fraga 1988, 11; Magalhães 1991, 35). In the case of a number of

¹⁴This agency is now SEDURB (Superintendência de Desenvolvimento Urbano do Estado do Ceará, Urban Development Agency for the State of Ceará).
brick making projects however, workers used private land. However, unlike past relief programs in which landowners denied workers access to the projects on private property, relief administrators arranged to transport the bricks from the private property to where they were needed (to build houses and community centers) immediately following production. Owners could not restrict workers' access to the final product. Shifting permanent projects away from large private land holdings was a major break from previous programs.

Second, the council favored labor intensive projects only where there were high concentrations of unemployed workers in the area. One such project was in Canindé, the Catholic "mecca" for northern Ceará, where the state decided to build a large outdoor religious amphitheater to seat hundreds of people. It was one of the few large scale projects in the program, but the type that the region needed since many people had already migrated to the sede of Canindé by the time PAPCS began.

Third, the state chose not to undertake projects that forced workers to travel long distances. For one of the farmers I spoke to in Tauá this represented the most significant difference between the drought relief program of 1979-1983 and that of 1987 as living away from home had been the most burdensome aspect of past relief programs.

Fourth, the state also encouraged people to select smaller projects, such as small wells and community buildings, that related closely to the needs of their own communities rather than the needs of large landowners and politicians. One worker noted that this was such a dramatic shift from other relief programs, that when he joined a brick making team of workers, he did so just assuming that the bricks were going to be used by a large landowner or sent to Fortaleza. It came as a shock to him to realize that the bricks were going to be used by other workers in the community to build a multi-purpose community center which would house a crèche and community activities.

Finally, PAPCS wanted residents in drought prone areas to benefit from projects in the long run. The government encouraged small farmers to prepare their own land
rather than that of large landowners, for the planting season. A very active rural workers
union leader said that although the time that the government paid farmers to work in their
own fields could have been longer, this innovation was one of the best features of the
program. Due to this innovation, he noted, the following harvest produced better results
than he had seen in the past ten years.

Step 2. CEDEC, with assistance from EMATERCE, and FUNCEME (Fundação
Cearense de Meteorologia, The Meteorological Agency of Ceará), used meteorological
data and information from the field to select the most drought-stricken municípios. They
selected 94%, or 171 municípios in the state (Magalhães 1991, 69).15

Step 3. Mayors in the selected municípios estimated the number of severely affected
families and passed the information on to the Council of Secretaries in Fortaleza. They
did this with the assistance of EMATERCE.

Step 4. The Council of Secretaries weighed municípios against others statewide and
estimated the maximum number of beneficiaries that each município could select.

Step 5. At the same time, at the community level, drought stricken communities (the
target population), some with as few as five families and others with as many as 200,
assembled to select the neediest families amongst themselves to receive employment by
the state. They went down the list of families, discussed each case and voted for each one
with a show of hands. They based their selection on the criteria set by the state. The
criteria were that the hardest hit agricultural families could receive work and a maximum
of one person per household (generally the male head of the household) could be
employed. The communities also selected the projects (for example cisterns, wells,
brick-making, small gardens) on which they wanted the people employed by the program

15 Seven of these municípios only had small projects led by SUCAM.
to work. The ways in which community participation affected the outcome of PAPCS are explained in the following chapter.

**Step 6. The GACs**, the municipal committees which oversaw drought relief delivery in communities across the *município*, registered the names of the families selected by the communities, according to the limit and criteria set by the Council of Secretaries. They weighed the communities against other communities, short-listed the workers to correspond with the number set by the state, and streamlined the list of project demands before passing information on to CEDEC/SAS and the Executing Departments.

Sometimes the GACs restricted employment in a given community to as little as 20%; sometimes it was as much as 100%. Because the GACs formed such a crucial component of PAPCS I will devote a later chapter to a discussion of these groups.

**Step 7. The Executing Departments** analyzed the selection of projects with CEDEC, weighing them against the general aims of the program.

**Step 8. The Council of Secretaries** examined and approved the list of projects.

**Step 9. The Executing Department** assigned the approved projects and communities to various agencies and field agents. As the following table shows, EMATERCE managed the widest range of projects. The influence of EMATERCE on PAPCS is outlined in a later chapter.
Table 2

Departments/Agencies that managed the projects in PAPCS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXECUTING STATE AGENCY</th>
<th>TYPE OF PROJECT UNDERTAKEN BY AGENCY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF MUNICIPIOS THAT EACH AGENCY WORKED IN</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED BY EACH AGENCY</th>
<th>% OF TOTAL WORKERS EMPLOYED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dep't of. Social Programs</td>
<td>Community Buildings SUCAM</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUCAM</td>
<td>Pest Control</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUTEC</td>
<td>Water Sources (Small wells etc.)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1,015</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFSA</td>
<td>Railway improvement</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1,366</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COHAB, AUMEF</td>
<td>Sewerage, Housing, Paving</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1,379</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOHIDRA</td>
<td>Dams, Irrigation, Water Source</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4,413</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dep't of. Health</td>
<td>Health Agents</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>6,350</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEMINAS</td>
<td>Whitewash, Masonry, Brickwork, Mineral Extraction, Community Buildings</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>39,910</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAER</td>
<td>Road Improvement Water Sources</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>74,504</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMATERCE</td>
<td>Agriculture Posts, Irrigation, Vegetable Gardens, Plowing, Small River Dams, Other Dams, Storage Facilities, Schools, Wells</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>101,767</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>232,039</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Social Programs 1988

Over 90% of all employment generated by these programs were in the infrastructure or physical improvement projects. However, in addition to infrastructure projects, the state also implemented service provision components (although these will not be discussed in depth in this paper). For example, a health agent program in which the Department of Health trained over 6,000 community women to be health agents completing over 1 million house calls over the period.\(^\text{16}\) SUCAM (a public health

\(^{16}\)See Freedheim (1993) for a description of this program.
agency) also trained 1000 people to perform pest control services involving building-to-building inspection for disease-carrying insects. The workers made almost half a million visits during the emergency.17

Step 10. Once in the communities, field agents (GAI) noted the names of the workers for each project and undertook the role of managing them. Agents managed workers in various communities who were doing the same type of project or managed single communities doing several types of projects. This depended on the agency’s range of expertise.

The number of people that the program employed varied monthly (as shown in the following table). The program gradually phased in workers starting in June 1987 until employment reached its peak in February 1988, and gradually phased them out starting in March when they returned to their fields to prepare for the following season (the humid months begin with January).18

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Total # of Workers</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 1987</td>
<td>45,652</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>70,447</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>129,734</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>147,415</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>154,922</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>187,338</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>210,181</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1988</td>
<td>224,410</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>232,039</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>230,428</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Social Programs 1988

17 Each building in Ceará, both rural and urban has to be inspected by a SUCAM agent and must be able to show proof of inspection.
18 See SEPLAN (1989) for details of the phase out process.
The field agents paid workers one minimum wage, often with a member of the GAC present to supervise the payment (Campos 1988, 84), and workers signed a receipt. Although the state indexed the wages to inflation (Magalhães 1991, 66) some workers said that they received less than a minimum wage for their work because the adjustment of wages lagged behind inflation. The program paid workers for 6 weeks following project discontinuation to ensure that they had some income to take them into the planting season, during which time they would not yet receive income from agricultural production. For the first two weeks after their release the state paid 75% of workers’ normal pay; the second two weeks, 50%; and the last two weeks 25% (SEPLAN 1989, 44-45).

Commenting on the effects of drought relief, a past secretary of a state department noted,

Immediately before the (relief) program started making its first (employment) payments in 1987 I traveled throughout the interior. It was like a ghost town. I traveled for kilometers without seeing another car, there were no vehicles on the highway. In the municípios there was very little activity. However, two months later (after the relief program was underway) when I traveled to the same area there was a lot of activity and more vehicles on the roads and highways. People were buying things and building. People were using materials (bricks, tiles) being made (under the relief employment program) in the municípios. The resurgence of economic activity was in response to the arrival of relief.

Relief Administration Backed by a Change in Approach

A major difference between the 1987 program and the prior effort was that the Department of Social Programs made a concerted effort to maintain contact with the interior throughout the program’s tenure. At the start of his tenure at the Department of Social Programs and as the director of PAPCS, the new secretary, Dr. José Rosa Abreu Vale, made it a point to travel extensively throughout the interior, a habit that he maintained throughout the entire drought period. Rural residents with whom I spoke said that it was unusual for the senior state government officials involved in drought relief to make such visits, and that they had seldom seen or heard of Secretaries of State traveling
to the interior on official business and showing as much interest in drought relief efforts.\textsuperscript{19}

The secretary also arranged for the GAI workers who had been assigned to work in the field with PAPCS, to take a statewide bus trip to expose them to the interior—a first time trip for many of them. A mid-level civil servant from the Department of Planning who went on the trip said that she had been very enthusiastic about the prospect of traveling to the interior since she had never been there, and that many fellow GAI workers had only \textit{heard} about the drought in the interior before traveling there, even though one only needs to travel three hours away from the city to see the devastating effects of the drought. After the trip, members of GAI understood the context of the interior which enhanced their ability to assign projects and work in the interior.

\textbf{PAPCS centralized information under SAS}

The Department of Social Programs (SAS) became a vital forum at the helm of relief delivery, a forum under which PAPCS centralized and encouraged the exchange of information and expertise coming from as many as ten various agencies and departments (previously listed). The fact that various departments and agencies came together made it easier for the state to quickly obtain basic facts and comparative data needed to get the program off the ground.

Consolidating efforts at the top between the Secretary of the Department of Planning and the Secretary of the Department of Social Programs had another strategic impact. Both secretaries had worked in Brazil’s federal capital prior to taking office and had first hand knowledge of how things were run at the federal level. Therefore when the state needed assistance beyond the boundaries of the formal drought assistance, they were able to make use of their contacts to expedite decisions in Brasilia. For example, utilizing professional contacts that he had made in Brasilia, the secretary of SAS was able to

\textsuperscript{19}There is a certain amount of irony in this since the secretary had spent most of his teenage and adult life overseas and in Brazil’s capital, Brasília, before returning to Ceará right before the drought. In a way he was an "outsider" to Ceará, and more so to its interior.
encourage agencies in Brasilia to fund the delivery of free milk in Ceará during the drought period, a unique and rare feature of drought relief. Initially federal agencies donated milk for one month, but the secretary got the contribution extended to six months. The milk delivery arrangement contributed greatly to the decline of infant mortality in the state during the drought.

PAPCS gave new roles to municipal and community players

Ironically, although centralizing information about field conditions in Ceará was one of the strong points of PAPCS, the institutional innovation of decentralizing supervisory roles and some decision-making to the municipal and community level probably made the greatest difference to drought relief delivery. Because the state had groups in the field monitoring the program and field agents dispersed throughout the state, the Department of Social Programs heard of, and responded to problems and requests in less than two weeks, a considerably shorter turn around period than in previous drought programs.20

Because PAPCS gave new responsibilities to municipal leaders and drought victims, there was a reduction of corruption and manipulation of the program at the municipal level. This is interesting because one might think that relegating supervisory roles to municípios and communities would actually increase the likelihood of corruption or result in problems previously experienced in which elites skimmed relief funds. The following chapters will focus on three new or enhanced roles of the community, the municipal committees (GACs), and EMATERCE, and how these groups managed the program and withstood corruption.

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20 From an interview with several GAC members from the hardest hit region.
CHAPTER FOUR
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: GIVING VICTIMS A SAY.

The innovations of the 1987-1988 drought relief program included the participation of drought victims in one of the key decision-making stages of the program. Once PAPCS had set its general guidelines, it allowed drought communities to decide which projects they would carry out under the relief program and which workers the state would hire for its emergency employment scheme. PAPCS did so in spite of the fact that the drought affected as many as 600,000 families across a state that is seven times as large as Massachusetts, and that the selection of workers had to be narrowed to only 235,000 positions (Magalhães 1991, 34, 65). It also did so in spite of the fact that the program’s success relied on communities’ ability to make decisions quickly so that field agents could gather and feed information to the state in order to mobilized the program in the interior.

Although many critics of participatory programs fear that large-scale participation has the tendency to compromise the effectiveness and timeliness of projects, victim participation in this case increased rural residents’ responsibility toward the program, increased the appropriateness of projects, created natural checks and balances for the program and satisfied more residents. Furthermore, victim participation did not compromise the timely delivery of relief. By allowing victims to participate, the government also raised the credibility of the program, and reduced the propensity for riots, migration and starvation.

PAPCS felt the benefits of community participation were so important that they made community-based decision making a part of their formal guidelines despite the risk of being slow. How did the state manage to provide quality relief while pursuing a "socially correct" yet time consuming tool such as participation? What is it about the manner in which victims were allowed to participate that made relief useful? Also, what
incentives were there for victims to gather as communities to vote on likely recipients, given that sometimes as little as one tenth of a given community could receive assistance and employment because of limited funding?

**Why Did the Participatory Method Work in PAPCS?**

One of the central explanations is that rural residents perceived that state leaders in Ceará were truly committed to increasing the level of involvement of everyday citizens into its development plans.

The literature often assumes that the poor naturally welcome development strategies which allow them to participate in decision making. However, Graham (1991) describes a situation in post authoritarian Chile where people emerging from a state of repression did not welcome the notion of public and institutionalized participation because "many actors (were) participating for the first time" and were still "particularly vulnerable to partisan manipulation." It is not uncommon for the poor to fear or mistrust a post-authoritarian government's encouragement of popular organizations. Therefore, it was important for Ceará's government to convince people that their participation would produce better results, and then to facilitate it. Respondents say that in the 1987 drought relief program, the government used the media and EMATERCE agents to convince the skeptics that rural residents would have an authentic say in the way relief was provided.

In his "Plans for Change" document, Governor Jereissati wrote that "the participation of the society, especially groups benefiting from government actions, would be promoted and respected as an essential element for the feasibility of social objectives (Ceará 1987, 9)." This commitment mirrored that of several key players in PAPCS. For example, the Secretary of the Department of Social Programs, who did comprehensive reading and analysis of past relief programs.¹ The fact that state officials displayed this

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¹The Secretary had previously worked in many social welfare programs and his experience also fed into his professional approach towards PAPCS.
commitment by formally including communities in the delivery process enabled the state to convince people to participate.

There are several other possible factors which led the participatory technique to be functional in Ceará.

The state capitalized on a growing trend

The government of Ceará, through its decision to involve the communities cleverly capitalized on and fostered a movement which was already growing. At the time of the 1987 drought, popular organizations and resident associations had already begun to surface all over the country, each feeding on the reputation of others. Once-clandestine organizations were going public, often with the support of the church and the increasingly powerful unions. In addition, through PAPP (The Support Program for Small Farmers implemented prior to the 1987 drought) people had become more familiar with the notion of publicly organizing behind demands. Many people across the state were frustrated with the old way of doing things, frustrated with getting relief only in exchange for votes, and were looking towards alternate solutions. Respondents state that people were weary of being mere beneficiaries and wanted to influence decisions that the state government made.

By incorporating this participatory component the state drew upon, and indirectly endorsed a current trend that enhanced the drought relief program.

The state imposed limits that made participation less "messy."

Participation worked well and in a timely fashion because the state set limits on the decisions to be made by the communities. In essence, the government was careful to qualify what “participation” meant. The government clearly stated the stage at which the community could make its input, (after the state established its general guidelines),

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2Like that of Vila Centenaria, in the urban periphery of Iguatu. The residents association of Vila Centenaria first met in 1981 having heard about successful “underground” residents associations in São Paulo. Even prior to democratization in 1986, they had begun making demands for small scale infrastructure to the mayor. Some demands had been met, while at other times the police had intervened and physically blocked them from the town hall, where they would make their demands.

3See Tendler (1982a) who explains the various interpretations of “participation.”
and the extent of community input. Although the broader aims of the program limited the potential for powerful landowners and elites to undermine the relief program, the program guidelines were more specific (no projects on private property, small projects, etc.). This reduced the propensity for confusion and misinterpretation at the community level when it came to making decisions.

Several critics however, argued that the project options that the government presented were not necessarily options that communities wanted. For example, many farmers wanted to work on large-scale irrigation systems which would address some of the long term effects of the drought on agriculture, which the government did not make an option, rather than small-scale projects. Also, many insisted on projects that would take longer than the time of the drought to complete and projects that hired farmers for a longer period. The state however, elected to target projects that farmers were likely to complete within the drought period in order to avoid having to pay farmers over an extended period and to avoid wasting resources on unfinished projects. Essentially people participated, not necessarily by selecting what they viewed as the best projects for drought alleviation, but rather by selecting the best projects out of a number of options that the state determined previously.

Affiliates of the unions, the Workers Party and some members of the church opposed the “minimalist” participation program on the grounds that while the participatory component of PAPCS was good, the program did not promote "genuine" decision-making given that a) the state had the ultimate say on how many people would receive employment based on their budget rather on the actual demand, b) the state determined the criteria that communities used to select people for employment and c) the state did not allow communities to select any project, but rather allowed them to choose projects from within a prescribed set of options.

Some Fortaleza-based, university trained social workers and social scientists agreed, arguing that by establishing limits to participation, the state was actually retaining
much of the decision-making control and not allowing participation which would then lead to the program’s improvement. For rural participation to be authentic, it had to be 100% rural and the initiative had to come from within the rural areas. They felt that the government grounded its program on the myth that rural and less educated residents were incapable of making decisions and creating their own criteria for the program.\textsuperscript{4} They scoffed at the argument that the program allowed effective participation.

In response I would argue that the state succeeded in delivery, particularly with regard to speed, precisely because it laid out specific limits and carefully defined participation. By placing a limit on the types of demands, the Department of Social Programs simplified mass participation and helped to maintain the focus of PAPCS. Statewide uniformity in the guidelines and criteria (that is, the state did not customize the limits and criteria to the demands of each community) narrowed down the potential types of requests that went from communities to the \textit{municipio} and then to the state. Therefore, the secretary and other officials in the SAS found it easier to respond to problems coming from the field in a timely fashion. A state representative noted that \textit{municipípios} received responses to demands within 10-21 days of appealing to the state for help as opposed to the month that they sometimes had to wait in previous droughts.

With the limits that the state set, participation was transformed from a tedious, time-consuming process to a functional and highly effective tool for relief delivery. Furthermore it led victims to treat their role in the relief process more seriously, and thereby enhance overall supervision.

\textsuperscript{4}Ugalde (1985) says that many externally created participatory programs are founded on the misconception that a) traditional values hold people back and b) traditional or rural people are not capable of organizing themselves.
How Did Participation Enhance Supervision?

Involvement of victims in decision-making created a sense of responsibility

Participation worked well because it transformed people's roles from merely laborers and recipients of state largess, to active decision-makers who were partially responsible for the results of the program. In Tauá, for example, when the government announced the drought relief program, many drought victims who had already migrated to the urban centers in search of food and water returned to their rural homes immediately to register for the program and to take part in meetings, "with their once-empty bellies filled with anticipation." Respondents stated that the government's display of interest and the expected benefits of employment, food, and water were part of what encouraged them to return home.

Limited jobs lead to greater program vigilance

According to an official in the Department of Social Programs, SAS intentionally announced that the state could not employ everyone. The secretary of SAS went so far as to understate the actual number of jobs allocated for a municipío in order to reinforce the idea of limited resources. By limiting the numbers, while at the same time ensuring a reasonable number of jobs, he hoped that the people would prioritize and select only those with true need. He expected two other benefits: first that people who managed to receive jobs would then have pride in them and take their jobs very seriously; second that those who didn't receive employment would become de-facto monitors and ensure that people who obtained jobs would perform well. This seemed to have worked because in several areas when someone wasn't showing up to work people in the community reported the person to the responsible field agents. By stating falsely low numbers, the

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5Interview with a lay worker from the church in Tauá, August 1992.
6Health officials have applied the same strategy to the selection of health care workers in the state (Freedheim 1993). Only a small percentage of people applying for health agent positions in some communities actually receive employment, but state employers tell those who are not hired that they can replace agents who do not perform well. Because this kind of check is in place, agents are forced to perform better.
secretary left some leeway for communities in dire situations who took the initiative to make special requests to the government for additional help.

Portraying employment opportunities as a "privilege" led to self and group monitoring. Thus inefficiencies like absenteeism and lethargy on the job, which had been associated with the previous employment programs, were drastically reduced. **Group participation created resistance to outside manipulation**

Group decision-making helped to circumvent the manipulation that had taken place in previous relief programs. As a group they vocally expressed that they would not tolerate manipulation by local councilpersons, and subsequently applied social pressure within the group to vote responsibly. Applying social pressure worked since members, for the most part, were homogenous, possessing similar backgrounds, experiencing similar circumstances, and wanting the same results from the program. That is, the group did not include elite farmers who were capable of influencing poor farmers who were dependent upon them for financial support.

Undoubtedly there were some individuals who were reluctant to give up the benefits that they personally received from the manipulation of past relief programs. As one respondent said, "Remember that manipulation goes two ways. It's true that we might be forced to vote for politicians that we don't really like in order to receive basic amenities from politicians and landowners. But they also depend on us to keep them in power. We get them to do things for us in return for our support." However, most people told me that they preferred situations in which they didn't constantly have to enter into individual agreements with elites in order to meet their basic needs,7 and that they voted accordingly.

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7A proposed solution for clientelistic municipios in Brazil, has been to promote mayors' interaction with organizations rather than with individuals (Ferguson 1990, 17) and therefore encourage group demand-making.

Once the program got underway, groups highlighted the program’s weaknesses and started to make "customized" demands on the program. Although the program could not respond to all the requests, it did when the groups making the demands proved to the state that the demands were easy to facilitate and still within the guidelines of the program. For example, after the program had barely begun, a group of 500 women in Tauá who felt discriminated against by PAPCS, invaded the GAC meeting in the sede where the Secretary of the Department of Social Programs was present. In a letter which they presented to the Secretary, they demanded work for women, arguing that the program did not have any suitable or sufficient jobs for women except for tending small gardens, brick making and the health agent program, projects which usually hired fewer workers. Although there was resistance from the GAC leader who viewed their invasion as the disruption of an orderly process, the Department of Social Programs authorized the creation of an artisan center\(^8\) which they had requested. Construction began in December, and in March PAPCS hired 65 women to do crochet, embroidery and dressmaking. The department funded the purchase of primary materials and machines and labor for four months.\(^9\) Although the project differed from the standard projects, it still fell within the specific guidelines of PAPCS.

The leaders of the women’s group which had the active support of the rural workers’ union and the church became more vocal with the introduction of the community participation. One of the leaders of the demonstration said that were it not for the government’s new approach toward the community, the women would probably not have done anything. Thus community participation had additional benefits. People went beyond government-sanctioned participation and got involved in making suggestions and

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\(^8\) As an example of the interrelatedness of projects, the center was built using bricks, tiles and male labor from the employment program.

\(^9\) The artisan center was registered as a business and still operates.
taking the initiative to ask for improvements. The program fostered an internal process which identified shortcomings of the program at no additional costs.

To summarize, in the drought program of 1987-1988 the Government of Ceará allowed drought victims in rural communities to become involved. By encouraging this level of involvement in the municípios while ensuring that participation was well defined, the state implemented more appropriate projects, provided employment for the neediest victims, and delivered relief in a timely manner. The innovation further led communities to take a more active role in monitoring relief delivery.
CHAPTER FIVE
THE GACS: MUNICIPAL "OVERSEERS" OF RELIEF.

The GACs were 12-member municipal administrative committees\(^1\) that the Departments of Social Programs and Planning created in most of the 171 municipípios included in PAPCS\(^2\) to oversee relief delivery taking place in the drought stricken communities surrounding the sedes. Each GAC usually met once a week during the beginning of the drought and twice weekly during the peak of the drought to evaluate information coming from the communities. In creating this municipal administrative body, "The state," as a past state secretary said, "recognized the value of the município as a space for articulating responses to the drought."

How Did the GACs Help PAPCS?

The GACs helped implementation in four ways as I elaborate below: i) They streamlined all information ii) They served a trouble-shooting role, and iii) They provided a means by which the program could bypass potentially corrupt mayors.

GACs streamlined information

The GACs streamlined all the requests, data and information about the employment scheme and the projects and forwarded these to the Department of Social Programs. At the very outset of the program in June 1987, they summarized the condition of the various municipípios and estimated the number of victims they felt the state should hire in each community and the range of projects that would suit victims' needs. With their comprehensive view of the município, they voted on which communities would benefit from particular projects, using the information passed on to them from the communities. Rather than having to wade through raw information

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\(^1\)See chapter three for the composition of the group.
\(^2\)Some municipípios did not employ enough people to merit the presence a GAC.
coming from thousands of communities across the state, the Department of Social Programs could then rely on the GACs to analyze and forward the crucial information and to handle the issues that could be dealt with locally.

During this drought period, field agents and GAC coordinators got to know the Secretary of SAS personally and established a rapport with him which further enhanced communication between the município and Fortaleza. Testimony of this relationship came years later when the ex-Secretary returned to some of the municípios to talk with GAC coordinators about the program. The coordinators were still eager to meet and discuss their impressions of the experience, of what they thought were the negative and positive experiences and what could be done to improve the system. They were also eager to work with the ex-Secretary on designing future drought relief programs and to sustain the dialogue that had emerged under PAPCS. While the state decentralized some of the responsibility to new municipal players, it also fostered a feedback process that made the program more effective.

**GACs identified problems soon after they surfaced**

In sharp contrast to pre-1987 drought relief programs in which there had been no effective method of detecting and reporting municipal corruption SAS implemented the GACs to identify problems as soon as they arose. SAS did so in order to address problems before they became so critical that drought victims either rioted, traveled to the Department of Social Program to protest (administratively cumbersome) or resorted to migration.

The GACs detected cases of corruption quickly because they lived and operated at the site of relief delivery and among both the actors who would receive relief, and those who were capable of misappropriating relief. For example, local politicians in a particular município invited the local GAC coordinator (an EMATERCE agent) to one of their party meetings knowing that he supported their party. The meeting turned out to be

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3It is not uncommon for groups or community representatives from the interior to travel to the Department of Social Programs during drought periods to ask for food and other basic items.
a session in which they tried to get the coordinator to divert relief funds to the
construction of a small dam on the property of one of the elite members of the party. The
GAC coordinator refused to comply and reported the incident to the state. The state
immediately sent word to the politicians making it clear that the state would not tolerate
that sort of corruption.

GACs were more suited to making certain decisions than Fortaleza-based civil
servants because coordinators in Fortaleza were not as well informed about what was
taking place at the municipal level. For example, whereas in previous droughts municipal
landowners could convince state officials to build unwarranted facilities on their
properties the GACs were able to recognize where these requests were inappropriate and
veto them.

The GACs became a local "thermostat," recognizing, drawing attention and
reacting to potentially disruptive situations.

GACs minimized the role of mayors—somewhat of an asset

The Secretaries in charge of PAPCS were keen on avoiding the active
involvement of mayors, who in the past had often controlled and diverted relief funding, particularly around election time. A post-1987 document analyzes the problem:

Occasionally (in 1987) delegating some of the powers to Prefectures of municipal governments (prefeito) would turn out to be a mistake: local political leaders would promptly take advantage of the situation, subverting the criteria of selection of projects and enlisted for their own benefit; in addition, some Prefectures thought the occasion was ripe for an attempt to regain control of the Program (SEPLAN 1989, 35).

Another example of mayors abusing political power comes from a município in
which the program had difficulties when it came to selecting workers for the health agent
program in 1987. The mayor in one município (exemplary of others) insisted on selecting

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4Tendler (1991) notes that POLONORDESTE (a Federal Government/World Bank program which funded rural integrated development in the nine Northeast states starting in 1974) also did not give municipal governments formal roles in projects since the program’s administrators viewed them as having clientelistic tendencies.
all the health workers himself rather than going through the standard procedure of resident selection. The agents he chose were people he knew and political supporters.\footnote{See Freedheim (1993).}

The GAC innovation tried to get around problems like these by practically eliminating the active role of the mayor and the town hall. That is, although the GACs allowed the mayor to attend meetings, the funds for relief which were scrutinized by the GACs did not go through the mayor but via state civil servants like EMATERCE. Mayors criticized the obvious detour to the extent that the discussion reached one of the state's major newspapers, \textit{O Povo} (1992). The mayors argued for greater involvement of the (municipal) Town Hall, which they said would facilitate relief administration and reduce the delays in the program that they claimed were the fault of centralized relief administration. The mayors argued for more autonomy in local governments, for the government to give them the role of administering the drought relief program at the municipal level, and for additional municipal decision-making power.

Yet, the GAC innovation proved itself a successful innovation, particularly in the municípios such as Iguatu, where drought relief delivery was successful despite the presence of mayors renown for corruption. This finding is important particularly since many development projects try to find a way of working around poorly performing mayors and fragile political structures. Their challenge is to devise programs which do not succumb to weak administrators and are immune to the ebb and flow of local politics. Forming the GACs was one solution to this frequently cited problem.

\textbf{The GACs made information public}

The GACs often relayed information to the community over the radio such as information from the state concerning the statewide progress of the relief program, the progress of various projects, and project starting dates to residents in the município and decisions made at the GAC meetings--to ensure transparência, or administrative openness, in order to reduce corruption. In the case of Tauá, independent reporters from...
the radio would also attend meetings and report the key results and information over the air. While some members of the GAC were uncomfortable with this, they did not actively oppose this practice.

In Tauá, the GAC also produced monthly information bulletins highlighting the progress of the program in the municipio. The first, printed in August 1987, introduced itself in this way: "This bulletin, coming out of the GAC in Tauá, attempts to broadcast news and transactions taking place in Tauá and serves as a vehicle for conveying information concerning the emergency projects." Several news items transmitted through this medium follow:

"To date the GACs have registered 3,110 people"

"CEMINAS has managed the production of 193,930 bricks and 36,967 roofing tiles. There are now 22 groups working on this."

"A piece of land is being sought from LBA (a government agency) which is administrated by the Lions Club, for the erection of a herb garden, which will involve six to ten women, with the aim of starting a micro-enterprise for herb production."

"We are currently distributing 2400 liters of milk to needy families in the sede daily, with assistance from the Women’s Union, the Residents Association, the Methodist Church, the Masons (Service Club) and the Lions Club of Tauá."

"There are currently 15 young people being trained to combat the mosquito AEDES DEGYPTI and the chagas disease (a fatal insect-carrying disease). House to house visitations are set to begin in the following locations..."

"Attention: The figures (numbers of workers etc.) presented here are not static. They change each month and the GAC in Tauá is doing everything to ensure that these figures keep increasing."

(Sherlock 1987-1988)

The bulletins averaged 10 pages, and stated that the GACs were circulating them to 40 agencies in Tauá (community groups, churches, state agencies, unions, the radio stations, political groups) and to 16 in Fortaleza (including the state newspapers, radio, the governor and various state organs).  

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6 Tauá was unique in this regard however. The fact that the GAC leader who initiated the bulletin, unlike many other GAC leaders, preserved all records, meeting minutes, resident registration forms and bulletins, years after the 1987-88 relief program and even wrote critiques and memoirs of the program, speaks to his peculiar dedication to the program. The GAC leader was known by his peers as somewhat of an eccentric, yet, the commitment demonstrated by this leader led the program to be successful there and led the Secretary of the Department of Social Programs to cite Tauá’s GAC as exceptional.
Encouraging the free flow of information served to demystify the drought relief process, the details of which had previously been obscured by the municipal-level elites who controlled the program. As an administrative and overseeing group, the GACs for the most part, managed to keep transactions open and steered the program away from corrupt politicians, landowners and other elites.

What was it about this group that allowed it to carry out these four tasks effectively and how was it unique? These questions will be answered through an analysis of the group's characteristics.

Varied Interests Maintained Groups' Balance

Members of the GACs said that at the outset of the program they thought that the fact that its members came from very different backgrounds and had different interests at stake would pose the greatest difficulty. GAC members represented a wide range of interests including private and public, elite and lower income, political and non-partisan (the church, service clubs, large landowners, small farmers). They were split along several lines. Some were concerned primarily with the nutritional well-being of drought victims. Others were interested in the employment status of victims. Some wanted to ensure that workers were productive in their communities rather than idle in the sede. Others focused on the long-term well-being of the rural residents. Finally, some were interested in the projects that would come out of the employment scheme. Such a group, members felt, would have difficulty reconciling these interests.

Ironically, this mixture of interests actually contributed to the group’s ability to make decisions primarily in the interest of drought victims. The simple majority vote rule in decision-making, and the balance of the group, prevented any one interest group from consistently dominating the decisions.

In Iguatu in June 1992, in order to support the research for this thesis, the coordinator of the now-extinct GAC convened a meeting of some past GAC members to
retrace the events of 1987-1988—a member of the large landowners union, a councilman, an EMATERCE agent and a rural union leader. The dynamics of the group, confirmed that strikingly different opinions came from all representatives.\(^7\) In particular, there was one member who spoke contrary to everyone on each point and was obviously the least liked or respected in the group.\(^8\) When I asked how that dynamic played itself out in decisions (particularly since they told me that there were other members who sometimes voted with this person), everyone shrugged their shoulders and said, "the majority won, in spite of how the minority felt." They said that because the group represented various interests, they couldn't afford to allow certain people to make all the decisions consistently. Having a variety of interests represented on the committee helped to get around this.

In some municípios, the composition and number of members in the GACs changed to suit the needs of the group. In the case of the município Crateus, for example, the community representatives felt that their representation was inadequate compared to that of the state representatives and elites. To repair this inequity, they requested that the GAC increase the representation of communities to seven out of 16, up from three out of 12. Community/lower income representation, including the rural workers union and church, ended up being the majority. The Department of Social Programs, impressed by the level of initiatives that community representatives took, sanctioned the change.

Another example of a change in the GAC composition comes from Tauá. The official representative from the rural labor union, and later from the church, left the GAC early in the program because some of their demands were not being met by PAPCS. They argued for the program to hire more workers, to hire more than one member per family, and for workers to receive higher wages. Members of the union and church

\(^7\) For example, in a discussion about the state, the most elite member argued that Ceará should become an independent state, rather than suffer the reputation of being the poorest state in Brazil. Meanwhile, a less wealthy member of the group argued that the state had to maintain its ties with other cities and the state in Brazil to which many Cearenses had migrated. Two different opinions, stemming from two different life circumstances.

\(^8\) Some members confirmed this in subsequent conversations.
continued to attend, but the official GAC workers union representative was replaced by a representative from a service organization. The fact that key members of the group left when their demands were not being met (initially) put a damper on the success of the GAC in Tauá. However, the group continued to be successful, in spite of the adjustments because members felt that the aim of the group and program were still being met.

What was important for this municipal administrative group, then, was its heterogeneity. Although this seems to contrast with one of the factors behind effective community level decision making (homogeneity), for a group operating at this particular level, where they had to account for the interests of many diverse small groups, heterogeneity allowed the group to factor the wide range of interests from across the entire município into its deliberations.

Although it seemed ironic that elites (the cause for many past problems) would be included in the GACs, the drought relief program in Ceará may have actually worked better because the state government included members of local service clubs, lawyers, doctors and large landowners. Rather than isolate them from the process or make major policy changes that openly excluded the elites, the state government incorporated them in the management of drought relief, just as it did the victims.⁹

Findings regarding this inclusion are as follows:

First, as part of the GACs, the elites were under constant public scrutiny as the groups received much media coverage locally and, sometimes nationally. In addition, there was a certain amount of prestige attached to the committee since it represented a crucial institution during the drought. In order to maintain their reputation, members needed to work in the public's interest, going along with the decisions that favored the majority of local residents.¹⁰

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⁹Marshall (1982) argues that governments can simply adjust the roles of relevant players when seeking to bring about redistribution aims. Involving elites was a simple means of fulfilling the aims of the program without resorting to revamping the entire system.

¹⁰See Tendler (1991) for cases in which external pressure leads to good performance in agencies, projects, governments etc.
Second, potential elite demands were tempered. They had to meet and work with representatives from lower income groups and other interest groups and could not control decision-making or attempt to manipulate the relief delivery process. For example, when elites in the municipios tried to get their preferred projects selected (for example a private well) by influencing elite friends in the GACs, the group usually vetoed the request.

Third, barring the inclusion of powerful landowners and politicians from the process could have undermined the relief effort. Initially powerful elites spoke out against the concept of representative committees to oversee the relief process. However, once elites who were members of the GAC began to let others know that the GACs presented a "fair" arena and that not one that actively sought to demolish the dominant elites, they convinced their peers that the GACs were a good idea which shouldn't be undermined. Tendler (1982b) has found that sometimes when elites are excluded from development projects, the projects fail simply because the elites have control over many of the mechanisms that support the very project.

As the last point illustrates it is better to find out, as Tendler suggests, where the interests of the elites and the poor overlap and use this as a tool to enhance poverty alleviating projects. Although they did not suffer from poor nutrition and were not forced to migrate, elites in the GAC went along with the program because the drought was also of concern to elites and middle class residents. For elites living in the municipal sede, the drought meant that the poor would migrate to the city, live on their streets, loiter by their stores and business places and become a local menace. For bank managers, the drought meant that the poor would close their bank accounts because of greatly reduced income. 

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11 Tendler (1982b) says that giving elites marginal roles in development projects, while creating the impression that their roles are crucial, can enhance the result of development projects.

12 Gathered from several interviews with merchants and businessmen in Tauá.

13 The bank manager with whom I spoke noted that the complaints of farmers regarding poor rainfall and crops coincided with an increase in the number of people arriving at the bank to close their bank accounts.
In sum, the elites had incentive to ensure that the drought relief program worked well, and the GACs benefited from the inclusion of elites.

GACs--Temporary or Permanent?

The state government disbanded PAPCS and the GACs in 1988 at the end of the drought. Some of the GAC coordinators argue that the GACs should have continued on a permanent basis. If the government were to make the GACs a permanent institution, they would ease the chronic drought problem by having in place an organization to monitor funding going to municipios for general development programs (which were said to be ineffective due to the same types of problems as experienced in drought relief programs) and to organize communities around drought alleviation techniques.

This argument has its merits, particularly since people said that communities that had some form of organization prior to the drought were the ones that were more successful in organizing around the 1987-88 drought relief effort—they showed more initiative, and were more responsive to the demands that the program made on them. Likewise, a município with a pre-existing committee that could oversee relief would be ready to respond to future emergencies.

However, a permanent arrangement would probably require the involvement of the mayor as central government couldn't afford politically to isolate a mayor from programs that permanently channeled state funds to the município. This was particularly true in the case of the government of Ceará which, in the years following 1988, aimed to increase the autonomy of local governments.14 Following this therefore, the government created committees which combined GAC-like groups with the mayor in the 1990 drought. However, evidence from the field suggests that this combination did not prevent the pre-1987 problems from emerging, and that partial blame rested on the mayors’

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14A past secretary reported that one of the aims of the government was to gradually give more responsibility to the municipios particularly following the reforms of the New Brazilian Constitution of 1988.
involvement. Given the re-emerging problems, in 1992 the governor eliminated the active participation of the group so that, once more, the program could work around the mayor. It would seem, therefore, that a GAC-like, mayor-free structure such as that used in 1987 is a better vehicle for drought relief programs and, perhaps, performs best as a prestigious, temporary institution, utilized when the threat of local corruption prevails.15

Some might argue that, in a way, the corruption in previous droughts resulted from the state’s decision to decentralize some of its responsibility by giving local landowners and politicians substantial control over the projects. What is interesting is that although decentralization failed previously, the state did not revert to a completely centralized system during the 1987 drought but, rather, extended the task to a group of actors like the GACs. In so doing they allowed control to stay at the local level but ensured that the control was held by many residents rather than a few powerful landowners and politicians.16

The GACs provided a means through which PAPCS could administer the drought relief process more effectively,17 while validating the knowledge and ability of municipal level residents to monitor the program and without having to employ personnel to work throughout the state. The following chapter describes another set of players, EMATERCE agents, who represented the single most active state agency in drought relief both in terms of state coverage and its role in providing technical and administrative support at the municipal level.

15 Particularly in election years when clientelism peaks and public funding is more likely to go astray.
16 See Smucker et al. (1979) who argues that decentralized management of public works programs is effective only when those managing the program at the local level represent the victims.
17 Chudy (1984) says that a “highly decentralized” management system in relief programs are overall more effective at assisting the poor.
CHAPTER SIX
GIVING CREDENCE TO AN EXISTING NETWORK.
THE CASE OF EMATERCE.

In 1987 the state government expanded the role of agricultural agents in drought relief. Whereas prior to 1987, EMATERCE (the state agency for technical assistance and rural extension) had served only as technical auxiliary to GESCAP, (the main agency in charge of the relief effort at both the state and municipal level), in 1987 the state assigned EMATERCE the major task of administering the drought-relief effort at the municipal and community level, and GESCAP (whose name had since been changed to CEDEC), the separate task of coordinating the relief effort from Fortaleza, routinely visiting the interior and attending to problems as they arose. Both agencies fell under the jurisdiction of the Department of Social Programs, having transferred from the Department of Agriculture; CEDEC permanently, and EMATERCE solely for the purpose of the 1987-1988 drought relief effort. Although agents from other state agencies also played a role in drought relief, their role was mainly to provide mainly technical support and was somewhat secondary to the role of EMATERCE. EMATERCE managed the highest proportion of workers in the employment scheme across the state, and worked in more municipios than did other state agencies.¹ This chapter concentrates on the role of EMATERCE, who played a more critical role in PAPCS.

With their expanded role, and now based in the department heading PAPCS, EMATERCE agents devoted much more of their time to relief work in the 1987-1988 drought than they had in previous emergencies. They played three main functions. First, they provided technical assistance to drought-related projects just as they had done in previous projects. For example, when in one município, everyone in the town voted to build a new type of well that they heard was being constructed in another município, the

¹See chapter three for a breakdown of workers by agencies.
extension agent, knowing that that particular type of well was technically inappropriate (due to the type of soil), persuaded the community to consider alternatives. Second, they helped to organize communities, guide them in their new decision-making role, and provide logistic support such as paying the work program employees bi-weekly. An extension agent described their interaction with communities as follows:

Under PAPCS, EMATERCE agents went around to communities and held meetings. If weekdays were inconvenient, agents even went on Sundays to convene the residents and conduct the voting process. In the meetings, EMATERCE agents would run down the name of residents and one by one, people would say whether or not the person was eligible for assistance. The decisions were often difficult and slow. Some agents spent over three hours with a given community (which could range from five families to as many as 50 families) agonizing over the final selections.

Last, in accordance with the PAPCS guidelines, EMATERCE agents functioned as members of the GACs and were often selected by GAC members to be coordinator of the group.

By giving an agency already well respected in the rural areas for its agricultural work this prominent role in the relief effort, the state took a great step towards changing the image of relief delivery at the municipal level. In comparison with GESCAP, the rapport that EMATERCE had with the population in the interior was extraordinary. By using this agency therefore, the state not only acknowledged the wealth of experience that extension agents had, but also strategically placed relief delivery in the hands of visible, well-known and respected actors in an attempt to reduce the propensity of relief agents being undermined. I will detail the factors that led the government to view EMATERCE as advantageous for the drought relief effort.

Factors Making EMATERCE's Role Advantageous

Standard EMATERCE work fed into drought relief work

Agricultural extension agents were effective partly because during the emergency they undertook tasks similar to those that they undertook in their standard extension work. Therefore, even though it appeared that agricultural workers were doing
"extracurricular" activities when they performed emergency activities during droughts, the fact is that they were essentially doing what they normally did, and this familiarity enabled them to perform well.

This comes as a surprise since I began the research viewing relief work as an "extracurricular" activity and consequently assumed that drought relief work was burdensome to agricultural extension agents. The fact that many state officials argued prior to 1987 that extension agents spent "too much" time on drought relief work, implying that it was outside the realm of their jobs compounded this belief. Whereas it is standard in many countries for extension agents to spend almost all their time doing strictly agricultural work (in non-emergency time), during emergency droughts EMATERCE agents spend over 50% of their time doing relief work, managing and monitoring projects in various communities. Given this increased "burden," I assumed that the motivation and productivity level of EMATERCE agents would be low enough to hinder the statewide relief effort. After all, civil servants often resist doing work beyond their standard roles, particularly since they perceive this as added responsibility for the same pay.

Yet, to my surprise, I found the opposite: in the municipios that I visited, extension agents saw themselves as being the best people to carry out drought relief work. They assumed that relief work was part of their "unwritten" job description, particularly because they were already familiar with helping people to organize, prioritize, specify demands and do construction work. I heard few complaints from extension agents about the fact that they spent most of their time doing drought work for

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2 Moore (1984) states that extension agents in India spend about 80% of their time doing agricultural work.

3 From an interview with a upper level EMATERCE officer. This is particularly interesting since in some of the documents outlining the POLONORDESTE program, in which extension agents gained greater importance, the issue of drought relief work is never raised.

4 Moore (1984) argues that low morale poses one of the greatest threats to extension agents.
as many as eight months out of the year.\textsuperscript{5} Their response was also partially due to the fact that during the drought period, agents get more transportation and fuel and so can spend more time in the field which they see as a central component (and pleasure) of their work. Whereas agents in one município said that in non-crisis time they go to the field as few as three times per month, during the drought crisis period they go as often as three times per week.\textsuperscript{6}

There are many similarities between the agricultural work and relief work. Often, EMATERCE agents used their experience from working under PAPP (a large rural development program for small farmers)\textsuperscript{7} to organize communities under PAPCS. PAPP had required them to work closely with small farmers and residents' associations and cooperatives and to make requests for agricultural equipment in the same way that PAPCS required them to meet with drought victims and make requests for public works projects.

EMATERCE agents often have to oversee food distribution in drought relief programs. In their regular role,\textsuperscript{8} EMATERCE agents have often had to assemble communities for seed distribution and other types of meetings. Through experience, they know that if they make announcements on the radio, they should do so at a time when the farmers will most likely be at home. Although seemingly obvious, accounts of development projects often tell of state agencies and NGOs failing to attract local people to meetings and projects because they neglect to publicize them in a way that the poor will have access to the information or be attracted to them.\textsuperscript{9} Through seed distribution,

\textsuperscript{5}This is similar to what took place when an agricultural program in India was implemented in the time of a crisis. The crisis was so grave that agricultural agents became motivated to produce good results, to the extent that their work improved (Moore 1984).

\textsuperscript{6}Based on 1992 experience.

\textsuperscript{7}PAPP followed POLONORDESTE. One EMATERCE respondent noted that under this program the role of agriculture extension expanded to take on a more educational and social function under this program.

\textsuperscript{8}This is based on an experience of the drought of 1992.

\textsuperscript{9}This has been the failure of development projects worldwide in the past. For example, NGOs have scheduled community planning meetings at a time when the target group has not been able to attend. This task requires the everyday experience of people who know the target group well.
EMATERCE personnel also know how to distribute relief supplies in ways that decrease the possibility of corruption and fraud in communities.

The type of technical advice that EMATERCE gave during PAPCS was similar to the type it gave while doing agricultural work. Farmers build small wells at all times of year. Many communities have resident "diviners," local people who are skilled at determining where underground water exists for possible locations of wells. As technical advisors however, EMATERCE agents sometimes have to show where diviners are mistaken--the area might have too many rocks, making dynamiting a difficult exercise.

In the same way that emergency time work requires EMATERCE to perform many varied tasks, so too does non-emergency work. The extent to which EMATERCE wears various hats and plays many roles effectively in the rural areas is expressed in the form of a joke, relayed by the head of a local EMATERCE office.

There is a refrigerator in Brazil that carries the brand name 'Counsel.' The refrigerator advertisement shows various members of a family coming up to the mother, each asking for something different, from fish to fruit to dairy products, to things that one would not even find in a refrigerator. Each time, regardless of the request, the mother automatically responded 'Counsel,' referring to the refrigerator. The point was that the refrigerator had everything that the family could ever demand.

Now, people refer to EMATERCE in the same way. Because EMATERCE is seen as the main state agency in the rural areas, whenever there is a task to be done there, related or unrelated to agricultural work, people respond 'Counsel,' in reference to EMATERCE, a 'catch all' agency. EMATERCE delivers, regardless of the task.

In the 1987-88 drought relief program the fact that the government recognized EMATERCE's breadth of involvement and experience in the rural area was crucial for the program's success. This new approach to the function of extension agents in relief programs should perhaps lead government officials to think a little differently about the role of agricultural extension agencies in rural areas. In expanding its vision of EMATERCE while at the same time not necessarily detracting from the standard work of EMATERCE the state improved the effectiveness of PAPCS.

EMATERCE was widely dispersed throughout the state.

The state used EMATERCE since its extension agents were already located in the interior and were the single state contact for many isolated, and in many cases, most
drought-stricken communities. Because the drought stricken population of Ceará is so widely dispersed, it was important to utilize an institutional structure that was just as dispersed as the population and could establish contact with the communities within a short period of time and without a great deal of institutional confusion.\textsuperscript{10} EMATERCE already had offices in the interior and was in a position to provide technical and administrative support.\textsuperscript{11} The previously utilized GESCAP had a much smaller workforce and were unable to cover the territory that EMATERCE did.

The statewide EMATERCE network also facilitated horizontal communication across the various municipípios. Agents talk with their colleagues (many of whom they know from their training) in other municipípios about difficulties in relief programs, where improvements can be made, etc. In one such case an agent who needed a particular car part for one of the scarce agency vehicles, learned from a colleague in another município that he could get the badly needed part in that município--a seemingly trivial piece of information but vital to the work of extension agents. EMATERCE workers with whom I spoke could explain in depth about the general conditions, the progress of the drought program in other municipípios, and other information that enhanced their own work.

With their prior experience in the communities EMATERCE agents were able to perform much more effectively than other state agents who were normally based in Fortaleza. As one resident said:

\begin{quote}
Agents understand the problems within the communities, know the "troublemakers," and can perceive when the communities need their intervention. For example, when one person starts to control a meeting they know how to resolve the problem.

Knowing the history of a given community and its residents greatly increased agents' ability to assist communities appropriately. In addition
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Residents insist that it is essential to work closely with an agent that they already know and trust. Likewise, agents believe that it is easier to work with communities with whom they are already familiar.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{10}Tendler (1982b) says that extension agents form a bureaucratic stronghold in rural areas because of their dispersion across the state.

\textsuperscript{11}Thomas (1986) says that the poor performance in many Food for Work Programs is partially due to a lack of management resources and logistic capacity.
EMATERCE's role was ambiguous

There is a certain ambiguity in the persona of EMATERCE workers. In one respect they represent educated elite, with some being university trained. This allows them to interact with other professionals in the interior. In another respect, they work closely with the farmers, many of them poor, and often speak on their behalf. EMATERCE workers have long maintained a working relationship with farmers and rural residents in rural Ceará, and are respected for having chosen to work in rural areas in spite of being educated elite. Also, EMATERCE agents represent the state and are responsible for the funding coming from the state for projects.

The fact that EMATERCE maintained a relationship with all players at the local level, yet represented something different to each group of players enhanced the ability to EMATERCE agents to perform well. For example, EMATERCE sided with the plight of poor farmers in the 1987 drought. However, they also represented the state bureaucracy. Their mixed role allowed them to explain to farmers that funding was limited, while at the same time pressuring the government to pay workers promptly. Their status as brokers enhanced the relief effort.  

A current example of the positive effects of having multiple roles comes from the Iguatu farmer demonstration in July 1992 just prior to the dry season. The farmers threatened to loot the town shops and food stores if they didn’t receive food and employment from the state. A prominent and well-liked EMATERCE employee, representing the mayor, calmed the crowd. The workers listened to him, giving him the legitimacy that they would not have given the mayor. They knew that he didn’t involve himself with local (and reputedly corrupt) politics, that he was familiar with the

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12 Tendler (1982b, 40) points out that extension agents did not always maintain a good relationship with the poor and previously maintained a closer relation with rural landowning elites. At one stage the elites supported EMATERCE’s role in providing credit and other agricultural benefits. However, when the World Bank’s shifted its emphasis to providing more services and subsidies to the poor, EMATERCE had to serve “new clients,” the poor, to the detriment of the previous, elite clientele.

13 This is similar to Tendler’s (1982a) view of NGOs as brokers and Wells’ (1982) argument that says that extension agents, who have state connections yet act on behalf of the poor make ideal brokers for the poor and other special interest groups that they work for.
conditions in all the towns, and that he would personally assist with food distribution when it arrived. Therefore farmers perceived him as a state representative with the interest of the workers at heart. He was able to "defend" the state and explain that funding for the farmers had not yet arrived from Fortaleza. One farmer noted that his talk probably prevented the workers from looting and rioting that day. The município's elites also supported this agent in his work, awarding him a prize at the município's Who's Who Award Ceremony. This acceptance from all parties enabled him to bridge the gap between the rural people and residents in the sede.

This multiple image of EMATERCE allowed them flexibility to perform their tasks and work effectively with four groups of players: victims in communities, elites in the sede and local and Fortaleza-based state administrators. That they were able to work across various groups was a luxury that few other state players possessed. What was important was that the state in 1987 took advantage of this asset, leading EMATERCE agents to treat their role in relief very seriously, and as a result, perform well as public-minded officials, refraining for the most part from corruption.

**EMATERCE’s Status Contributed to Good Performance**

First, an official in the Department of Social Programs argued that EMATERCE, whose “reputation as a state agency doing agricultural work had begun to diminish while in the Department of Agriculture” gained some prestige simply by being transferred to the Department of Social Programs where state officials considered its role as vital. One EMATERCE field worker said that the fact that the state government in 1987 treated extension agents as “authority” figures contributed to EMATERCE agents feeling better about their work. 14

Second, EMATERCE looked positively at drought work because communities respected their roles. Agents gained status because victims saw them as non-partisan and therefore

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14See Tendler (1991, 13) who argues that changing agency staff from roles as project coordinators to roles in which they actively assist with implementation leads to increased morale.
objective and trustworthy civil servants.\textsuperscript{15} EMATERCE agents also knew that communities needing assistance preferred to work with them rather than rely on councilmen for favors even though EMATERCE agents were less likely to have disposable funds to offer them. One farmer even referred to his community’s extension agent as a “savior,” noting that the work of the extension agent was the most vital part of drought alleviation. Communities credited agents for their technical knowledge, and their willingness to meet and assist them in their communities.

Third, EMATERCE agents were motivated by their roles in the GAC. As coordinators they led lawyers, merchants and large landowners who, in any other setting, would otherwise have been considered their superiors by virtue of class and status in the community.\textsuperscript{16}

These factors led to increased motivation and provided incentives for good performance in drought relief, debunking the perception that relief work was inferior to the work of extension agents and did not utilize their potential capacity.

By giving credence to EMATERCE in PAPCS, the state built on already existing experience, technical knowledge and a link with isolated communities. Furthermore, using EMATERCE, an already functioning institution, was cost effective as the state did not have to use scarce resources to develop a special cadre of professionals large enough to effectively advise and manage the delivery of relief in communities scattered across 170 municípios across the state. The state’s acknowledgment of EMATERCE agents as competent professionals and as a vital link in the delivery of relief services \textit{coupled} with the other innovations (community involvement and municipal administration) allowed the institutional structure of PAPCS to work well in the 1987-1988 drought.

\textsuperscript{15} People did not always view them as such. I heard of municípios in which agents immersed themselves in political activities.

\textsuperscript{16} A CEDEC official said that as many as 80\% of the EMATERCE GAC coordinators went on to win political roles (as councilpeople or mayors) after the drought, suggesting that they gained some clout from their role in the program.
Several key lessons can be learned from this case. The state showed how inexpensive yet effective simple innovations helped address some of the root causes of the devastating effects of the drought and the major obstacles which prevented effective relief. For the most part, what the state did was a) decentralize some of its decisions and tasks, b) maximize the use of already existing state employees, and c) create new roles for municipal and community players who were previously bystanders of relief. Although many argue that decentralization can be problematic since needed skills are often not available at the local level (Smoke, Prud'homme, and Khellaf 1992), the state showed that when the tasks were simple, the skills were available and the people were willing to be involved community involvement was not only possible but greatly beneficial.

Summarized below are the main lessons of the program.

The state built on the unique components of extension work (their role as brokers, their extensive network and their technical expertise in areas of rural technology) and successfully converted it into a useful tool for relief delivery. By building on existing knowledge and experience, the program created a cadre of relief experts who required no additional training, and who still had their permanent jobs to return to once the crisis was over. The state’s use of agricultural extension agents for relief delivery challenged the conventional vision of extension agents, leading us to think about how state workers’ function can be adapted for alternative yet appropriate purposes when the need arises.

The state capitalized on the growing trend of community involvement. While one could argue that this was a natural progression since the country was undergoing a process of democratization, the state ingeniously channeled this to benefit both the drought relief program and the recipients of relief themselves. Not only were local rural community residents skilled enough to decide who the poorest people in the communities
were, and which projects would most suit their needs, but they were actually the best candidates for the task because they were informed and the ones in need.

The state developed the role of leaders in the municípios, giving interest group leaders, state representatives and landowners positions of public responsibility. This, in turn, increased the notion of accountability within the municípios, which helped to circumvent some of the traditional problems of relief skimming.

Finally, the state, in developing new roles for the above mentioned actors, shifted much of the “burden” of the program monitoring away from Fortaleza. By decentralizing the task of monitoring, supervision, and relatively simple decision-making, the state was able to gather vital information and constant feedback from municípios regarding the problems and progress of the program. The drought relief programs prior to 1987 never successfully managed to fulfill these tasks efficiently, simply because the onus of the program was so heavily concentrated in Fortaleza and because there was insufficient control over the program at the municipal level.

The drought relief program of 1987 showed Ceará alleviating some of the major problems by focusing not only on the “spoils” of relief, but also, to a large extent, on the social factors which consistently undermined the state’s efforts to provide relief.
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