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IFES

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

IN SALVADORAN SOCIETY

WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON GENDER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SAN SALVADOR

EL SALVADOR

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INTRODUCTION

The Peace Agreements of 1992 have taken root and produced changes that have greatly strengthened democracy in El Salvador. The elections of 1994 have been called "the elections of the century"[1] because they took place at the end of an era, after the civil war that consumed this country for more than ten years.

However, the Legislative and Municipal elections of March 1997 ended with concern at the lack of interest in political participation, as indicated by the low voter turnout. It is therefore important to analyze the barriers to political participation, because the involvement of ordinary citizens in day-to-day civic activities is essential to the democratic process.

Today, El Salvador faces the challenge of consolidating its democracy. Traditionally, a free and fair electoral process has been considered a guarantee of democracy; however, elections alone are not sufficient. The challenge is to give to the people the right of participation, and the desire to participate, not only in elections but in the search for greater social, political and economic equality.

Any look at citizen participation must include both men and women. Traditionally, women have been relegated to a secondary social, political and economic role. Voter turnout in El Salvador has been markedly lower among women than among men. The fundamental basis of a democratic system is the principle of justice and equality for all citizens.

This study attempts to provide a deeper understanding of the reasons why Salvadorans do or do not participate, their understanding of democracy, and the equity of opportunities for men and women. At the same time, we hope to determine what opportunities for participation are available to Salvadoran citizens, especially women. This analysis will provide a clear view of the equality, or inequality, of access to decision making.

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[1] The words used by ARENA, the governing party.

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General Objective

- To understand the attitudes, opinions, experiences and expectations held by different social, political and economic sectors with respect to the democratic process and especially the role of women in the demand for and access to citizen and political participation.

Specific Objectives

- To determine, with emphasis on the role of gender, the degree of involvement of different social, political and economic sectors in actions that foster citizen participation.

- To identify areas of common interest among the various sectors that offer opportunities for the participation of women.

- To determine the various sectors' level of knowledge about subjects of national interest and their response to the problems faced by women.

- To define actions that can be taken to increase citizen participation in Salvadoran society, especially the participation of women.

I. METHODS

This study was undertaken using the focus group method, which gathers a fixed number of people in a place easily accessible to all participants. Qualitative information was obtained in a creative and efficient manner in a climate of cordiality. In order to obtain a clear perception of the areas of interest, the facilitators encouraged discussion by generating questions based on predetermined guidelines.

The division of groups into men and women produced a clearer differentiation of their attitudes and opinions with respect to the same issues.

The focus groups met between August 12 and August 23, 1997, with a sample of 276 persons, 138 individuals of each sex. Twenty-eight focus groups were formed, each with approximately 10 men or 10 women and with the following characteristics:

5 groups of non-leader women from rural areas	5 groups of non-leader men from rural areas
5 groups of female municipal leaders	5 groups of male municipal leaders
1 group of professional women	1 group of professional men
1 group of young university women	1 group of young university men
1 group of female national leaders	1 group of male national leaders
1 group of members of civic organizations	1 group of members of the media

The **discussion topics** included: participation in the political process, areas and mechanisms of participation, women's participation, rights and responsibilities in a democracy, family and community needs, and recommendations originated by the groups.

The selection of the participants in the focus groups was based on the following criteria: **sex, age, civil status, education, income, employment.** Affiliation with some organized group and having a daughter or granddaughter were required of male participants from rural areas and in the professional groups. University students were required to attend UES, UCA, José Matías Delgado, Tecnológica or Politécnica.

Professional participants were required not to be affiliated with a professional association different from their university training. Members of civic organizations could not also represent other sectors, such as professional associations, NGOs or women's groups. Finally, participants in the male and female leaders groups, whether at the national, municipal or departmental levels, had to be recognized as such by the media or the citizenry.

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The demographic profile of the participants was as follows:

Education: 60% of the participants had no education beyond the ninth grade, 15% had completed high school, 5% had a technical education and 20% had a university degree.
Age: 36% were 34 years of age or below, 40% were between 35 and 52, and 24% were 53 years old or older.
Civil Status: 64% of the participants were married or lived with a companion, 28% were single, 5% were divorced and 3% were widows/widowers.
Participants with children: 81% had children and 19% had none.
Family income: 68% had a family income below 2,451 colones (approximately US$285) per month, 30% had an income above ¢2,451, and 2% did not respond.
Employment: 54% of the participants did not have permanent jobs, 26% had permanent jobs, and 20% owned their own businesses.
Affiliation with organized groups: 66% of the participants had no group affiliation and 34% did.

The criteria for the **geographic selection** were: departments with a potential to generate greater income; departments with a high level of poverty[2]; departments with a high incidence of health problems, especially areas with high incidence of gastro-intestinal diseases[3] (diarrhea); lack of basic services such as sanitation, electricity, water and sewage pipes[4] ; high level of illiteracy; balanced participation in the major political parties, department-wide; departments with female mayors.

The application of these criteria indicated that the most suitable departments for this study were: **Ahuachapán:** site Apaneca; **La Libertad:** site San Juan Opico; **Cabañas:** site Guacotecti; **Usulután:** site Jiquilisco, with two islands represented; **Morazán:** site San Francisco Gotera; **San Salvador.**

The criteria to select the municipalities within the departments were: easy access and five cantons no further than 45 minutes away by car from the research site. Some of the cantons represented had schools and basic services and some had not.

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[2]

Source: Ramirez V. Basic Indicators and Social Expenditures at the Municipal Level, January 1996

[3]

Source: Home Surveys, MIPLAN. 1994

[4]

Ibid.

II. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The focus groups provided a wealth of information about the perception of and the knowledge about citizen participation in democratic processes in a variety of geographic sites and social, political and economic sectors.

Participation is perceived by the citizens of rural areas as "getting together to talk and detect problems"[5] and "getting involved in something" or "being taken into account." A broader concept is the one perceived by professionals and students who indicate that participation is "the active incorporation into a process" that identifies the needs of the people. For men and women leaders, participation is conceived of as "being active within an organization" which in turn creates "a process that permits our communication with other groups and social agents."

Citizen participation is perceived as "work for the improvement of the community and the country" as well as "everybody's civic actions."

On the other hand, the perception that citizens have about **political participation** is that it means "to support the candidates" and "to participate in elections, in the political parties and in a political post."

The discussion of **rights and responsibilities of citizenry** indicated an almost total lack of knowledge of these concepts. It was assumed that first, these rights identify certain acquired faculties which are in decline and that they are associated with problems of a social character. There appeared to be no specific knowledge about civic duties and what they are.

For the participants, men appeared to benefit from the rights of citizens and women were obligated by the responsibilities, thus increasing the social inequities. The lack of familiarity with and awareness of citizens' rights and responsibilities led to the perception that citizen participation is related exclusively to party affiliation. It would also appear that the political parties have contributed to the distrust of the focus group participants, who said "they lie to the people" and "there should be laws to make politicians fulfill their promises."

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Quotation marks, wherever they appear in this report, indicate that the words were expressed by the participants in the study.

There was a dichotomy among participants as to whether El Salvador is following a democratic process. Some people believe that it is, but others are of the opinion that what is happening in the country is the opposite of democracy, and that democracy cannot be achieved because of "the difference of opinions and the social differences." Democracy is perceived in simple terms as "peace and unity," "knowledge about rights and responsibilities," "freedom to act politically," "equal participation by everybody," and a "system of political parties and an electoral system." In a broader sense, democracy is perceived as the "norms to guarantee constitutionality and human rights."

At the municipal level, participants said that the nation is approaching democracy, but that there was still much work to be done. The most radical perception of all was expressed by the youth groups, who said that El Salvador is getting further away from democracy due to the predominance of social inequities and that nobody listens to what the population has to say, which tends to reduce opportunities for participation.

Participants said that the assumption of equality between men and women, in reality does not exist. "Men overwhelm women with their strength, character, egoism and all the opportunities they have." Machismo, the exaggerated importance given by the society to the masculine sex, was recognized as a serious obstacle to the equitable participation of men and women.

Focus group members believe that there are opportunities for civic participation, but that fear, apathy and lack of time due to work and/or home duties do not permit the use of those opportunities. As for political participation, there are insufficient opportunities and the citizens face numerous obstacles to gain access to them.

It is interesting to note that many of the participants identified various institutions, with the emphasis on cooperatives, schools and churches, as providers of opportunities for participation. Both male and female leaders indicated that the opportunities for participation are concentrated in their places of work, such as city halls, government institutions, NGOs, businesses and political parties.

Women's participation in the making of public policy, from the perspective of the women themselves, is minimal because men take advantage of opportunities to participate and "do not approve of the participation of women." Impediments to women's participation may include sexual harassment, physical abuse and/or unfair competition in schooling and/or work. Domestic work, "enslaving and unrecognized," is limiting, even if women have the desire and opportunity to participate as citizens. Furthermore, the double work load (inside and outside the home) becomes a strong impediment to other activities. Some expressions used by women with respect to their civic participation were: "you get nowhere unless you

have clout," so it is necessary to "change the mentality of those above." Another obstacle that minimizes the participation of rural women is the obligation to "request permission" from their husbands or companions.

Both male and female participants indicate that besides machismo, another impediment to participation is dependence and limited access to higher levels of education, since tradition and culture have required that girls help with the household duties.

Participants also mentioned that women themselves contribute to the support of machismo because of cultural patterns and the mistaken view of feminism in some women's organizations which, by excluding men, provoke clashes between the genders. The church was identified as one of the institutions that encourages women to be obedient and assigns their place as being in the home.

In spite of the grave limitations on women's participation, an innovative spirit appears to be gestating among young university women, who are conscious of the effort they must make to create and consolidate their own opportunities for participation. On the other hand, young university men show concern for the fact that women "are smarter and more disciplined." This perception makes the men see women as a "threat."

According to the focus groups, professional men "resist recognizing and granting opportunities" for civic and/or political participation to professional women because of their socio-economic conditioning to a pattern of labor competitiveness. For them "there exists a preoccupation with defending" economic opportunities and social position against competition in general, and in particular, against the threat that feminine competition represents within the public sphere.

However, professional women express "resistance" and "impotence" to asserting themselves into leading positions. They do not know what else to do because, culturally, they see themselves as defeated by the social control exerted by men.

Contrary to what happens in the city, the lack of economic resources has pushed women in rural areas to look for alternative forms of income. Here, a woman is valued for her help and usefulness in the family as well as in the community and, as precarious living conditions get worse, both men and women must channel their time strictly towards activities for survival. However, the greater opportunities for rural women to participate do not necessarily imply that men cede portions of real power in those roles that, in accordance with the sexual division of labor, have traditionally belonged to them.

The participation of women members of the focus groups in the political arena is less than that of men, although both recognize that women have increased their role in public life without neglecting the home.

Inequity among social classes was also perceived. The participants in the focus groups stated that "the lower part of the society does not live within the democratic process." "The sectors at and above the median participate and benefit from democracy" and "the poor have no access to the institutions of the country while women are pushed down." Furthermore, elected representatives and political parties lack credibility because "they do not listen to the people."

III. SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

According to the participants, the existence of a number of unresolved needs in El Salvador is the primary obstacle to higher levels of civic participation for the portion of the population striving to improve basic living conditions. A list of those needs, as identified by the different demographic and sectoral groups, follows.

Non-Leader Men and Women in Rural Areas:

This sector of the population expressed hopelessness about learning new skills to solve its problems. They saw the low levels of schooling, and the consequent high level of illiteracy, as serious deterrents to participation, especially among women, who consider themselves "ignorant, useless, slaves, and rustic; unable to think and transmit ideas," with all opportunities for participation closed to them so that they will "obey and attend to their homes." Women are assumed to be "marginated" and without the capacity to solve their problems, with their sole role being the support and reproduction of the family.

The general opinion was that the lack of basic services, poverty, not being heard by their elected leaders, and lack of organization were the main barriers blocking participation, both civic and political. Participants believed that this situation will continue as long as there is no utilization of the available opportunities, because people do not consider civic and political participation as part of their interests and immediate needs.

Women considered "natural" and as "protection" the control that men exercise over them. This attitude reinforces the transmission of values that are detrimental to the achievement of gender equity and democracy, and the existence of low self-esteem and dependence on men, thus strengthening machismo and increasing intra-family violence.

The opinion of the participants was also that dependence on assistance from donor institutions through civic organizations had created an attitude of apathy. In the communities with the lowest levels of participation, there is no evidence of substantial improvement, despite the assistance received. Civic organizations have generated expectations, but follow-up and measurement of the impact of the actions taken has been deficient.

Professionals:

Participation in organized groups becomes difficult due to factors such as the economic crisis in El Salvador, defined by the focus groups as the high cost of living

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and the high rate of unemployment. These problems prevent people from involving themselves in activities not connected with their workload or their employment because that is what "they have to take care of."

The need to be represented more effectively by political leaders was palpable.

University youth:

There was great mistrust of the current system of political participation, which they felt lacked organization and did not consider the people. People feel that they are not represented. Materialism, individualism and religion "limit thinking" and limit participation in general. Many universities lack programs to motivate participation in development projects.

Male and female leaders:

These groups showed a preoccupation with achieving political, social and economic harmony that could guarantee political and civic participation and lead to social and economic well-being. They were aware of the need for adequate methods and technical assistance to strengthen leadership, manage groups, design public policy and implement strategies for inter- institutional coordination in order to guarantee citizen participation at all institutional levels for the support of democracy in the country.

Both male female leaders perceived great needs among the population. Apathy and distrust, together with a paucity of information and a lack of response from the established institutions, hindered participation, which was often linked in participants' comments to the lack of vision and openness of the political parties.

Finally, they were concerned that lack of access to basic services and the fear of change in cultural patterns may reinforce civic non-participation.

Civic Organizations:

Representatives of this sector recognized that they have lacked the vision to stimulate citizen participation and that the opinions of the population about the needs that should be fulfilled and projects that should be carried out have not been considered. They admitted that this stimulation has not been provided and that resources have been wasted due to the lack of inter-institutional coordination and deficiencies in the assessment of the impact of actions taken. These circumstances have generated despair and lack of trust within the population, which is often shown in the form of civic non-participation.

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There was a generalized concern about the lack of continuity and follow-up in projects and programs of human development and citizen participation. It was furthermore recognized that the organizations had become "commercialized" to the point that their actions, at the local level, were often a "competition" among themselves to win the interest of the population, keeping the communities at a distance. There were also questions about the time that must be invested, without mechanisms to evaluate the real impact and the level of performance of the actions of the civic organizations.

For the majority of the representatives of civic organizations, civic participation and political participation, although not synonymous with the epistemological point of view, were closely associated. Many said: "I am aware that the work we do increases citizen participation." For others, however, citizen participation is the fundamental purpose of their actions.

The members of civic organizations believed that community work must include both sexes, and must empower women through information and training. Furthermore, the population must participate in community development projects through guilds, trade-unions or other existing institutions, as these projects were viewed as providing opportunities to promote women's participation.

The organizations credited themselves with the intent to increase women's participation, but recognized that this does not necessarily translate into concrete results. They acknowledged that the type and quality of the opportunities for women to participate, were generally of a secondary or marginal character.

The Media:

The media both provide an opportunity for participation and influence public opinion for or against broader participation. According to the media participants, "disinformation and management of information according to ideology affect the participation of the population."

The media representatives indicated that technical training for media personnel was necessary. There was awareness of the role the media can play to educate and lead, but the lack of a democratic culture was seen as the reason citizens do not demand access to the media to express their opinions publicly, and as the reason the media do not generate the necessary opportunities.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the opinions expressed by the participants and the methodology used, the following can be concluded:

Citizen participation was perceived as civic action, expressed in the phrases, "it is a right" and the "freedom to elect," remaining limited and relegated to an electoral event. The focus groups cited their involvement in community activities when "participation" was mentioned, but when the words used were "citizen participation," they connected them with elections and political parties. Democracy was seen as a process that must go beyond electoral participation, and a process that will require a great deal of work to develop because, at this time, human values are not practiced on a daily basis.

The collective opinion was that active participation of the citizens will be in inverse proportion to their motivation to satisfy particular interests and/or needs of a private nature. Approximately 68% of the participants in this study had a family income of less than ¢ 2,451.00 and therefore could not afford the basic cost of living estimated at ¢2,442.00[6] for 1997 by the Secretary of Economy.

As long as members of the population are unable to satisfy their basic individual needs and those of their family groups, they will hardly feel motivated to participate actively in work that is different from that leading to the generation of economic resources. Only 26% of the participants held permanent employment.

With respect to the experiences they had participating in the political process, focus group members said that the interest of the established institutions in encouraging their participation had been minimal. In the case of women, access to opportunities for participation was even less. "When we got organized for the potable water project we cooperated. But a government promoter embezzled the community's money, and [because of that experience] we are no longer available to participate." "At the national level there is nobody that keeps his/her promises" and "we live all our lives with deception." "When we have turned to the authorities, they have not solved our problem." As far as government institutions are concerned, the experience of the focus group members was that of "not having been heard."

As for political participation is concerned, the experiences of the focus groups were primarily concentrated in electoral participation. They said, "politicians make offers,

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Source: El Financiero, la Prensa Gráfica, Tuesday, June 24, 1997

-but they do not keep their promises, and they lie." One participant explains her experience, "Once I was named a substitute (municipal) council member, but I was never called to a single meeting. I was only used to fill the list."

Focus group members said what they wanted most with regard to participation was "being heard" and "getting answers to our problems." There was a desire to collaborate and learn, but there was also a belief that before that can happen the trust of the population must be earned. The media, in spite of being aware of their important role to inform and educate the public, recognized that they had not been able to promote citizen participation. These multiplier agents themselves acknowledged that they had insufficient knowledge of the principles of democracy, partly because of lack of training. This knowledge was seen as necessary for the implementation of actions that benefit the citizenry.

Civic organizations also recognized their lack of vision with respect to fostering participation. It was not possible, within the context of this study, to determine the existence of coordinating mechanisms that inter-relate actions between civil society and the government, although this inter-relation could foster the citizen participation necessary to sustain democracy in El Salvador.

All the sectors were of the opinion that equal opportunities must be given to both men and women, but focus group members said that in practice men are concerned about the possibility that women will wake up and take action to generate social changes and therefore impinge on the opportunities available to men. Many participants, both men and women, wanted to make the necessary efforts to initiate or contribute to the development of a systematic process that would increase civic participation and above all, that of women, as long as an organization or institution facilitated this development. The male and female leader participants, in particular, were aware of the work that is needed to carry out a process to make citizen participation viable.

The priority areas identified, particularly by women, in order to generate a new culture of gender equity were the social areas, with an emphasis on education. The focus groups did not prioritize the need for greater women's participation in political or economic sectors in spite of the enormous role that women are already playing in the economic sector.

The groups noted that women have always been assigned roles in health and education, areas which were considered as "women's own" and in which men did not count. The groups felt that women themselves must make efforts to open doors and to have their participation recognized in the political and economic arenas.

The concerns of both men and women in the focus groups included the economic crisis; lack of information and guidance on how to obtain access to different institutions; lack of safety, not just with regard to delinquency, but within a total vision which included the safety to which all people are entitled in their family, social and work circles and specifically in recreation, health and education.

To respond to the problems of women, the focus groups felt that attention must be directed to creating attitude changes both in men and women, so that the family, the schools and the workplace can develop values to increase gender equality. They believed that it would be very difficult for women alone to solve the lack of access and opportunities in society.

According to the groups, the population cannot be faulted for its lack of interest in active participation because of El Salvador's social, political and economic problems and its history, characterized by a culture of non-participation. These factors explain the attitude of indifference towards citizen participation in solving community and national problems.

Participants in the groups believe that an increase in citizen participation will develop to the degree that women and men leaders, in coordination with different sectors of the civil society and the government itself, promote actions that can initiate a change in attitudes and an increase in the level of trust between men and women in El Salvador. The lack of confidence and trust in elected officials expressed presents the risk that the population will not avail itself of opportunities to participate that may arise.

Political participation was viewed as partisan affiliation. But there was doubt among the participants about the advancement of the democratic process. This was due to the fact that they did not see opportunities for access to a life of dignity and justice; the prospects of social instability were seen as growing and there was fear of worsening conditions.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

In answer to the question of how best to foster citizen participation in order to eliminate obstacles and fill needs, the majority of the participants recommended:

a) Develop educational programs for both children and adults about democracy, its values, rights and responsibilities, all with a gender focus. These educational programs should be designed from the point of view of the daily lives of the target audience, rather than the perspective of the technicians.

b) Develop a training curriculum for the media in order to stimulate the spread of information about citizens' responsibilities, rights and the laws of El Salvador.

c) Hold public town hall discussions involving non-organized local citizens and distribute information about rights and responsibilities, Salvadoran law, and the application of democratic values, such as freedom, responsibility, justice, tolerance, pluralism and dialogue.

d) The Government should open public discussions in order, first, to know what the people are thinking and, second, to discuss proposals for new laws and determine their application and benefits to the people.

e) Generation of greater employment and credit would resolve many needs, as would the execution of programs that guarantee citizen safety in sports, health, and other areas.

f) Train multipliers such as elementary, secondary and university level teachers, religious teachers and community leaders to teach values intrinsic to democracy, techniques of community organization and formation of leadership groups, and knowledge of the law, all under the banner of promoting gender equality.

g) Train the most capable leaders in the strengthening of leadership, administrative management, and morality and ethics in order to avoid corruption. Train politicians and NGOs in the design of public policies that encourage citizen participation.

h) Train all public servants in areas of public relations and self-esteem in order to make public services more effective.

I) Intensify programs to eliminate illiteracy.

j) Encourage all NGOs to incorporate a focus on gender in all their projects and to unify their criteria to make inter-institutional coordination viable.

k) Facilitate and legitimize coordination among NGOs via the Ministry of the Interior.

l) Sensitize the Church to its role in eliminating myths that contribute to the subordination of women by men.

These views of the focus groups suggest some possibilities for follow-up action in the interest of expanding participation in El Salvador:

1) Encourage legitimately established NGOs to coordinate their actions and form a network for democratic participation. This network, which should be multi-sectoral, could facilitate:

- A new vision of the importance of citizen participation for sustainable development and for the improvement of the quality of life, by means of the practice of human values in all NGO activities.

- The establishment and coordination of strategic alliances among civic organizations, government jurisdictions and, indispensably, the media.

- Dissemination of information to the population, with special emphasis on women. The information can be adjusted to fit the audience, so that the practice of human values can lead to tangible and concrete actions applied to the interests and needs of the population within a defined zone or region.

- Unification of criteria to coordinate and optimize the use of material, economic and human resources by the NGOs in order to achieve a greater impact on the communities and encourage greater citizen participation.

- Promotion among the multiplier agents of the idea that the beneficiaries directly involved in the process should monitor, evaluate, follow up and measure the impact of all NGO activities. By participating, the population will be able to see the results and guarantee recurrence and sustainability of these activities.

2) The projects to be carried out for the sustained development of El Salvador should be based on studies that involve the citizens. Having citizens participate in the studies, not only under the donor's direction, but also after the donor leaves El Salvador, can assure better use and sustainability of the project.

3) Donor organizations should develop a model for coordination in order to optimize the use of their material, financial and human resources, establishing criteria for the evaluation and follow-up of projects carried out by civic organizations and the Government of El Salvador.

4) Initiate a process for developing *skills* in multiplier agents such as civic organizations, media, government and private institutions.

- The development of skills should be focused on the application and design of strategies and mechanisms to encourage citizen participation, with a focus on gender.

- These skills should be facilitated by dynamic techniques and procedures applied to subjects inherent to the reality of each community.

5) There are good opportunities for education and training in democracy and the rights and responsibilities of citizens, if this training makes use of dynamic techniques applied to the concrete reality of the beneficiaries.

- The training could be started in coordination with the universities, e.g., by developing a degree in methodological techniques applied to the social marketplace.

- The opportunity for COs (community organizations) and universities to involve young people directly should not be ignored because young men and women can be integrated into local level projects. This will benefit society and awaken interest in participation.

6) Civic organizations should advise and train women and men leaders in the communities where they carry out projects.

- Advising and training should be focused on community organization, the formation of administrative boards, and Salvadoran law, all with a focus on gender and incorporating the practice of human values applied to the audience's subjects of interest.
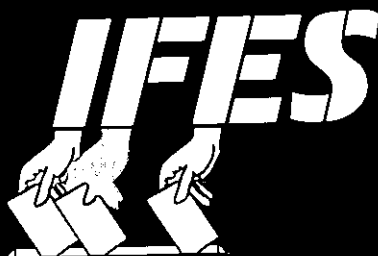
7) To further gender equality in NGO activities, meetings between couples could be carried out in homes of persons having local trust and confidence, where plans for community projects can be discussed.

- Testimonials by women who have been successful in various social, political and economic environments may be presented. Community homes can be an ideal place for presentations of that nature.

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- Fostering the growth of Children's Day care Centers will encourage more involvement of women in community activities.

8) People working in the media and communications will benefit from training in the subject of democracy and in methodologies for creating opportunities and informing the public, thus promoting democracy through public opinion.

9) Government institutions will benefit if they develop strategies to inform, advise and train both male and female public officials, so that their mechanisms to assist and provide answers to citizens, particularly women, become more effective and efficient. All government training activities on any subject can incorporate the principles of democracy, with a focus on gender equality.