The need for increased participation of the poor in the decision-making process of community action agencies in Georgia

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THE NEED FOR INCREASED PARTICIPATION OF THE POOR IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS OF COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES IN GEORGIA

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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The Need for Increased Participation of the Poor in the Decision-Making Process of Community Action Agencies in Georgia

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The intent of this paper is to identify and recommend solutions to the lack of effective participation of the poor in the decision-making process of the Community Action Agencies in Georgia.

The first section consists of the introduction, which contains the agency's background information. The second section presents a picture of how the poor people participate in the decision-making process of the Community Action Agencies. Section three gives alternatives to the present status. The forth section deals with conclusions and recommendations to improve participation of the poor people in the Community Action Agencies in Georgia.
The main sources of information were interviews, personal observations and findings, readings of published and unpublished materials.
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I. Introduction

Purpose of Study.

This paper has two purposes:

1. To identify some of the problems which resulted from the ineffective participation of the poor in the decision-making process of Community Action Agencies in Georgia;

2. To identify and recommend key factors which will promote participation of the poor people in the CAA's decision-making process, programs and activities, and also to describe some techniques which other CAAs have used successfully to enhance such participation.

The Problem.

Senator Ralph Yarborough has stated that "participation is the key to the success or failure of most domestic programs. When users or recipients are involved and consulted, the services offered are more soundly conceived and more widely used."\(^1\)

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 called for the involvement of the poor in the planning, policy-making, and operation of programs by Community Action Agencies.

Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) clearly intended that the poor be included in the official decision-making process. In 1967, Congress passed legislation which required that one-third of Community Action Boards be 'representatives of the poor.' As a result, CAA Boards were required to include poor people in their membership.

Although federal guidelines do provide for one-third participation of the poor on each CAA Board, in practice, these guidelines are not being met. This study will address the lack of representation of low-income people in the decision-making process of the CAA Boards. Additionally, it will identify strategies for increasing their participation.

Methodology.

Both primary and secondary data were utilized in this study. Most of the data was provided by the State Economic Opportunity Office and former employees of Community Action Agencies.

The principal method of inquiry was interviews with employees of both the SEOO and CAAs. These usually took place after conclusions of particular board meetings. Questions were focused on decisions that were made during these meetings. Although some of the employees interviewed were reluctant to reveal any damaging information about the agencies,
published materials were made available. The opportunities to interview low-income people and their representatives on the boards were adequate although most of them were afraid to engage in any detailed discussions that could reveal illegal activities by the CAAs. Also, access to agency files was limited because of lack of cooperation from some officials. Other methods used were observations in board meetings and conferences dealing with programs for the low-income people, and readings of some literature related to the topic.

The conclusions and recommendations reached are based upon personal observations and evaluation of interviews and printed materials.

Delimitation of Study.

There are twenty-three Community Action Agencies in Georgia (See Appendix A), which provide services in 127 counties. All of them are private non-profit organizations except one, the Macon-Bibb Economic Opportunity Council, which is public.

Because of the limited duration of the internship, the duty assigned was to monitor the activities of only four agencies:

(1) Area Community to Improve Opportunities Now (ACTION, INC.)

(2) Central Savannah River Area Economic Opportunity
Authority, Inc. (CSRA)

(3) North Georgia Community Action Agency, Inc. (North Georgia CAA)

(4) Southwest Georgia Community Action Council, Inc. (Southwest Georgia CAC)

Although all of them differ in size (number of counties served), they all implement similar programs for the poor people. Some have more funds and programs than others (See Appendix B), and their programs are all supposed to be monitored by the State Economic Opportunity Office. Though this study does not examine all of Georgia's CAAs, interviews with the field representative at SEOO reveal that similar problems do exist in most of the other CAAs.

The inaccessibility of certain data was another limitation of this study. Specifically, the unavailable data was statistics relating to the population of low-income people in each CAA and the number of low-income people that were participating in the Community Action Programs. Also, other data regarding CAA employees attitudes towards low-income people was limited. Discussion on this was largely based upon personal observations.

Lastly, the names of some representatives of the poor who were interviewed have not been mentioned at their request.
Agency Background Information.

This writer was a Governor's Intern assigned to the State Economic Opportunity Office/Department of Human Resources as a Research Analyst from June 12, 1978 to September 15, 1978, with the responsibilities of monitoring the activities of four Community Action Agencies; attending CAA Board training sessions and meetings, and reviewing federal and state documents for information relating to low-income people.

The State Economic Opportunity Office was established in November 1964, after the signing of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The purpose of the Act is to mobilize the human and financial resources of the nation to combat poverty in the United States.

As set forth by OEO Instruction 6710-1, the goals of the SEOO are as follows:

"... to promote the purposes of Community Action in the activities of state government agencies; promote improvement in coordination of programs carried out with or through state agencies; provide technical assistance to CAAs and other organizations involved in Community Action; operate programs and assist the Governor in carrying out his responsibilities with respect to community action."\(^2\)

\(^2\)Applying for a CAP Grant, OEO Instruction 6710-1 August 1968, p. 5.
OEO Instruction 7501-1 lists four basic functions that the SEEO must perform in order to accomplish its goals. The four functions are:

1. To advise the Governor on appropriate action regarding funds and matters having impact on the poor. This function includes reviewing grants to be given to Community Action Agencies, take appropriate action regarding approval or disapproval, and monitor ongoing operations of anti-poverty agencies to determine accountability and benefits to the poor people.

2. To advocate for the poor in channels of service delivery, program planning, job placement, establishing policy and equal opportunity. This includes reviewing documents to determine proper coordination and their impact on the poor people and assess program activities to determine the extent of participation of the poor.

3. To provide technical assistance and training to anti-poverty agencies in program planning, program development and program management.

4. To provide communication, coordination and response as necessary to federal, state, local officials, and the citizens in general, on matters regarding the poor.3

Under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, local and state governments are given the responsibility of

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establishing Community Action Agencies and assuring that they meet the structural, procedural and program requirements to qualify for federal recognition and funding. One of the provisions of this act provides that, "a Community Action Agency shall be a state or political subdivision of a state (having elected or duly appointed governing officials), or a combination of such political subdivisions, or a public or private non-profit agency or organization which has been designated by a state or such a political subdivision or combination of such subdivisions..." 4

The CAA is not simply a dispenser of welfare or social services to the poor. It is the basic weapon that the federal government is utilizing to wipe out poverty. Its purpose is to bring together all available local, state, private and federal resources to achieve the goal of enabling low income families and individuals of all ages, in rural and urban areas, attain the skills, knowledge and motivation, and secure the opportunities needed for them to become self-sufficient. In this role, it is expected to:

(1) Significantly and meaningfully involve the poor through "maximum feasible participation" in developing, conducting and administering anti-poverty programs.

(2) Coordinate efforts throughout the community so as to avoid duplication, improve delivery of services, and relate programs to one another.

(3) Plan and evaluate both long and short-range strategies for overcoming poverty in the community.

(4) Serve as an advocate for the poor on matters of public policy and programs which affect their status.

(5) Promote institutional and desirable changes in social policies and programs for the poor; encourage administrative reform and protect individuals or groups against arbitrary action.

(6) Conduct in its own right or delegate to other agencies the development and conduct of programs financed through Economic Opportunity Act funds.

(7) Report to Governing Board of CAA, Regional Community Services Administration (formerly OEO), and State Economic Opportunity Office all required documents on a regular basis.\(^5\)

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 3.
II. The Present Status of Participation of the Poor in the Decision-Making Process of the Community Action Agencies in Georgia

After the Economic Opportunity Act became law, the greatest controversy was centered around the meaning of "maximum feasible participation" of the poor in the developing, conducting and administering of anti-poverty programs. There was no consensus as to the interpretation of this provision.

A major task faced by OEO was determining who would govern CAAs and administer their programs. OEO sought maximum feasible flexibility in determining representation on CAAs, allowing communities to work out their own arrangements. This did not, of course, satisfy the various contending groups. Some cities wanted complete control over "their" CAAs, while militant advocates of "maximum feasible participation" sought also to gain control. OEO was caught between the factions: "We have no intentions," stated Sergeant Shriver, then OEO director, "of letting any one group run the programs. That's not community action."6

OEO's difficulties were further compounded by the initial failure of the law to specify eligibility criteria for representatives of the poor on CAA Boards, except for the stipulation that they reside in the areas served. Thus, affluent citizens who happened to live in a "target area" could represent the poor people. The law could therefore be observed without having a single low-income person on the CAA Board. This was exactly the case in the early days of the Atlanta CAA (now Economic Opportunity Atlanta), where the only person that was representing the poor people within the vague criteria of the provision was Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr., then living in a low-income area. On the other hand, in some communities, the poor themselves served on, though not effectively or influentially, the governing boards of community action agencies.

Given the wide diversity of community practices and a desire to allow communities maximum freedom in determining the organization of their anti-poverty agencies, OEO was at a loss to spell out guidelines regulating the selection and composition of CAA Boards. The allowance for "maximum feasible participation" is the only provision for poor participation in the CAA programs and this representation is to be included in the CAA Boards.
The requirements for the composition and selection of governing boards are set forth under Section 211 A & B of the Act:

"Each board to which this subsection applies shall consist of not more than fifty-one members and shall be so constituted that:

(1) One-third of the members of the board are public officials, including the chief elected official or officials or their representatives, unless the number of such officials reasonably available or willing to serve is less than one-third of the membership of the board;

(2) At least one-third of the members are persons chosen, in accordance with democratic selection procedures by the poor in the area served, and

(3) One-third of the members are from the private sector-business, industry, labor, or other major groups and interests in the community.

Each member of the board selected to represent a specific geographic area within a community must reside in the area he represents. No person selected under Clause A or B of this Section, as a member of the board, shall serve on such board for more than five consecutive years or more than a total of ten years. A summary of the functions of the board is as follows:

(1) Establish policies and make policy decisions of CAA.

(2) Review, assess and approve program plans.
(3) Review formal evaluation and appraisals of agency employees.

(4) Assure the safeguard of funds, equal opportunity and that all Federal and State requirements are complied with.

(5) Determine priority of programs based on the community's needs and establish meaningful evaluation to determine impact of activities on poverty.

(6) Serve as public spokesman for poverty in the community and keep the community currently informed.^

During the internship, it was discovered that the composition of the CAA Boards has caused more problems in the development and funding of programs than any other issue. The failure to properly follow Community Services Administration's guidelines for a broadly based cross section of representation on the board has resulted in a vast waste of time, effort and money. The required composition of the boards is clearly spelled out by CSA, and this is one area where there is no flexibility, but some CAAs have taken upon

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7Eligibility and Establishment of CAAs. OEO Instruction 6302-2, February 26, 1971. p. 4.

8The Community Services Administration (CSA) came into existence in January 1975 as a successor to the Office of Economic Opportunity. CSA was given additional powers as an Independent Federal Agency. It stressed that one-third of any board membership should be representatives of the poor before decisions affecting programs are reached,
themselves to make the boards as flexible as they want them to be. Not only have the boards been unrepresentative, but no care is taken in replacing members to see that the proper balances and ratios are maintained.

A majority of the forty low-income people interviewed stressed that because of their inadequate participation in the decision-making boards, many programs that were instituted do not meet their needs. "The war on poverty," said one poor representative, "not only raised the hopes and expectations of millions of low-income people, it ironically increased their frustrations with the inabilities and insensitivity of the "system' and its institutions." The low-income people expressed concerns and frustrations about the way the boards run programs. They said that not all poor persons are poor in the same way and that the boards should recognize the need to learn about poverty from the people who know it best.

What is striking, however, is not the differences, but the similarities in the needs expressed by the low-income people. They stressed serious deficiencies in programs such

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9Interview with Mr. Bill Coley, Board Representative of the Poor, Southwest Georgia CAC, July 12, 1978.
as health care and transportation. They also cited the need for additional housing, energy, employment and nutrition.

During observations at two consecutive board meetings of the Southwest Georgia CAC in July 1978, it was discovered that the poor people were underepresented on the board. Personal interviews with the representatives in attendance revealed that those members who did not attend did so because of transportation problems or insufficient notice. Furthermore, those in attendance did not participate because they lacked knowledge of issues being discussed. This was further illustrated by the fact that they voted positively on issues or did not vote at all.

At a board meeting of North Georgia CAA in August 1978, members were asked to vote on two issues. One was to abolish a section of the Head Start Program costing $7,000 and use the money to buy a new car for the director of the agency. Another was moving some poor people from a certain section of the community to make way for a new car sales lot. The board comprised twenty-four members; ten public, eight private and six representatives of the poor. There was little debate before both issues were passed unanimously. After the meeting, the six representatives of the poor were asked why they voted for the issues. Two of them stated that they cannot vote against them because their homes are owned by a
businessman who is one of the private board members. Another
two said that as employees of one of the public agencies rep-
resenting the poor, they would loose their jobs if they ob-
jected. The last two stated that they had been told to vote
for the issues because they had no alternative choices. If
however, "decision-making implies that people must make a
choice of some sort," these individuals did not partici-
pate in any decision-making but were forced to rubberstamp
decisions already made by public and private representatives.

At another board meeting of the CSRA Economic Oppor-
tunity Authority in August 1978, five representatives of the
poor were asked how they became members of the board. Three
of them replied that someone (reluctant to give a name) had
come to ask them personally to become members. One other
member said that he had received a letter in the mail tel-
ing him he had been elected to represent the poor, without
even running for an office. Another stated she had offered
her services to help improve conditions of the poor but on
becoming a member of the board, she became influenced by
other members and started looking out for her personal gains

\[10\] Gerald H. Graham, Management: The Individual, the
Organization, the Process, Wadsworth Publishing Co.
California, 1975, p. 239
instead of seeking the interests of the poor people.

At ACTION Inc., an interview with a former representative of the poor stated that he was dismissed because he had opposed some changes in programs that would affect the poor adversely instead of helping them. He added that he was planning to move out of the community because the agency was not trying to help eliminate the causes of poverty but was trying to maintain the programs that do not address the needs of the low-income people. He also added that private and public representatives work hand in hand and run the CAA as their personal property because they benefit from it. Three other former board members explained that they got involved in poverty organizations by initiating inquires themselves. After becoming board members, they discovered that they were being used as tools, utilized sometimes by the staff, sometimes by other board members. This frustration led them to resign because they were using their valuable time to be volunteers on a board that was not representative.

At the Southwest Georgia CAC, a small group of representatives of the poor petitioned the board due to the fact that they were under-represented. When the hearing came up, the number of their representatives had increased from five to ten, out of a total number of thirty representatives.
This increased representation amounted to one-third of the board's composition, which the law required. When the additional five members, who were on the board for the first time, were asked how they became members, they stated that they received letters from the agency informing them that they had been elected as representatives by the poor people. These people did not have any knowledge about their functions on the board.

Other findings revealed that many programs were poorly planned and administered. Deficiencies and abuses included:

- lack of coordination between and within programs;
- lack of sufficient funding to accomplish objectives;
- lack of accountability by staff;
- excessive funding on administration and not enough for providing services;
- profiteering and fraud;
- nepotism (providing funds and jobs for friends and relatives rather than people in need);
- improper training of program staff;
- duplication of effort.

A State official summarized the effect of lack of participation by the representatives of the poor by saying, "if we don't coordinate we all lose, especially those who
need the services most. The CAA Boards act as a system which invades privacy and is oppressive and demeaning. It presupposes the poor are not deserving, and advocates are needed because the poor are still, to a great extent, without power and voice to respond to these charges."

According to Mr. Stinson, his job at SEOO calls for monitoring the programs of CAAs to recommend funding. Because of the freeze on State jobs and the cut in the State budget, he has been the only one servicing the twenty-three CAAs around the State. Therefore, as the only Economic Opportunity Representative (See Appendix C), he has not been able to monitor CAA programs effectively and this has caused the boards to act as they wish, ignoring Federal and State guidelines.

11Interview with Mr. Ralph Stinson, Economic Opportunity Representative, Georgia State Economic Opportunity Office, August 14, 1978.
III. An Alternative to the Present Status: Increasing Participation of the Poor on CAA Boards

Participation is a form of communication and helps prevent misunderstanding; and participants feel they are a part of the organization, and they identify with it. In addition to these advantages, participation often results in an improved change.  

If Bernard M. Bass was right about the concept of participation, Community Action Agencies should establish procedures, according to federal guidelines, which representatives of the poor should use for adequate representation on governing boards. "Participation, by providing a sense of community and participatory relationships, is the key to improving the quality of life."  

A hallmark of American democracy is the tradition of individuals forming organizations to protect and advance their common interest. This tradition of group activity has become an important part of our decision-making process, making it more responsive to citizens' needs. Thus business and trade associations, ethnic groups and other special interest groups have influenced public policy and helped shape political, economic and social decision making process."  

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13Ibid., p. 15.

14Ibid., p. 17.
The Community Action Program should build on this tradition and extend it to include the poor people, who have not fully participated in the past.

Poor people have a greater chance of being heard, influencing decisions and achieving specific objectives if they, too, exercise their right to form and work through groups. Requests made by groups have greater force than similar requests made by individuals. A group provides continuity even when individuals change, and has a structure leaders can recognize and work with.

As the representatives of the poor gain experience in methods of constructive group action and participation in community affairs, and become part of the decision-making processes, their actions may cause existing institutions and programs to become more sensitive and responsive to the needs of low-income people. It can increase the human and financial resources devoted to problems of low-income people. It can strengthen the social fabric of the community by encouraging the non-poor to understand, care about, and help solve the special problems and needs of the low-income people.

Some CAAs around the country have used many methods to encourage and increase participation of the poor in their decision-making process. Most of this can be found in urban
CAAs, e.g., Economic Opportunity Atlanta, which are usually watched closely by state and federal officials because they are easily accessible. For this reason, most urban CAAs get the most funds and operate more programs (See Appendix D). Rural CAAs will have to overcome special problems of working in sparsely settled areas in which distance, population dispersion, poor transportation and communications, and sometimes insufficient resources make meetings and group action difficult.

Increasing the participation of the poor in decision-making depends greatly on dedication of the Community Action Agencies and the poor people themselves.

One other alternative is by motivation. Motivating people to take part in community affairs is difficult in the best of circumstances. It is more difficult with poor people because they have rarely had the chance to participate or may have been rebuffed in earlier efforts.\(^\text{15}\)

As a result, they may not be familiar with acting on their own behalf, may have little experience in and knowledge of how to make their views known, or may have become apathetic.

because of their apparent inability to influence decisions. However, some CAAs have learned that people will act when their involvement appears to offer a chance to solve problems.

"Two important conditions are, (1) that people whose well-being is at stake must themselves identify their concerns and interests. Issues cannot be imposed by others, they must arise from the awareness of the people that are affected, (2) that there must be an early demonstration that the people participating will be able to make meaningful decisions and that their views will result in corrective action.\(^{16}\) It is nearly impossible to sustain interest if people have little say in developing or carrying out a project or if it does not have a reasonable chance of success.

Issues of interest to poor people are many. A particular problem may be relevant to a single person or to several. It may involve only one neighborhood or several. Issues are wide ranging; from jobs, to better services, to gaining a voice in planning and decision-making processes. CAAs must be sensitive to the many ways in which issues emerge and to ways to identify problems which need the input of the

\(^{16}\text{Ibid., p. 373.}\)
poor, CAA staff can go into target areas to acquaint themselves with the desires and aspirations of poor residents in order to recommend and develop programs that will effectively meet the needs of these people.

-In Bath, Maine, a group of poor mothers met to talk over problems in the operation of the town welfare system following discussions in the Head Start program with a CAA Community Worker. From this beginning, welfare regulations were eventually changed.\(^{17}\)

-In Huntsville, Alabama, a CAA worker talked with the poor residents and found that low wages, due to working in unskilled positions, was a big issue. After a training program was set up by the CAA, the residents were able to command higher wages because of the acquired skills.\(^{18}\)

Another alternative is providing adequate information about community issues or decisions by CAAs. Frequently, poor people learn of decisions too late to be able to influence or change them. Access to information about a problem, therefore, may be a factor in increasing their participation.

-In East St. Louis, Illinois, poor people learned that the city planned to rezone a residential area for industry and acted to protect their homes.\(^{19}\)


\(^{18}\)Ibid., p. 5.

\(^{19}\)Ibid., p. 6.
-In another city, knowledge of CSA's one-third poor participation requirement in decision-making sparked some poor people to take part in planning some programs.20

-In Phoenix, Arizona, information that the city planned to develop and improve a large recreation area led the poor residents to suggest an alternative plan for "mini-parks" located in target areas, which was adopted.21

CAAs are responsible for informing poor people early of matters concerning them so they may be heard before decisions are made. While all CAA staff cannot personally reach all poor residents, they can inform and explain issues to key representatives of the poor in each area and have them spread information to others. Reliance on information being spread by radio, TV or newspapers is not enough because some poor people cannot afford those things and some cannot even read. For example, at neighborhood centers, issues could be discussed, and poor people who understand the issues could act as discussion leaders.

Another alternative will be training the poor representatives to acquire leadership abilities and help them identify goals and formulate plans of action. After acquiring these skills, they should be able to gain the confidence, recognition and support of the others. "Leaders should be

20Ibid., p. 6 21Ibid., p. 6
those who are sympathetic to the aims of the poor and who can command the respect of others."

There is always a danger of any leader using a group for his own purposes. The leader must be committed to his group's goals, must hold himself accountable to the group, and must be willing and able to share responsibility with other members.

- In Forrest City, Arkansas, the CAA uses community improvement projects as a means to develop leadership, by placing some poor in leadership positions.

- Some CAAs in New York have found it useful to tap local sources such as universities, labor unions and the League of Women Voters as resources for leadership development.

Because issues are often of long standing concern and poor people despair finding solutions to problems, defining a goal might also encourage increase in participation. "Setting a goal—the end result of discussion and

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24 Ibid., p. 7.
decision— is essential to provide direction, sustain interest and increase participation, and bring a sense of achievement as a group moves forward."\(^{25}\)

The goal should be specific, realistic, and achievable; otherwise, energies will be wasted and disappointment will discourage continued participation. As a beginning, it is better to start with a limited goal which has a fair prospect of easy attainment, rather than an ambitious one which requires complex action over a longer period. As they gain experience in this process, succeed in realizing their aims, gain confidence, and build their organization with small successes; they may tackle more difficult projects. In defining goals, they may ask the following questions:

(1) Where are we? (2) Where do we want to be? (3) What are the alternatives? (4) What are we willing to settle for? To achieve goals, they may need to work only with public and private organizations, or they may need to involve State and Federal agencies as well.

\(^{25}\)Webster Lewis, Planning Technician, Title XX Programs, Office of District Programs, Atlanta, Georgia, Interview, August 17, 1978.
"Broadening the base of participation of the poor is another effective way of increasing participation." Often, only a small group of poor people will identify an issue requiring corrective action, because they are the only ones who can afford to attend meetings, etc. However, a variety of means could be used to build attendance at meetings. Personal contacts are usually most effective: target area neighborhood leaders could inform residents, door-to-door canvassing may be required, fliers may be distributed, posters placed in neighborhood shops, announcements made at public meetings, churches and other public places. Spot announcements may be made on radio and TV for those who have them, and notices placed in newspapers. CAA newsletters may also be used.

Meetings must be held at times convenient to poor people and at places where they can feel comfortable. Evening and week-end meetings may be easier for those who hold jobs. Neighborhood centers, storefronts, local cafés and people's homes are popular meeting places. Government buildings and downtown offices are less suitable.

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Transportation to meetings, particularly in rural areas, presents a problem. Car pools can be used as a partial solution; participants should be reimbursed for mileage costs if funds are available and public transportation should be made accessible whenever possible.

-The Iron River, Michigan CAA uses two mini-vans, Government Services Administration station wagons and pick-up trucks, and a government surplus automobile to transport people to meetings. 27

Time and effort are needed to involve a large number of poor people in participating. A number of meetings may be required before participants define their problems and goals. But each meeting must be geared toward action; discussion alone will not suffice. Minutes of all meetings should be recorded in writing and sent to each participant. This procedure helps create expected communication channels between the individual participants or groups, provides a means of sharing information with one another, and prevents internal arguments and disagreements over what was actually decided.

Lastly, encouragement and support should be given to the poor so that they can continue their efforts of

participation. One of the most important ways CAAs can support low-income people is with financial assistance.

-The Richmond, Virginia CAA gave $3,400 to a group of poor representatives concerned with neighborhood renewal to let the group hire an advocate planner to help develop alternate plans than those of the Housing Authority.  

-The CAA located in Bath, Maine provided a group of poor people with $20,000 to help them set up a sudden emergency loan fund, hire a day care center director for six months, and start a high school equivalency program.  

28Ibid., p. 12

29Ibid., p. 12.
IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

The observations, interviews and findings clearly demonstrate that increased participation of the poor in the decision-making process of the CAAs in Georgia needs extensive planning and commitment of the Community Action Agencies.

It is the opinion of the writer that CAAs have representatives of the poor on their boards mostly because they want to meet State and Federal laws and not for decision-making purposes.

Most of the representatives of the poor are aware that they do not have any influence on the boards and it is a source of constant frustration to some of them. One representative of the poor stated that people usually laughed at them and thought they were just puppets helping the professionals justify putting money into their own pockets. Membership on policy-making boards may confer a little prestige on the poor persons who participate but it will do nothing more than that when they are outnumbered by the influence of representatives of organizational interests.

The findings of this study support Floyd Wood's position that the poor on CAA boards are not influential or
taken seriously in any major decision. He says, "generally, the poor serving on Community Action Boards have proved vulnerable to blandishments and have been easily absorbed or controlled, or flattered."\(^\text{30}\)

The fact remains however that the influence and power of private and public representatives will, for a long time, be used to control representatives of the poor in the CAA boards. They are acted upon by forces they cannot control. Therefore, we see the CAAs planning programs for the poor and do not give the poor people the choice to take part effectively in the planning process.

**Recommendations.**

1. The poor should be given enough liberty and security to elect the people that they want to represent them on the CAA Boards. They should be encouraged to form small resident groups that should be recognized by the CAAs. The representatives of the poor should be answerable to these groups and the groups should be able to remove from office any of their representatives who do not act in their interest. This will eliminate those representatives who are easily influenced by other board members who happen to be their bosses and landlords.

2. The State Economic Opportunity Office should monitor CAA programs effectively and see that

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they comply with State and Federal laws requiring "maximum feasible participation." Since SEOO recommends funding for the programs, its staff should be increased to involve enough Economic Opportunity Representatives who cannot be bribed by powerful officials and who would report any violation of laws.

3. The Community Action Agencies should provide publicity and public education for the poor. Some CAAs have used their media effectively to publicize their aims and broaden participation and support among poor and non-poor. Issues should be stated clearly, concisely and accurately and the poor should be given the whole story of what is happening in the community. Adequate notification of meetings should be given to all.

4. The CAAs should conduct elections of board members democratically. The private, public and poor sections of each community should be equally represented by one-third representatives each. Members who run for offices should be genuine representatives of the poor and not simply the most vocal advocates.

5. CAAs should employ more qualified personnel at all levels, that know about problems the poor people face. Some agencies are filled with friends and relatives of the influential people in the communities and they are neither the most promising, as previous crisis have proved, nor sufficiently prepared for their tasks. A better staff will, of course, improve board operations.

6. CAAs should provide a link for low-income people to critical resources, e.g., education, man-power training, counseling, housing, health; to increase the accessibility of available critical services that the poor still often find beyond their reach or blocked off from them; should restructure community service
institutions to assure flexibility, responsiveness, respect, and true relatedness to the problems faced by the poor.

7. Training and technical assistance should be provided to help the poor decide on plans of action, develop proposals, and carry out projects. This should involve techniques for identifying needs and solving problems; background information on Federal, State and local procedures; ways to mobilize resources; methods of building community support; human relations training, self-help efforts and know-how in a variety of fields.

8. The CAAs should involve the people they serve in planning their own programs and services. Resources, alternative courses of action, strategies, tactics, progressive stages and timetable for each phase should all be included in the planning process. This philosophy of involvement should be a prerequisite if poor persons are to acquire the skills necessary for participation in the decision-making process.
APPENDIX A
COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES
STATE OF GEORGIA

Allied Community Services, Inc.
P.O. Box 458
Gainesville, Georgia 30501
Phone: (404) 532-0118

Altamaha Area Community Action Agency, Inc.
P.O. Box 466
Reidsville, Georgia 30453
Phone: (912) 557-4388

Area Community to Improve Opportunities Now, Inc.
594 Oconee Street
Athens, Georgia 30605
Phone: (404) 546-8292

Central Savannah River Area Economic Opportunity Authority, Inc.
Suite 310 Mid South Building
360 Bay Street
Augusta, Georgia 30901
Phone: (404) 733-9002

Clayton County Community Services Authority, Inc.
667 South Avenue
Forest Park, Georgia 30050
Phone: (404) 363-0575

Coastal Georgia Area Community Action Agency, Inc.
P.O. Box 1814
Brunswick, Georgia 31520
Phone: (912) 264-3281

Coastal Plain Area Economic Opportunity Authority, Inc.
P.O. Box 1645
Valdosta, Georgia 31601
Phone: (912) 244-7860

Community Action for Improvement, Inc.
P.O. Box 1307, 301 Broome Street
LaGrange, Georgia 30241
DeKalb County Economic Opportunity Authority, Inc.,
3550 Kensington Road
Decatur, Georgia 30032
Phone: (404) 294-6535

Economic Opportunity Atlanta, Inc.,
75 Marietta Street, N.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
Phone: (404) 525-4262

Economic Opportunity Authority for Savannah-Chatham County
Areas, Inc.,
P.O. Box 1353
Savannah, Georgia 31402
Phone: (912) 232-4392

Enrichment Services Program, Inc.,
P.O. Box 788
Columbus, Georgia 31902
Phone: (404) 324-2148

Heart of Georgia Community Action Council, Inc.,
P.O. Box 398, 213 Pine Street
Eastman, Georgia 31023
Phone: (912) 374-4301

Macon-Bibb Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.,
Room 610, Grand Buidling
Macon, Georgia 31201
Phone (912) 746-2258

Middle Georgia Community Action Agency, Inc.,
801 Young Street
P.O. Box 2286
Warner Robins, Georgia 31093
Phone: (912) 922-4464

Ninth District Opportunity, Inc.,
123 North Main Street, P.O. Drawer L
Gainesville, Georgia 30501
Phone: (404) 532-3191

North Georgia Community Action Agency, Inc.,
251 South Main Street
P.O. Box 530
Jasper, Georgia 30143
Phone: 692-5644
Northwest Georgia Economic Opportunity Authority, Inc.
120 W. Villanow Street, P.O. Box 525
LaFayette, Georgia 30728
Phone: (404) 638-3203

Piedmont Area Community Action Agency, Inc.
P.O. Box 133, 163 Covington Street
Jackson, Georgia 30233
Phone: (404) 775-5323

Slash Pine Community Action Agency, Inc.
201 State Street, P.O. Box 1965
Waycross, Georgia 31501
Phone: (912) 285-6083

Southwest Georgia Community Action Council, Inc.
County Agriculture Building
P.O. Drawer 1219
Moultrie, Georgia 31768
Phone: (912) 985-3610

Tallatoona Economic Opportunity Authority, Inc.
P.O. Box 685
Cartersville, Georgia 30120
Phone: (404) 382-5421

West Central Georgia Community Action Council, Inc.
P.O. Box 350, 403 N. Drayton Street
Montezuma, Georgia 31063
Phone: (912) 472-8176
NON CAA CONTRACTORS

Albany Urban League
626 Pine Avenue
Albany, Georgia 31701
Phone: (912) 883-1410

Marietta/Cobb Community Center
P.O. Box 393
Marietta, Georgia 30060
Phone: (404) 427-4250

Marietta Housing Authority
269 Lawrence Street
P.O. Box 393
Marietta, Georgia 30060
Phone: (404) 422-5300

Oconee APDC
P.O. Box 707
Milledgeville, Georgia 31061

Overview Corporation (Oconee APDC)
P.O. Box 707
Milledgeville, Georgia 31061
Phone: (912) 452-5327
APPENDIX B

Area Community to Improve Opportunity
Now (ACTION), Inc.,
594 Oconee Street
Athens, Georgia  30605
(404) 546-8292

Executive Director: Wilbur P. Jones
Chairman: William J. Breeding

Counties served:
Clark, Green, Morgan, Oglethorpe, Elbert, Walton, Madison

Funding Sources:

Community Services Administration $ 690,622.00
Dept. of Health, Education & Welfare 370,998.00
Dept. of Human Resources 580,698.00
Dept. of Labor 1,686,371.00
Dept. of Energy 10,982.00
Dept. of Agriculture 151,743.00
Total Fundings: 3,491,414.00
County Commissioners (City of Athens) 6,406.00
Community Development (City of Athens) $ 108,429.00

List of Programs

Senior Opportunity Services
EARN - Employment and Responsibility Now
Project JOIN - Job Opportunity & Involvement Now
Community Food & Nutrition
Anti-Crime Education

Energy Conservation
Work Experience
Head Start
Health Education
Family Recreation
Community Services
Central Savannah River Area Economic Opportunity Authority, Inc.,
360 Bay Street
Suite 310, Mid South Building
Augusta, Georgia 30901
(404) 722-0493

Executive Director: Robert O. Davis
Chairman: Henri Freeman

Counties Served:
Richmond, Burke, Screven

Funding Sources:

Community Services Administration $ 623,622.00
Dept. of Health, Education & Welfare 394,200.00
Dept. of Human Resources 136,374.00
Dept. of Labor 100,000.00
Total Funding: $1,254,396.00

List of Programs:

Neighborhood Service Centers
Farm Workers' Economic Development (Now Terminated)
Community Food & Nutrition
Emergency Energy Assistance
Weatherization
Summer Feeding
Head Start
Day Care
North Georgia Community Action Agency, Inc.,
251 South Main Street
P.O. Box 530
Jasper, Georgia 30143
(404) 692-5644

Executive Director: Frank Hill
Chairman: Dale Huddleston

Counties Served:
Cherokee, Fannin
Whitefield, Gilmer,
Murray, Pickens

Funding Sources:

Community Services Administration $ 458,826.00
Dept. of Health, Education & Welfare -0-
Dept. of Human Resources 312,369.00
Dept. of Labor 88,945.00
Total Funding: $ 860,140.00

List of Programs:

Emergency Energy Conservation
Special Crisis Intervention
Transportation Assistance for Elderly
Family Day Care Home Referral
Public Service Employment
Emergency Energy Assistance
Community Food & Nutrition
Outreach Home Management

General Community
Summer Youth Recreation
Childhood Development
Aging Nutrition
Senior Center
Transportation System
Employment Program
Energy Assistance
Weatherization
Southwest Georgia Community Action Council, Inc.
County Agriculture Building
P.O. Drawer 1219
Moultrie, Georgia 31768
(912) 985-3610

Executive Director: Robert J. Clinton
Chairman: Sam Lofton

Counties Served:
Colquitt, Baker, Grady, Lee, Miller, Mitchell, Terrell, Thomas, Worth, Early

Funding Sources:
Community Services Administration $ 595,626.00
Dept. of Health, Education & Welfare 905,762.00
Dept. of Human Resources 99,200.00
Dept. of Labor 464,380.00
Total Funding: $2,064,968.00

List of Programs:
Emergency Energy Asst. Program Multi-County Handicap Grant
Emergency Energy/Weatherization Senior Citizens Nutrition
Youth Recreation Program (YRP) Community Food & Nutrition
Multi-County Child Development Summer Feeding Program
Affordable Solar Appliances for Senior Citizens Housing
the Poor Senior Citizens Housing
Migrant Child Development CETA Contracts
Child Development Programs Handicap Grant
Emergency Food Rural Housing Project
Emergency Food Weatherization
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*Note: Funding figures are approximate and may vary.*
Executive Administrator: Levi Moore  
Chairman: Robert L. Foreman, Jr.  

Counties Served:  
Fulton, Gwinnett,  
Rockdale, Douglas  

Funding Sources:  
Community Services Administration $3,116,478.00  
Dept. of Health, Education & Welfare 1,578,296.00  
Dept. of Human Resources 548,387.00  
Dept. of Labor 2,073,999.00  
Total Funding: $7,317,160.00  

List of Programs:  
Emergency Energy Assistance  
Weatherization/Crisis Intervention  
*Basic Skills learning  
High Support Counseling  
Veterans Outreach & Counseling  
Community Gardening  
Head Start  

Neighborhood Service Center  
Social Services  
Community Organization  
Housing Hotline  
Volunteer Services  
Staff Development
Economic Opportunity Atlanta

List of Programs (cont'd)

*Edgewood Parent and Child Center
Summer Youth Employment Program
CETA Title III
Youth Community Conservation and Employment Program CETA
Title III
*Family Counseling Services
Fast Start - CETA Title VI
Public Service Employment Program
CETA Title VI
Summer Youth Recreation Support
Community Programs on Aging
Title III
Nutrition Programs for the Elderly Title VII
Head Start - Child Development
Gwinnett Adult Services
Title XX
Alcoholism Treatment

*Summer Head Start
Job Corps - Gale House
Atlanta Employment Program
*Briar Patch
*Federation of Southern Cooperatives
*The Patch, Inc.
*Private Household Workers
Senior Opportunities and Services
Foster Grandparents
Summer Food Program
Summer Jobs Program
Rockdale Homemaker Chore Services Title XX
Drug Recovery

*Delegated Programs
APPENDIX E
APPENDIX E

A TYPICAL COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY ORGANIZATION CHART

PRINCIPAL REPRESENTATIVE BOARD

PERSONNEL AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
HEALTH COMMITTEE
PLANNING AND EVALUATION COMMITTEE

CENTRAL STAFF

GREEN COUNTY BOARD
HEAD START COUNCIL

CAA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
SCHOOL BOARD
HEAD START

CAA NYC

NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH COUNCIL
NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS DI

WEST END COMMUNITY COUNCIL

CITY HOSPITAL
COMP. HEALTH CENTER

CAA CENTERS

CTR CTR CTR
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Coley, Bill M. Board Representative of the Poor. Southwest Georgia CAC., Moultrie, GA. Interview, July 12, 1978.


Lewis, Webster. Planning Technician, Title XX Programs, Office of District Programs, Atlanta, GA. Interview, August 17, 1978.


