

# **Project Global Village Television Program, "Strengthening Democracy", HONDURAS, CENTRAL AMERICA**

## ***Introduction***

### ***Description of case Study***

Approximately two years ago, Project Global Village initiated a television program called "***Strengthening Democracy***" within their Civil Society program with the main purpose of educating the population on their responsibility as decision-makers and voting citizens during the last presidential elections (November 26, 2001). This program was financed by Mercy Corps International, a U.S. based organization that has had a strong affiliation with Project Global Village (PGV), a Honduran development NGO, for over 15 years. Chet Thomas, PGV's director, is also Mercy Corps' representative in the country.

The Civil Society program created in 2000 with Mercy Corps' financing took advantage of the existing elections climate to help educate people on how to give a "rational" vote based on the candidate's qualifications and development proposals for the region instead of the typical vote based on your family's traditional political affiliation. The idea of a television program was seen as a good opportunity to extend the educational efforts to the larger population in the region. The television program was aired between July, 2000 to December, 2001, through a weekly hour-long program, (although in some cases it lasted up to 2 ½ hrs) produced in coordination with a local Christian TV station.

The "Strengthening Democracy" program was quite innovative for the existing production in the region. Although the people involved in producing and directing the TV program were initially inexperienced, they worked quite hard to meet the challenge and were able to produce over 60 editions of the show. They addressed a variety of topics including the specific proposals of the candidates for the position of mayor, for congressmen, and for president. They invited the candidates from the five political parties as guest speakers, and had question and answer sessions with them. They included public participation through telephone calls to the station. They also covered the work of the district attorneys and informed the citizens of the region what to do when they required assistance from this office, where they should go and with what documentation. Other programs covered information on labor laws, women's rights, etc.

The program ended in December, 2001 when funds from Mercy Corps dried up. The program director, Carlos Soto, also moved to Tegucigalpa, the capital city and was no longer involved in the program. Although PGV has applied for more funds to continue the Civil Society program in the region of Siguatepeque, it is doubtful that it would include a television component again, as the financial cost is extremely high and difficult to maintain

### ***Aim of Project***

1. Strengthening democracy in the country with an emphasis in training the population for rational decision-making.
2. Changes by non-violent means.
3. Accountability and transparency

### ***Target Group***

The TV program was directed towards the voting population in the region of Siguatepeque, without limit to class, sex or age (voting age is over 18).

### ***Role and detail of ICTS***

To create a civil society cable television programme.

The program initiated with the television channel's old equipment and technology, due to which PGV contributed (with Mercy Corps funds) to the purchase of the necessary equipment for the live program, including the construction of 2 television sets, several digital cameras and bullet (trans?) microphones, all which belongs to the television channel today. They still don't have a television editing machine, so they had to do a very simple edit with the tapes in order to transmit the pre-taped shows

### ***Sources of Funding***

Mercy Corps – US\$50,000 over four years. This covered the cost of production, the purchase of equipment and the set, which was donated to the channel, a contribution to El Shaddai for facilitating the space for production, and other contributions to subsidize the operation costs. Even so, PGV didn't pay the entire cost of producing and airing the program. The Channel also contributed their time and equipment at a subsidized rate because they thought it was a worthy cause.

### ***Project process***

No evaluation process designed to measure the impact of the programme.

Carlos Soto designed and directed the program, and he directly supervised and monitored production. There was no other input for quality control, although they did try to improve with each production.

The television program tried to respond to the needs manifested by the organized groups PGV was involved with through their Civil Society Program. This was done by maintaining constant communication with the groups, assessing their understanding of the topics addressed, and finding ways to provide feedback for existing needs.

Global Village claimed that the television program had no intermediaries as it was directed exclusively by Carlos Soto (he did not consider himself an intermediary), and he produced programs according to his own perception of the audiences' need for information, especially with the pressure of the elections campaign.

### ***Points of Interest***

No longer being produced due to lack of funds.

Carlos Soto had no previous experience in this area. (He has a degree in mathematics from the university). He began production without formal training and later received some training on television production through qualified people in the area.

One of the main achievements (also mentioned previously) is the fact that although the communities in this region are primarily of liberal affiliation, the mayor that won was from the national party, as he was a better candidate.

According to what the pastor of El Shaddai has expressed, they are still willing to continue collaborating with PGV or any other organization that wishes to make use of their television channel to educate the population. However, he recognized that the cost is very high and that they have to make an increased effort to maintain their transmission.