SHARE FOUNDATION
Fundación SHARE

ANNUAL REPORT

In honor of all their lives meant and continue to mean, we remain committed to close partnership with Salvadoran organizations that are building the skills and capacities of individuals and communities that will usher in the possibility of a new El Salvador.

2009

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ADVOCACY PROJECTS

Working for justice through advocacy initiatives historically has been a central pilar of SHARE's work. In 2009, this emphasis continued with a variety of initiatives. These included work to ensure free and fair elections for municipal governors, legislators and the president; supporting advocacy for Equitable Rural Development Policies and Sustainable Environments through partnerships with Equipo Maiz, CONFRAS, and CREDHO. These groups provided community-based education and leadership training for environmental committees, women's groups, and activist leaders throughout Central America. SHARE continued its work in Human Rights, with a specific focus on the issue of violence against women (Feminicide); and with the Archbishop Romero Working Group to ensure adherence of the Salvadoran Government to the accords established in 2000 by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. One initiative that we highlight in this Update is SHARE's support of Salvadoran's struggle with respect to the anti-mining efforts related to the longstanding problem of gold mining in the country. Highlights below focus on two crucial elements of this work: the 2009 elections and the anti-mining initiatives.

Free and Fair Elections

In January and March 2009 elections took place to elect new municipal governments, legislators and the president of the republic. Deep concerns arose among SHARE partners about political violence, anomalies in the electoral process and the role the U.S. government would take in the elections.

- SHARE responded by strengthening partner civic education organizations in their work to educate citizens about the voting process and engage in an analysis of the candidates proposals. Civil rights workers were trained to work the polls on Election Day and to defend the vote from fraud.
- In the United States, SHARE mobilized hundreds of people including academics, grassroots solidarity volunteers and congressional representatives to advocate in favor of free and fair elections in El Salvador. Activities included conducting research and publishing about electoral anomalies and the US role in previous elections; and hosting election observation delegations.
- The 165 delegates who participated as observers of the Presidential elections in March experienced the thrill of engaging in a moment of profound historical significance. Delegates observed the electoral process in 12 key municipalities, and pressed the Salvadoran Government to ensure fairness in the process. Delegates also played a critically important role in responding to threats by conservative Congressional representatives. These Congressmen had indicated that if the FMLN were to win the elections, then Salvadorans in the US would be deported and that remittances — vital to the Salvadoran economy— would be cut off. In response, delegates in El Salvador,

together with our US allies and grassroots base began a massive email campaign to generate two congressional "Dear Colleague" letters. These called on the U.S. president to publicly indicate a non-intervention policy regarding the results of the elections and the willingness to work with the government chosen by the Salvadoran electorate. These letters were signed by members of Congress and published in Salvadoran newspapers, representing a *major victory* against all-too-familiar forms of election intimidation.

Anti-Mining initiative

In 2009, SHARE staff, volunteers, and its grassroots constituency collaborated with Salvadoran community members on anti-mining initiatives. SHARE worked with counterparts to focus attention on the severe consequences of extensive environmental degradation and community disruption created by open pit mining to extract gold. By participating in this important effort, SHARE continues to stand with the Salvadoran community against the impunity of transnational corporations and the unmitigated negative impacts of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

- SHARE supported the National Roundtable on Mining to stop a bid by Canadian metallic mining company, Pacific Rim, to extract gold through open pit mining. The National Roundtable on Mining has presented a legal case against Pacific Rim.

- SHARE participated actively in sharing information about the work of the National Roundtable with human rights organizations and activists in the US. We were delighted to share with representatives from the Roundtable when they were presented with the *L´etalier-Moffit Human Rights Award* by the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, DC. This award brought international attention to the issue of open pit mining in El Salvador and the repression being unleashed on those who oppose it.

- SHARE joined with Oxfam America, US-El Salvador Sister Cities, CISPES, Washington Office on Latin America, Latin American Working Group, Sphere Group, Voices on the Border, Rights Action, Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran World Federation and Canadian solidarity groups to raise awareness about the impact of mining on communities in El Salvador. Through this initiative, four Roundtable members visited a dozen cities in the US and Canada to share information about mining and their opposition to it.

- SHARE issued more than a dozen action alerts in response to the death threats against mining activists, community radio stations, and to the murders of Marcelo Rivera (June, 09), Ramiro Rivera and Dora Alicia Soto (December, 09). Those murdered were all anti-mining activists, and supported our partners' press for justice in these cases.

GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES

Delegations

Delegations provide opportunities to nourish the partnerships and relationships between Salvadoran and North American communities. These People to People exchanges are a vital part of SHARE's work. In 2009, SHARE staff hosted 13 of these groups.

- Over 100 students from US high schools and universities, and participants from Sister Church and Sister Community partnerships throughout the US visited El Salvador, providing hands-on accompaniment and support to community initiatives.
- Representatives of communities in El Salvador were invited to Kansas and Wisconsin to visit their partnering communities. They made presentations in classrooms, masses, community organizations, and visited the offices of Congressional and Senatorial representatives in order to keep the many issues facing their communities on these representatives' agendas.

Scholarships from Sister Parish communities and individual donors

Community members understand the importance of education for their children, yet many lack the financial resources to provide this opportunity. Funds provided by Grassroots supporters assist families of high school and university students achieve this goal. They also enable these youth to participate in training and activities that strengthen their capacity to give back to their communities.

- In the 2009 school year, 26 students from rural communities in Tecoluca and 20 from Agilares/ Paisnal were supported by academic scholarships enabling them to attend high school. The students, all youth from families with scarce economic resources, are elected based on prior community participation. They receive training and support from regional organizations in developing and executing work plans with youth groups in their communities. These youth work on their formal academic education and they participate in various social, cultural and communal events in their communities that build their leadership skills and knowledge of the history of social movements in El Salvador.

Women's Empowerment

Creating opportunities for women to participate in decision-making processes — whether at the family, local, regional, or national level — involves everything from improving life skills (e.g. literacy) to supporting and facilitating regular gatherings for women where they exchange ideas and experiences, to strengthening women's skills and political consciousness. As primary agents for change in their families and their communities, women's participation is crucial for the continued transformation toward a new democratic system that puts people at the center and takes diversity and difference into account. Spedific projects included:

- Home vegetable gardens for food security and better nutrition with women in Tecoluca,

- Fifteen (15) microcredit loans of $350 for women in Chalatenango;
- Organizing and raising awareness around contamination of the Río Sucio in Aguilares/El Paisnal; and
- Support for women's committees and regional women's associations to carry out advocacy activities directed at companies responsible for pollution. In addition,
- Grassroots partners also supported a community education and organization project against metallic mining in Chalatenango.

Advocacy

Grassroots sisters supported many advocacy efforts through delegations and post-delegation efforts. For example, Delegates visited communities affected by mining in Cabañas, and provided accompaniment during the search for disappeared anti-mining activist Marcelo Rivera. Delegates also made visits to the US Embassy in El Salvador.

Students from Northwest High School in Seattle, WA conducted a letter writing campaign to Kimberly Clark, one of the largest polluters of the San Andres Valley where their sister community is located. This pressure has led Kimberly Clark to begin treating their waste at their plant in Aguilares and is working with other companies to do the same.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Moving toward Food Sovereignty

Promotion of sustainable agricultural practices continues to be a pillar of SHARE's work with local partners. Similarly, SHARE has continued to support the efforts of Salvadorans to obtain land titles in fulfillment of the 1992 Peace Accords Land Transfer Program (PTT). Together, these different elements of SHARE's work with our partners enable local communities to increase food security, reduce environmental degradation, and improve the overall health of the community. Increasing sustainable practices mitigates the influence of transnational corporations that push genetically modified seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Ultimately, this work fosters a context of greater food sovereignty, leading to deeper and more lasting systemic change that shifts from a food system based on imports to local food systems that produce higher quality foods, agricultural practices and policies with an improved environmental focus, and enhanced local economies.

- SHARE supported 345 farmers through CONFRAS´s Peasant to Peasant agro-ecology program, an innovative capacity building model in which farmers are trained to teach others in agro-ecological growing methods. These farmers received native seed, organic materials and trainings on fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides and foliar applications, natural erosion control, seed saving, crop diversification and pasture improvement.

- Demonstration plots provided a unique opportunity for a larger group of farmers to participate in agro-ecological farming and learn by doing. This helped to erode concern that these farming techniques would not work, or would yield significantly smaller harvests. Farmers learned farm planning skills with a focus on production, sales goals and the activities needed to meet them.

- Thirty families from CRIPDES continued transitioning to sustainable agriculture. They planted a total of 81.6 acres of corn and 48 acres of beans and were able to save over 200 lbs of seeds to distribute to other farmers in the next growing season (6 lbs per participating farmer.) A marker of the importance of this initiative includes the decision of 23 farmers making the decision to work 100% organically this year. This is especially important in this region where three men lost their lives to kidney failure last year as a result of extended exposure to agro-chemicals.

- ACAMG and ACOOPACAMZ chose to plant during the wet fallow season after a drought and then heavy rains raised doubts about crop feasibility. This strategy made it possible for a 50% recovery rate from the farmers who suffered farm damage.

- SHARE's partner organization, CRIPDES, has labored steadily for decades to move the land title process forward. By the end of 2009, nearly 3000 homeowners have received title to their land. More than simply possessing a document, this reality provides a measure of peace and security to households that had not been possible before. SHARE and our partners will continue monitoring the ongoing process of land title distribution in the years ahead, as President Funes has committed to turning over 95,000 deeds by the year 2013.

Women's Rights and Literacy

- SHARE supported ORMUSA, a women's organization, in its work to gain legal recognition for the crime of femicide, the murder of women for various reasons, often cultural. Women's organizations in El Salvador are seeking to raise awareness that women have a right to life free from violence. The targeted murder and mutilation of women should be recognized as a gender crime and a violation of human rights.

- SHARE's partners in the areas of Lower Lempa (ACAMG), and Sonsonate and Ahuachapán (ADEMMUN, ADCMAIG and FEDECOOPADES) concluded a three year term of literacy programming for women. Over the course of this period, 88 women completed the 6th grade, with an 82% retention rate. Through these projects, women learned about women's rights, cooperativism, small businesses, leadership and their value as human beings. Nearly all report the improved self esteem that comes from reading, writing and knowledge and now

find themselves as viable candidates for leadership positions within their cooperatives as well as equal participants in the economic decisions taken at home.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO HURRICANE IDA

The winds and rain from Hurricane Ida wrought destruction of property, livelihood, and even loss of life that are all too familiar in El Salvador. Mobilizing immediately with our partners, SHARE staff in El Salvador sent photos of the damage and narrative descriptions that helped to make the extent of the damage clear. With generously donated funds totaling almost $42,000, SHARE was able to fund our partners' work on a first phase of Emergency response in ten communities. This included: food supplies, water, bedding and mattresses, gas stoves, and personal hygiene products.

Sister churches and communities, religious orders, foundations, individuals responded quickly and generously. Local Salvadoran Associations also played a vital role in extending a hand of support to their compatriots. One group, from Houston, both pooled emergency resources and traveled to El Salvador to participate in the reconstruction efforts.

Looking Ahead…

The year 2009 represent a time of transition for SHARE in the United States and El Salvador. Likewise, 2009 brought major change to the Salvadoran people. The inauguration of Mauricio Funes and the FMLN ushered in an unprecedented era of change and possibility. SHARE´s partners have a potential ally but they will have to work hard to formulate and advocate sound and progressive policy proposals in the face of fierce competition from the vested interests who will lobby to maintain the status quo and the facile solutions that will tempt the new government. 2010 marks the 30th Anniversary of the deaths of Monseñor Romero and the Religious women, Ita, Maura, Dorothy and Jean.

In honor of all their lives meant and continue to mean, we remain committed to close partnership with Salvadoran organizations that are building the skills and capacities of individuals and communities that will usher in the possibility of a new El Salvador.

With gratitude and optimism as we look forward to the journey ahead in 2010 !