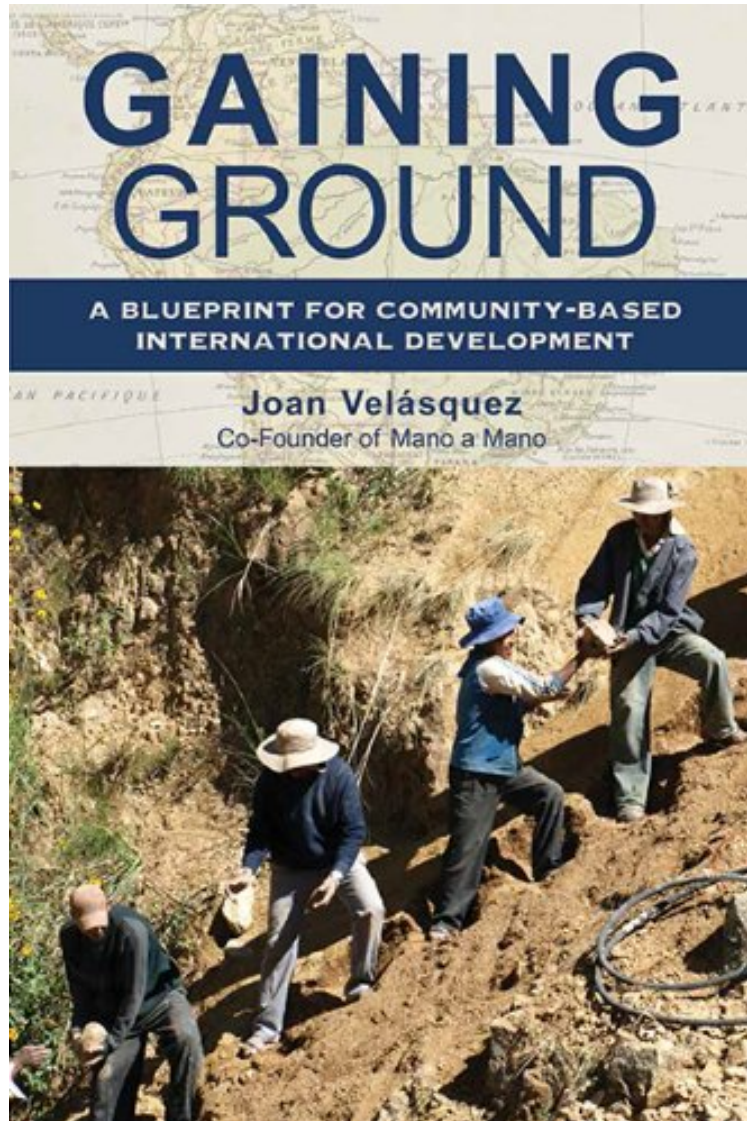


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Gaining Ground

Joan Velsquez, Ph.D.

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Joan Velsquez, Ph.D. : Gaining Ground before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Gaining Ground:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Follow your DreamBy FlacoBobThis is an awesome how to book, not a novel with only love and excitementbut a beautiful and exciting manual on how to develop and create a non-profit agency, in Bolivia from Mendota Heights, Minnesota, a difference of 4,623 miles. Joan, a Peace Corps Volunteer in the early years of the agency, is sent to a remote and very isolated community in the Andean mountains of Bolivia. She meets her future husband and NGO partner Segundo and his family, the Velzquez clanall Quechua

speaking indigenous people of the Inca Empire. Joan discovers an indigenous community that may not have much, extremely poor, but rich in cultural values that have been handed down for generations. Family members help one another during difficult times. Many of the communities near Cochabamba (the third largest city in Bolivia) are not even on any map, no roads and seldom any type of community health centers. Death rates for children during their first years is 10% in rural Bolivia, and 37% of rural children under age five suffer from chronic malnutrition. Where is the Bolivian government in all of this? What are they doing to improve the life of the rural population? Though Peace Corps could make a difference, Bolivia has closed the program twice. Even sending the American Ambassador back to his country. Yet, in all of this, Joan and Segundo keep doing what is important to their communities: they learn to listen. But back in Mendota Heights, Minnesota, Joan and her husband Segundo begin taking small medical supplies to his Bolivian community in their suitcases. They collect never-used surplus medical supplies and lightly used medical equipment for hospitals and medical centers in Bolivia. What started as a suitcase of medical supplies before 1994, now sees 150,000 pounds being shipped as of 1999. By April 2014, 3.5 million pounds of usable medical surplus had been shipped from Minnesota to Bolivia and it all started with one suitcase and an idea! If you are involved in establishing an NGO, or a board member or volunteer for your local community, I strongly suggest that you read *Gaining Ground*. This manual can make your efforts more professional. *Mano a Mano* is a step by step procedure for any NGO that wants to be successful. It will never be an easy task, but *Mano a Mano* has blazed the trail. The fact that Joan and Segundo focused on Bolivia, you can do the same perhaps in Nepal. And as Joan said, the folks at the IRS were very helpful and encouraged her. *Mano a Mano* started as a hospital and health center effort, but roads had to be cleared, planes used for emergency, schools built, and the battle for donations. *Mano a Mano* expanded to meet the challenge of providing health care and related matters. On April 2016, *Mano a Mano* will celebrate their 21st Anniversary and it is still going strong. What is important to consider; had there never been a *Mano a Mano* effort in Bolivia, where would we be health wise? Joan and Segundo have made a difference. Joan's Peace Corps experience made a difference, letting her see that a simple idea like packing a few medical items in their suitcase can make a difference. Joan and Segundo have not created monuments, but developed communities for the betterment of Bolivia and Minnesota. I recommend that any NGO or community organizer read this manual and text on how to create, organize, and establish an NGO that you will be proud of. Let your donors see what can be done! The villager that felt Joan and Segundo were noisemakers who promise everything but do nothing in Quechua he said, *ch amas*. He has seen what communities can do together! These are not noisemakers! 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Put the Book in Hand - *Pone El Libro a Mano* By Matthew Hartranft If you've ever donated to charity, you WANT this book. If you've ever searched for a better way to give, you NEED this book. The life lessons spelled out in this book inspired me to contact the organization and to meet the founders. I cried when I heard their founding story firsthand. EVERY project this organization has ever done is still active and successful - all 300+ projects, all in Bolivia, and all growing - from clinics to schools to roads and bridges. There is something special, perhaps mysterious, certainly wonderful about what must be behind the success of the organization that wrote this book - *Mano a Mano*. I have served for the past five years as the program director of an international NGO that restores livelihood in regions affected by natural disaster. I have learned a lot from this book and my advice is; Put the "Libro a Mano" (Book in hand). 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great vignettes make the story come alive By Ellen Scholten Well written discussion of how a successful development organization was created. Great vignettes make the story come alive. A good read.

Launched at a kitchen table in Mendota Heights, Minnesota, *Mano a Mano* began collecting and shipping medical supplies to impoverished Bolivian communities in 1994. Twenty years later, an organization that once operated exclusively from the founder's basement has now successfully implemented over 300 infrastructure projects, including medical clinics, schools, roads, and water reservoirs. As a result of their efforts, over 700,000 Bolivians, who face one of the highest rural poverty rates in the world, now have access to health care for the first time. *Gaining Ground* is the inspiring case study of how this volunteer-based, grassroots organization is making history in Bolivia, and offers an autobiographical look at the "how to" and "lessons learned" of their international development work. Inside *Gaining Ground*, discover: a blueprint for developing your own international NGO, why the grassroots community partnership model works, how to facilitate participatory development, approaches to achieving sustainability and self-sufficiency, alternatives to standard organizational structure, the critical nature of a bicultural perspective, and a detailed history of this organization

"Now our wives and children won't die." --Community leader of Chullpa K'asa, after *Mano a Mano* built a clinic in his community. "Mano a Mano helps with many different kinds of projects, but for us, the most important is water. Water is life." ---Community resident of Ucuchi, where *Mano a Mano* built its first water reservoir About the Author Joan Velsquez, Ph.D., co-founded *Mano a Mano* with her husband, Segundo, and wrote *Gaining Ground* in response to numerous requests for guidance in navigating humanitarian initiatives. She hopes that this book will inspire others to reach out to marginalized communities in all corners of the world, and will remind readers that people of modest

means and intense commitment can make a difference.