

**NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS' ACTIVISM
IN NEW DEMOCRACIES:
THE CASE STUDY OF
THE *PROYECTO REDUCCIÓN DE VIOLENCIA
CONTRA LA MUJER, SEDE IZABAL* (PRVM-IZABAL)**

by

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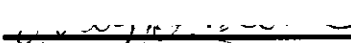
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Non-Governmental Organizations' Activism in New Democracies: The case study of the

Projecto Reduccion de la Violencia Contra la Mujer, Sede Izabal (PRVM- Izabal)

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ABSTRACT

The 1996 Guatemalan Peace Accords offered a variety of civil, political and social rights, including ones specifically directed towards women. Two major issues emerged in the aftermath of the Peace Accords. The first is Guatemala's ability and willingness to implement the Peace Accords despite its pursuit of neoliberal policies—which limit funds for the realization of many Peace Accords. The second is the role of new nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) who have organized to press for the fulfilment of the Peace Accords. This thesis studies one such organization, the *Proyecto Reducción de Violencia contra la Mujer, sede Izabal* (PRVM-Izabal). The organization exemplifies both the successful mobilization of those organizations to take advantage of the Peace Accords and the mechanisms or strategies those entities used for goal achievement. The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that while the PRVM-Izabal had a degree of overall success, there were particular conditions or aspects—such as economic factors and cultural attitudes—that challenged the organization.

The thesis finds that the PRVM-Izabal encountered little public financial support due to neoliberal policies that force public spending cutbacks. As a result, NGOs such as the PRVM-Izabal have turned to foreign aid to pursue their goals, with accompanying conditionalities. The thesis also finds that long-standing cultural attitudes are an obstacle in a society where democratic behaviour, structures and attitudes are beginning to take root. This study of the PRVM-Izabal offers valuable lessons for other women's NGOs that operate in new democracies.

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LIST OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

AMVA: Organization Women Let's Go Forward.

CEPAL: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

CICAM: Centre for the Investigation, Education and Support for Women.

CMM: Council of Mayan Women for Integral Development.

GOs: Governmental institutions.

NGOs: Non-governmental institutions.

PA: Peace Accords.

UNIFEM: United Nations Development Fund for Women.

USAID: United States Agency for International Development.

URNG: Unión Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca.

VIF: Ley de Violencia Intra-familiar (1996).

***Compañero(a)*:** It literary means companion, but in Latin American culture it may also refer to a personal bond or connection with one's colleagues, partners, or friends.

Empowerment: "the notion of people acquiring control over their own lives and defining their own agendas; it is usually associated with the interests of those dispossessed of power and assumed to be an expression of desired change without specifying what that change implies" (Deere and León 2001: 3).

Incidencia: Lobbying activities that are related to or are supportive of an organization's main goals.

Ladino(a): In Central America, a mestizo, or a person of mixed European and indigenous decent; a Spanish-speaking or acculturated indigenous individual.

***Q'eqchi'*:** A person of ethnic Mayan decent and who is fluent in one of the twenty-one Mayan languages spoken in Guatemala. The Q'eqchi' peoples are spread throughout Guatemala but they are mostly concentrated in the department of AltaVeraz, which neighbours Izabal to the East.

Garifuna (Garinagu, black carib): Literally means “cassava eating people” and is probably descended from the word “Kalipuna,” which referred to an indigenous South American tribe that invaded and conquered the Arawaks peoples who lived in St. Vincent Island. A “Garifuna” is a black person of mixed decent. The history of the Garifuna peoples began after a Spanish ship carrying Nigerian slaves shipwrecked on St. Vincent Island in 1635. Following years of internal war, the Kalipuna, Nigerian and Spanish folks intermarried, creating a group that the Spaniards referred to as black “Caribs,” or cannibals, a term from which the word “Caribbean” descended. After a Garifuna revolt in 1795, the British, who had by then colonized St. Vincent Island, settled the Garifuna in the Honduran Island of Roatán. Today, Garifuna people live along the Central American Atlantic Coast. In Guatemala they are concentrated in Livingston, Izabal.¹

¹ For more information see,
<<http://igoguate.com/Destinations/Destination%20Pages/Livingston.html>> and
<<http://www.mayaparadise.com/garifune.htm>>

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Objective of the thesis

After undergoing thirty-six years of civil unrest and widespread violence, Guatemala turned its attention to eradicating the root causes of the civil war. This aspiration aimed at including into national politics previously alienated groups, such as indigenous peoples, women and peasants. How to overcome civil war traumas and suffering before becoming successful participants in national politics turned out to be an important question for women. This issue became even more pressing not only because numerous women had been victims of civil war violence, but also because violence had made its way into many Guatemalan households in alarming proportions. As will be discussed later, both the civil war and neo-liberal policies are related to the increase of intra-family violence. Although it is very difficult to determine how much each of those two factors has contributed to the increase, it must be noted that efforts to address intra-family violence seem fundamental to the solidification of peace and the respect of human rights, as these struggles are to be grounded in the home.

This thesis studies the *Proyecto Reducción de Violencia Contra la Mujer, sede Izabal* (Project Reduction of Violence against Women, PRVM-Izabal) and how it operated in the Guatemalan post-Peace Accord context—which underlines both the implementation of the 1996 Peace Accords and neo-liberal policies. A special focus is given to how this organization dealt with internal and external challenges to take advantage of the political opening and the Peace Accords' guarantees for women. The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that while the Peace Accords have given women room to organize, economic factors and cultural attitudes diminished the success of the PRVM-Izabal.

Theoretical Framework: NGOs and Feminist Theory of Organization

To understand the work of women's organizations in Latin America, the thesis is based on the conceptual framework of two theories, non-governmental organizations (NGO) theory and Feminist Theory of Organization (FTO). The thesis explores NGO theory first because it provides an overview of how civil society is operating in the current Latin American context. Given that women's social movements make particular gender-specific contributions to civil society, the thesis is based on a second, and complementary theoretical framework, FTO. Despite their limitations, the theoretical frameworks help us to understand how Guatemalan women's organizations operate during the transition to democracy and the implementation of neo-liberal economic policies.

A great deal of NGO literature discusses the challenges that NGOs face in developing countries, especially in Latin America. One of these challenges focuses on how neo-liberal economic policies limit sources for NGO activism. Thus, the concept of "neo-liberalism from below" draws attention to the debate over whether NGOs are a tool to facilitate the implementation of neo-liberal policies (Petras and Veltmeyer 2002: 130; Tedesco 1999: 135-6) or a tool to solidify the transition to democracy and a "means by which people try to protect themselves from market forces, exploitation, and domination" (Chase-Dunn and Manning 2001: 213). Scholars such as Petras, Veltmeyer and Tedesco suggest that NGOs promote neo-liberalism by failing to question the status quo and complying with the "neoliberal rules of the game" (Tedesco 1999: 136). This camp posits that while NGOs appear to promote civil participation, they in fact promote first world agenda by being accountable to, and depended on, both donor governments and the private sector from developed countries. Such dependency, especially that on donor

governments from developed countries, causes this school of thought to question whether NGOs are indeed *non-governmental*.

Despite its contributions, this camp seems to neglect two points. First, how successful may NGOs be should they have to rely solely on their own sources and what alternatives do they have to avoid dependency and still promote their cause? Secondly, what other options does civil society have? This question seems to be very important, especially since NGOs appear to be one of the few existing alternatives for citizens to mobilize to protect their interests and to voice their concerns.

On the other hand, for some scholars the question of funding dependency is not as important as the role NGOs play in wedging resistance to “neo-liberalism from below.” Authors such as Lehmann and Bebbington contend that making dependence on international funds a focal point in the examination of NGOs may potentially undermine the complexity of these organizations. These scholars urge us to conceptualize NGOs as “part of something larger, of which they are only one dimension, and which includes those very international agencies that fund the domestic NGOs in recipient countries” (1998: 252). They continue, “By describing them as part of a movement we avoid doubts about the legitimacy or appropriateness of their ‘dependence’ on ‘money from abroad’ because in this conception the opposition between ‘home’ and ‘abroad’ becomes secondary, and the funding agencies are part of the same movement in any case” (ibid).

For this camp, the issue of funding dependency is not as important as answering the question of what the essence of NGOs is. In answering this question, these scholars argue, we will examine what NGOs are; what different kinds of NGOs there are; what their main goals are; where they operate and, most importantly, what the kind of

relationship they have with their donor agencies. Acknowledging these issues—which focus on difference—will allow us to evaluate their success more accurately.

This camp seems to offer more opportunities to understand the PRVM-Izabal's activism and performance. For instance, the idea of resisting “neo-liberalism from below” acknowledges the role that minorities and women's organizations play in the resistance of “new globalized forms of control” at a national, regional and global scale (Chase-Dunn and Manning 2001: 212). Chase-Dunn and Manning indicate, “The women's movements and the environment movement have already developed new transnational organizational structures, and such an approach is also emerging among the indigenous peoples of the world” (ibid).

While NGO theory contributes to our understanding of the PRVM-Izabal as an NGO, FTO helps us to examine the organization's gender-specific concerns. For instance, the literature raises the question of what a feminist organization is—or what sets women's organizations apart from other organizations—as well as what the goals and achievements of those organizations are. One of the current limitations of the theory is that it is mostly grounded in the experiences of women's organizations in the developed world. The theory acknowledges “difference” but only in the sense that examines the variety of feminist organizations in industrialized countries. However, the theory is beginning to analyze women from other regions of the world. This expansion is now pointing to the examination of difference not only in regards to women's organizations, but also in regards to how these organizations operate in their contexts, particularly in emerging democracies and developing countries.

One of the authors leading this shift is Acker, whose contribution encourages us to re-conceptualize our understanding of the relationship between gender and organizations at the global context. She asks,

Have we, in our research and theorizing about gender and organization, chosen a particular form of organizing, the dominant one in industrial countries and schools of business, and called this 'organization'? Once we take a global look, we can see that other forms of capitalist organizations in which women are incorporated differently and in which gender has different meanings; the locations of boundaries of the phenomena and of our studies become less clear. For example, when production is done in the home, with the family organized as an entrepreneurial enterprise as in the satellite factory system in Taiwan, gender, production and reproduction meld in different ways than in Western societies. Do we call that an organization? (1998: 202).

She further draws attention to the examination of gender, organizations, patriarchy and globalization. Acker cites that men are largely involved in the globalization of markets through their role in the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and Wall Street. She contrasts women's little involvement in the decision-making processes of these organizations with the following claim,

The non-responsibility for reproduction of large organizations is obvious in the process of globalization and in the measures, such as forced domestic austerity to pay foreign debts, long practiced to resolve the crises of global system and its big players. Globalizing processes are often cast as inevitable and 'economic', but it is real men who make and remake, within and between their organizations, the so-called economy (ibid 205).

Acker's questions in essence deal with the issues not only of context but also race and class (1990: 154; 1998: 196). Answering those very questions help to examine the case study of the PRVM-Izabal.

Organization of the thesis

Before examining how the current Guatemalan context has affected women's organizing, we first need to examine the context itself, which is the focus of the next chapter. Chapter Three will examine the organization in detail, including its origin, scope, goals, achievements and strategies to study the factors that resulted in its success. Chapter Four will analyze how the context and its accompanying cultural and

economic challenges hindered the organization's activism and success. The Conclusion will tie all the chapters together and will highlight their implications.

Methodology

The research for this thesis involved interviews both in Vancouver, BC, and in Izabal, Guatemala. Participatory observation in activities of the collective *Nuestra Voz*-Vancouver and contact with its members provided information about Guatemalan women's organizations that operated in the post-Peace Accord period. *Nuestra Voz* is a women's organization made up of Guatemalan and Canadian women, who provide solidarity support to women's struggles in Guatemala. While the organization has no direct link to the PRVM-Izabal, it provided documents and literature about Guatemalan women's organizations. Out of these organizations, the PRVM-Izabal—which was part of a national project called the *Proyecto Reducción de la Violencia contra la Mujer*—was randomly selected and contacted to ask whether it would be interested in participating in this thesis' research.

The field research, which occurred between 4 June 2002 and 24 June 2002, took place in the Guatemalan department of Izabal, particularly in the municipalities of Puerto Barrios, Los Amates and Livingston, where the PRVM-Izabal operated.

Data for this thesis was collected from interviews; surveys; academic sources; visual aids and graphic presentations; electronic correspondence with Guatemalan contacts; Internet sources; participatory observation and document analysis. Document analysis included but was not restricted to: the *Registro de Boletas de Denuncias*, or the registry of intra-family violence complaints; Monitoring Reports, which evaluated the national PRVM and its corresponding branches; as well as the *Reglamento del Proyecto No Violencia*, or the guideline for the national project and its branches.

While participatory observation provided a general sense of how the organization operated at its various levels, it must be qualified that my presence may have influenced the participants' responses. In an attempt to tackle this problem, the thesis relied on evaluation reports of the PRVM-Izabal—which were prepared by two external evaluators, who were nevertheless paid by the organization, but seemed to provide impartial results.²

Participant observation was possible in many of the organization's activities, including staff meetings, meetings between the organization and its solidarity networks, and observations of the organization's office and field work. Field work observations included participating in the Women's Health Week Campaign; monitoring the development agents' work with the self-help groups; watching the legal assessor and assistant coordinator conduct consciousness-raising workshops and observing a staff member in Los Amates conduct the weekly radio show of the organization's solidarity network.

In an attempt to construct a comprehensive understanding of the PRVM-Izabal, a total of thirty-two individuals were interviewed in the Izabal municipalities of Puerto Barrios, Los Amates and Livingston. These individuals included ten of the organization's female employees, of which two were new; one former employee with her husband and her male child; the Governor of Izabal; two male Puerto Barrios' police officers; five male and one female local government authorities from various ministries who had participated or were participating in the organization's consciousness-raising workshops;

² The evaluators identified and discussed many failures and structural problems in some sections of their reports (*Evaluación Interna, Proyecto Reducción de la Violencia Contra la Mujer*. Guatemala, Septiembre 1999 a Agosto 2001; and *Informe Monitoreo: Octubre 2000 a Marzo 2001*. Guatemala, September 2001).

two beneficiaries of the organization's programs and services; two children of the organization's beneficiaries (one male and one female); two husbands of the organization's beneficiaries; and four female members of the No-Violence Network that the PRVM-Izabal had created.

All of the aforementioned individuals, with their distinct contributions and degree of connection to the organization, were asked to participate not only in an attempt to construct an accurate picture of how the PRVM-Izabal operated but also to evaluate the organization's success. Twenty-seven interviewees involved in the research participated in a survey about the Peace Accords, whose results are presented in "Appendix 3." The survey, which drew upon the responses of randomly selected individuals, was intended to get a sense of how Guatemalans in general felt about the Peace Accords and the current political context.

All of the participants provided specific information on the organization. New and former employees were interviewed, surveyed and observed to analyze the organization's internal relations and dynamics. It is worth mentioning that the methodology sought to provide the employees with an opportunity to assess *their own* involvement in the organization as well as the organization's success and internal dynamics.

Local authorities—including judges, Izabal's governor, and other government workers—participated in interviews and surveys to examine the relationship of the PRVM-Izabal with the local government. These individuals' contributions were to further expand the evaluation of the organization's success in working with the local and departmental governments. The representatives of the organization's solidarity networks were interviewed to analyze the relationship between the organization and its

solidarity and support groups. Individuals' responses provided information about some of the strategies the PRVM-Izabal utilized for goal achievement.

The beneficiaries of the organization's programs and services participated in interviews and surveys to assess the success of the organization's programs and services. More specifically, the methodology intended to assess whether women's lives improved or changed at the household level as a result of participating in the organization's activities. The beneficiaries' children and husbands or partners were also interviewed to determine whether the PRVM-Izabal programs indeed produced better relations at the household level.

Unanticipated limitations considerably militated against getting a comprehensive picture of the PRVM-Izabal, its operation as well as its performance. These limitations included difficulty in accessing the organization's internal information—such as attending private staff meetings and getting copies of internal evaluations and documents. Accessing these sources and information would have provided a better sense of its internal dynamics. There were also problems related to the participants' willingness and degree to which they considered it appropriate and comfortable to share information. For instance, it was not possible to discuss the organization's internal dynamics with the coordinator as much as it was possible with the rest of the employees. Another example of this limitation was one of the employees' conflicting responses in two different sets of interviews. This thesis, therefore, analyzes the two opposing views and cites their implications where it was deemed suitable.

Moreover, it was not possible to assess the organization's success in the provision of services to women victims of violence who sought its in-office services or programs. Women who received psychological and legal counselling could not be interviewed for ethical reasons, especially because it was not deemed appropriate to

interview them at a moment when they were experiencing emotional distress. At the same time, it was not possible to contact these individuals afterwards because the organization did not record its clients' contact information in order to ensure confidentiality.

Finally, it was possible to obtain the participation of only two beneficiaries of the organization's out-of-office programs and services, which limited the assessment of the organization's success in this area. The methodology of this thesis had anticipated the collaboration of five women to be selected randomly to ensure accuracy. However, only two women participants of one of the fourteen self-help groups agreed to partake in the interviews and surveys. The implication of this limitation is that a small sample greatly affected and limited the responses that were possible to gather, especially since the PRVM-Izabal worked with fourteen self-help groups, each of which had about fifteen permanent participants. The responses from a small sample did not allow for an in-depth examination of the organization's performance and success.

Several factors reduced the number of women who could participate. The first was that some of the beneficiaries did not have enough time since most worked, went to school, took care of their families and were very active in their communities. It was difficult to coordinate some interviews not only with the women themselves but also with their children and husbands or partners due to their school and work obligations—which makes the study be largely based on impressionistic data.

The methodology sought these individuals' participation because the thesis aimed at examining the organization's success in changing relations at the household level. The PRVM-Izabal employees indicated that they themselves had had problems measuring their own success at this level due to many issues, especially women's time and privacy. On the other hand, it was possible to get a general sense of the

organization's success in its work with the self-help groups through participatory observations in three groups meetings, which took place on 6 June, 18 June and 21 June 2002 in San Pedro La Cocona, Las Pavas and La Libertad, respectively.

After presenting an overview of the thesis' purpose, organization, and methodology, the next chapter will present some findings and will attempt to analyze them with the help of NGO theory and FTO.

CHAPTER TWO: “OVERCOMING CHALLENGES IN THE POST CIVIL WAR AND POST PEACE ACCORD PERIOD”

Introduction

Before we examine how the current Guatemalan context has affected women's organizing and operation, we first need to examine the context itself. While currently Guatemala offers both opportunities and challenges for political activism, the purpose of this chapter is to examine the factors that have facilitated Guatemalan women's organizing. The discussion will be divided in two parts—a) the implementation of the Peace Accords and b) neo-liberal policies—to examine how these two processes have affected women and how they have prompted their increase in political organization.

The section on neo-liberal policies will also show that these procedures—by virtue of focusing on privatization and social spending cutbacks—seem to conflict with the aims of equality and social justice that the Peace Accords pursue. As will be demonstrated shortly, these policies have not only minimized public spending for gender specific programs—which are to facilitate women's integration into national politics—but they have also forced women to mobilize to provide services that the government once provided and others it never did. The implementation of these economic policies seems to favour machismo or sexist attitudes, two of the reasons why gender-specific concerns have low priority in the Guatemala Government's agenda. This is because, according to As Martinez-Salazar, the Guatemalan society has deeply ingrained patriarchal and racist patterns that continue to be difficult to eradicate (2000).

On the other hand, the section on the Peace Accords will reveal that there appears to be new interest in the consequences that the civil war had and continues to have on women. This new interest principally raises the question of dealing with the

increased occurrence of the intra-family violence, a civil war by-product that needs to be overcome before women can become full partakers in national politics.

The Guatemalan political context

'There is not a long-lasting peace because it was signed in a contract. A contract can be dismissed or broken when it is convenient'

Martinez-Salazar 2000: 95.

Guatemala's present political context underlines a challenge to balance two seemingly opposing national projects: the implementation of the Peace Accords—which seek social justice—and the implementation of neo-liberal policies—which focus on privatization and social spending cutbacks (Jonas 1991). The first project focuses largely on the fulfilment of the Peace Accords (PA), which impelled a transition to democratic rule and a drive to eliminate the inequalities that led to the civil war. These aims are of specific interest to the female population because they give women room to demand their rights as they were recognized in the PA. The PA recognized and granted women many rights, including the right to mobilize, to own property, and, for minority women, the right to express their cultural difference freely. In simple terms, the PA recognized and re-conceptualized women's rights as human rights. The PA meant for Guatemalans the beginning of many struggles to restructure many social and political patterns to encourage the solidification of democracy at various level of society. Despite these guarantees, "another type of war"—one that highlights people's struggle to exercise their rights—appears to continue in various fronts, especially within the home (Employee 8, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 6 June 2002).

The most important consequence of the PA is that they have allowed women to mobilize and to provide services. The case study shows how women's organizations have mobilized to take advantage of the spaces that the PA provided. According to

Employee 1 of the PRVM-Izabal, “now, in the post-PA period, women have the space to get to know their rights at a better level. I believe this [advancement] has been in steps. Well, in short but very substantial steps...the gender focus is open in all sectors” (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 24 June 2002).

At the same time, and quite conversely, the second national project is to rebuild the Guatemalan economy and to integrate it into an increasingly interdependent and global economy. For the Guatemalan elite it may seem as though neo-liberalism—which will be defined shortly—is the only development alternative to achieve those ends. Moreover, it appears as though the Guatemalan elite see the opening up of the economy as a window of opportunity to promote their economic interests. Chase-Dunn and Manning suggest that although the domestic elite may not always agree with the neo-liberal policies of international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, these organizations have been able to press for the fulfilment of the PA and to persuade the elite into the neo-liberal development strategy through promises of loans and grants for development projects (2001: 219). However, this development approach undermines the objectives of the PA, especially the aim to create a more inclusive society where citizens, including women, are to become active participants.

As the ensuing discussion will reveal, neo-liberal policies have particular implications for women and their role in development³ because women often mobilize in various ways to make up for government cutbacks. A United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) report states, “women from less well-off families are often pressured to take poor-quality, low-paying jobs in industry and services to make up for

³ “Development” is defined here as “fundamentally a question of values” where “we must discover what people value and why” (Lent 1996: 76).

falling family income, rather than through their own choice. This is particularly likely in situations of economic crisis and structural adjustment.”⁴ Several reports indicate that both economic crises—which have occurred forty times in Latin America between 1980 and 1998—and structural adjustments have caused a dramatic increase in poverty, especially a GDP per capita drop by 4 percent or more in those years (Lustig 2000: 3; Yamada and Arias 2000: 2). This study shows how women organize to provide services at a time when the Guatemalan Government is unable to grant them due to its focus on social spending cutbacks and privatization.

A. The first project: The implementation of the Peace Accords and the emergence of women’s rights as human rights

While women’s rights were never actually specified in single and exclusive accord, various guarantees are made in many of the Peace Accords. The PA are a radical improvement over the previous approach to gender issues in Guatemala, especially when one considers that Guatemalan society has been, and continues to be, exclusionary, chauvinist and racist (Martinez-Salazar 2000: 172). The PA include the following agreements which include numerous provisions for women. This section will briefly discuss those that concern women’s organizations’ such as the PRVM-Izabal:

Comprehensive Agreement On Human Rights;

Agreement on Resettlement of the Population Groups Uprooted by the Armed Conflict;

Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

Agreement on Social and Economic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation; and

Agreement on the Strengthening of Civilian Power and on the Role of the Armed Forces in a Democratic Society.

⁴ <www.unifem.undp.org/progressww/2000/>

Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights

This accord guaranteed women the ability to enjoy equal human rights. The accord similarly guaranteed women freedom of association and movement. The accord indicated, too, that both the government and the guerrilla forces were to give reparations to women victims of human rights violations (*Los Acuerdos de Paz y la Mujer Guatemalteca, Procurador de los Derechos Humanos, 2001*). The focus on women's rights as human rights gave women's organizations such as the PRVM-Izabal the ability to mobilize to protect women's rights, especially their right to lead a violence-free life.

Agreement on Resettlement of the Population Groups Uprooted by the Armed Conflict

The accord stated that resettlement was important for social justice, democracy as well as sustainable and equitable national development. This aim facilitated the work of the PRVM-Izabal because the organization worked with women in communities that migrated to Izabal from areas that endured the civil war and land expropriation—particularly from the department of Alta Verapaz (Employee 2, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 5 June 2002). According to the agreement, resettlement is to encompass land distribution to help fight extreme poverty as well as to promote the inclusion of uprooted populations in the design, implementation and supervision of resettlement strategies.

This agreement emphasized that significant attention ought to be given to displaced families headed by females or widows, especially to their reproductive activities to facilitate food security and adequate nutrition (Jonas 1991: 87; *The Guatemalan Peace Agreements, New York, 1998*). This agreement has been difficult to implement because patriarchal structures undermine land ownership by females. As Luciak suggests, land titles have been issued under husbands or partners' names,

although one of the goals in the post-civil war years was to increase female land ownership (2001; Deere and León 2001: 3).

Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The accord recognized the different ethnic groups within Guatemala, including the Maya, the Garifuna and the Xinca peoples. This recognition attempted to purge the racist attitudes that Guatemala acquired since its colonialization. Among many guarantees, the government pledged to create laws and institutions to help minorities exercise their right to cultural development and to defend those rights in case of violation, discrimination, economic exploitation and sexual harassment (*Los Acuerdos de Paz y la Mujer Guatemalteca, Procurador de los Derechos Humanos, 2001*; the Guatemalan Peace Agreements, New York, 1998). This accord facilitated the work of organizations such as the PRVM-Izabal, which worked with a variety of women. Women's organizations could appeal to the accord to work with mandate institutions to help the women who sought its support.

In addition, the government undertook the obligation to comply with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The government, too, committed itself to promote women's access to land, including land titles, housing, credit, and participation in development projects. The promotion and awareness of these rights were to take place through the mass media as well as rights organizations (Jonas 1991: 87). The PRVM-Izabal took advantage of this accord to make women and entire communities aware of women's rights through consciousness-raising campaigns in the Q'eqchi' and Garifuna languages, two languages spoken by minority groups in Izabal.

Agreement on Social and Economic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation

The accord stressed inclusion and participation in economic affairs. It encouraged equitable distribution of wealth by calling for the protection of interests of the most vulnerable groups. It also promoted the transparency in public policies and their orientation towards the common good rather than special interests (The Guatemalan Peace Agreements, New York, 1998). The agreement made special mention of the value of women's social and economic activities by indicating that their participation in these activities was necessary for Guatemala's economic and social development (ibid). As a result, discrimination against women was to be abolished to allow them to participate in development strategies, plans and programs (Deere and León 2001: 168). Jonas explains,

In the area of work opportunities, women were to have legal equality, equal training, protection for domestic labor (including decent salaries and working conditions), equal access to public sector jobs and policymaking, equal participation in the 'development councils' at all levels, and equal treatment in the countryside, whether as workers or owners of land, and in decision-making about rural development issues (1991: 87).

Although the PRVM-Izabal did not offer women material incentives for participating in its activities, this accord allowed the PRVM-Izabal to conduct activities to empower women and to ultimately strengthen their role in grassroots development.

Agreement on the Strengthening of Civilian Power and on the Role of the Armed Forces in a Democratic Society

The accord focused on developing democracy at the grassroots level to strengthen civil power through democratic means and to decrease non-civilian control in the army and national police forces (The Guatemalan Peace Agreements, New York, 1998). Women received guarantees to participate in the implementation of the PA through their organizations and their role in development councils. Thanks to this

accord, the PRVM-Izabal could work with women to encourage civil participation at the grassroots level.

The focus on violence against women and the Peace Accords

Some scholars have investigated the connection between economic policies of the 1980s and *la violencia*, or civil war violence. According to Chase-Dunn and Manning, "the massive genocide of the Maya in the early eighties was followed by a wave of maquiladora investment that was out of sync with the still low levels of direct investment dependence in Mexico and the other Latin American countries. The repression may have created a situation of business confidence that attracted foreign investors" (2001: 221). In this sense, repression and violence in Guatemala were necessary to set the stage for the eventual implementation of neo-liberal economic policies. The Guatemalan war caused the greatest suffering out of those that Central American experienced. This was because civil wars because the Guatemalan Government wanted to prevent uprisings that could be similar to those in Nicaragua and El Salvador (Lent 1996: 87). As a result, during the entire civil war period, 440 indigenous villages were destroyed; 75,000 people were killed; as well as an estimated 200,000 were orphaned, and 40,000 women were widowed (McCleary 1996: 93).

The guarantees that the PA gave women attempt to address their experience during Guatemala's civil war. These guarantees have, in turn, opened up new spaces to deal with the by-products of the civil war—which, as suggested earlier, permeated the home in the form of increase incidence of intra-family violence. The consequences of the civil war affect women in special ways. Increased levels of intra-family violence, depression, alcoholism, low morale and continued human rights abuses outside the

home hinder, to a considerable extent, the implementation of the PA at the national and domestic level.

This section intends to show that although guarantees for women's human rights exist, a great challenge for the implementation of the PA is putting their platform into practice at both the national and household level. Although the guarantees basically deal with women's human rights, violations of women's rights continue to occur. Moreover, the task of implementing the PA guarantees at the national and domestic level appears to be especially difficult, given that the civil war had many consequences, including the increased occurrence of alcoholism and intra-family violence.

Addressing violence against women at the national and domestic level has been difficult partly because talking about violence against women has generally been considered some sort myth in Guatemalan society. For example, many Guatemalans tend to exclude gender when they refer to *la violencia*, or civil war. Some continue to conceptualize *la violencia* as a period when many *people* faced—among others—disappearances, assassinations, threats, kidnappings, and displacement. However, statistics reveal that in the 1980s counterinsurgency period alone, women represented twenty five percent of human rights abuses perpetrated on the population (USAID Evaluation no 70, December 2000). During the civil war the bodies of women who were or were not directly involved in political activism were subjected to rape, torture, and massacres (Schirmer 1993). As some reports suggest, sexual violence and forced labour were used to demoralize women, "When women were captured and raped by soldiers, they were often forced to cook and clean for them afterwards" (USAID Evaluation no 70, December 2000). The following quotation illustrates that abuse and humiliation not only targeted women's bodies but their psyche as well,

Women's mental stability and physical health have been seriously threatened, some times destroyed, by the introduction of mice into their vaginas. Foreign objects, such as sticks and dull instruments, have also been introduced into the vagina and anus; but it is difficult to compare even such an abuse with the psychological and physical suffering brought about by a scratching, biting, disoriented mouse forced into a female's genital region. Women, now in exile, who survived this torture, explain that they have not, nor do they believe they ever can, really recover from the trauma of this experience. Many of them developed ulcers within their vaginal walls as a result of the rodent's action inside them (Bunster 1993: 113).

Women's human rights were violated during the civil war because their mobilization posed a threat to the military repression (Central American Analysis Group and Valerie MacNabb, Guatemala City, 1998). Women's activism is related to *Marianismo*—which is an important part of Latin American culture. *Marianismo* prescribes what “acceptable” female behaviour is and, because of this, women often agree to lead their lives by pursuing this cultural ideal. We shall discuss this notion briefly to get a better sense of how it affects Latin American women's lives and how it affected women's mobilization.

As its name suggests, *Marianismo* focuses on the cult of Mary and epitomizes an exaggerated example of female behaviour. Chaney defines it as “the cult of female spiritual superiority which teaches that women are semi-divine, morally superior to and spiritually stronger than men” (1979: 47). Thus, living up to *Marianismo* requires women to be pure, submissive to men, and most importantly, self-abnegated mothers—a woman would immediately judged as being tainted, rebellious and a whore should she decide not to accept nor to follow the norm (Craske 1999: 12). *Marianismo* cannot be separated from machismo in the Latin American context, as it is often considered “the other face of *Marianismo*” (ibid: 11-12; Chaney 1979: 47).

Marianismo is a key concept to understand when examining Latin American women's activism. On the one hand, the ideal of acceptable female behaviour has

prevented women from becoming involved in any activity outside of their homes. On the other hand, *Marianismo* has motivated women to act, particularly during bleak political moments. It is important to note that even during difficult circumstances women's action is "acceptable" and tolerated only because it is thought to be part of their duty to be self-abnegating and nurturing individuals. Chaney elaborates,

Yet the intervention of the revered mother figure in certain spheres gives some women undeniable power to manipulate and coerce (if rarely officially), a power that they and society, paradoxically, recognize and respect. When women do break out of the normal boundaries set by the ideal image, they do so most successfully when they emphasize the positive aspects of the womanly image (1979: 49).

This concept helps to explain why women's civil participation increased dramatically since the 1980s, the decade of brutal repression. Women became very active in political and social activism because they were convinced that they needed to stop or challenge the government, which—through the disappearance of *family members*, repression and human rights abuses—had invaded the domestic sphere and "the sanctity of the family, destroying the very symbol of life" (Schirmer 1993: 53). Schirmer conceptualizes these women's movements as 'motherist' groups, in which women acted as "disobedient female subjects of the state' turning their powerlessness, as protected females within the family, on the state" (Westwood and Radcliffe 1993: 17). Through this action and struggle women activists themselves became subjects of human rights abuses (Stephen 1994; Bunster 1993 and Schirmer 1993).

The abuses meant to punish women for their "unacceptable" behaviour and intervention in the public sphere. These tactics backfired on the government as they actually prompted women to resist even more (Radcliffe 1993). Joining social and

grassroots movements or the guerrilla forces were some of the ways in which women responded to increased human rights abuses.⁵

Women's participation in these movements, especially their participation in the Women's Sector of the *Asamblea de la Sociedad Civil*, fostered peace negotiation talks between the Guatemalan Government and the *Unión Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (URNG). The most significant consequence of women's struggles and mobilization in the peace negotiation process is that they led to the recognition that women, too, had suffered during the civil war. It was only through women's lobbying in the pre-Peace Accord period that the Guatemalan Government recognized the need to include provisions for women in the peace agreements. Moreover, through the *Asamblea de la Sociedad Civil*, the Women's Sector was able to press for the inclusion of many gender equality issues—which not only opened more spaces for the women's sector but it also legitimized its activism in Guatemalan politics (Luciak 2001: 38).

The success of the Women's Sector was largely due to the international developments that were taking place during the drafting of the Guatemalan PA. International conventions such as Nairobi-1985 and Beijing-1995, which favoured women's rights, fostered an international climate that validated and legitimized women's demands around the world (ibid, 233-234; Lehmann and Bebbington 1998: 251).

Although women received many guarantees through the PA, they are far from being fulfilled at both the national and domestic level. Organizations such as the PRVM-Izabal have emerged precisely because women still experience the violation of their rights within their very homes through domestic violence. Laura, the coordinator of a

⁵ The number of females in the Guatemalan guerrilla movement alone increased between 1978 and 1980 to make up about twenty-five percent of the total forces (Luciak 2001: 27-8).

government organization, the *Procuraduria de los Derechos Humanos*, indicated that it is within their homes that women continue to suffer from physical, psychological, sexual and "patrimonial" violence—which refers to the physical destruction of tools that women use to earn a living (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 24 June 2002). The 1998 US State Department Human Rights report revealed that both intra-family violence and violence against women were serious human rights problems in Guatemala (Broken Bodies, Shattered Minds, Amnesty International, 4). Indeed, in 1998 seventy-six percent of all violence against women occurred at home (Central American Analysis Group and Valerie MacNabb, Guatemala City, 1998; Broken Bodies, Shattered Minds, Amnesty International, 10). Nancy, a Guatemalan Government official, discussed the seriousness of violence against women,

I believe that [violence against women is] the most important problem that has yet to become visible. It's one that is deeply rooted and has always been considered a private problem—a family problem—which is why very few women have the courage to report it. It is a problem that really affects society because violence is created and encouraged within the home—which is supposed to be a reliable and safe place. In addition, the violence that goes on within the members of the family creates potential criminals, who, due to their psychological traumas, engage in criminal acts within and outside the home (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 24 June 2002).

Increased intra-family violence, one of the many legacies and traumas of the civil war, hinders to a great extent the implementation of the PA at the household level. Intra-family violence and other post-war traumas have significant implications for women as many survivor communities are predominantly made up of females, who often experience feelings of fear and uncertainty due to their low morale (Alecio 1995: 36). The evaluation of the United States Agency of International Development, USAID, supports this argument by indicating,

Women who witnessed violence or lost family members continue to suffer psychological and physiological ailments or *tristeza*—literally the embodiment

of suffering, or suffering incorporated. A human rights report compiled a list of psychological and emotional ailments that continued to plague witnesses and victims of state-sponsored violence up to two decades after the acts themselves. These included sensations of sadness, prolonged mourning, psychosomatic problems, eating disorders, and feelings of injustice, helplessness, isolation and loneliness (December 2000).

Intra-family violence is often due to alcoholism, whose dramatic increase was another by-product of the civil war. The following excerpt from the USAID evaluation report indicates that women not only suffer violence due to alcoholism but they themselves often resort to it to deal with their post-war traumas,

[Excessive alcohol consumption] is equally true for both witnesses to violence and perpetrators of it—men who served in the civil patrols, the army or the guerrilla forces. A study conducted for the Guatemalan army shows that upwards of 50 percent of discharged soldiers became full-blown alcoholics. Male witnesses or victims of violence are more likely than nonvictims or females to drink heavily. The increase in male alcoholism has resulted in a rise in wife and child abuse. Among Maya women before the war, alcoholism was rare. But by the end of 1990, anthropologists have noted, regular drinking to escape grief and other suffering has become common among women (no 70, December 2000).

From a gender perspective, the implementation and fulfilment of the PA depends a great deal on Guatemala's ability to build peace from the home, which ultimately requires a reconceptualization of security. This is because, as the interviewees indicated, what goes on in the home has implications for society as a whole. The redefinition of security must be grounded not only in the politicization of the home but also in the respect of women's rights within it. Although the latter may be *one* of the factors that could contribute to establishing long-lasting peace in Guatemala, it must be qualified that it is possible to have (national) peace without gender equality. This may be possible especially if we concede that unequal gender relations and violence occur not only in nuclear families but in non-nuclear ones as well.

The issue of violence against women, or domestic violence, has received international attention only because of the current neo-liberal policies that Guatemala is

to implement in the post Peace Accord context. Yamada and Arias suggest, "on related social aspects, the Sustainable Development Department has led in the quantification of the economic costs of problems such as domestic and social violence, violence against children, and the costs of urban growth based on extensive exploitation of the landspace and social-spatial segregation" (2000: 11). They continue, "The [World] Bank has taken the lead in drawing attention on the costs of violence on the quality of life and on society's ability to achieve sustainable and equitable growth" (ibid 15). One would get the impression that intra-family violence, especially violence against women, has become a pressing concern only because of its economic effects. Taking the perspective of scholars such as Petras, the eradication of intra-family violence is important for international development agencies such as USAID only because it is convenient to integrate women in the labour market under neo-liberalism. To establish such changes, however, international development agencies will need to confront and root out deeply ingrained gender relations in developing countries such as Guatemala.

While the Guatemalan Government made efforts in 1996 to redress the issue of family violence through the *Ley de Violencia Intra-familiar* (VIF), implementing the PA at the national level continues to be difficult as human rights abuses outside the home still prevent Guatemalans from finding closure. Surviving populations predominantly made up of widows and orphans have not been able to overcome their traumas and loss of family members mainly because they have become victims of state repression themselves for trying to uncover what happened to "disappeared" individuals during the pre-PA period and for attempting to find those responsible for human rights abuses (Martinez-Salazar 2000; USAID Evaluation no 70, December 2000). It seems as though the prevailing perpetration of human rights abuses has become another impediment for the fulfilment of the PA and the transition to democracy (Stephen 1997: 240).

As Martinez-Salazar indicates, impunity for perpetrators of human rights abuses is disguised in the efforts for national reconciliation. While survivors are struggling to heal their suffering, to open up and to search for answers, those responsible for human rights abuses continue to deny any responsibility by asserting that the post-PA period is a time to forgive, to forget and to reconcile (Sinclair 1995: 41; Martinez-Salazar 2000). The direct result of this process is resentful reconciliation or no reconciliation at all among traumatized populations, especially in small communities. Also, the existing impunity in the current Guatemalan political context is one of the reasons why some Guatemalans still question the validity of the PA and their fulfilment. Two participants in a survey⁶ stated the same belief, "one thing is to sign a document, and another is to fulfil that commitment" (Roberto, Livingston, Izabal, 20 June 2002; Employee 9, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 11 June 2002).

B. Neoliberalism: Women, the civil war aftermath and Guatemala's insertion into the global economy

Although the PA provide room for equality issues and social activism, the neo-liberal project seems to contradict the PA drive for inclusiveness and social justice. Examining the impact of these policies in industrialized economies, Marjorie Cohen posits that they "are not progressive and are not in the interests of democracy and equality." She adds, "People's rights, particularly the rights of women and disadvantaged minorities, are subverted through the destruction or increasing irrelevance of the very institutions that supported the idea of equality and democracy" (1996: 187).

⁶ I undertook a survey to learn how a sample of twenty-seven Guatemalans felt about the PA. See the appendix section for detailed findings.

While loans and grants for neo-liberal development projects may seem rewarding for Guatemalan elite elements now that Guatemala needs to re-build and develop its economy, neo-liberal policies in general undermine the commitments the government undertook through the PA—especially its responsibility to provide services for its citizens and to guarantee social justice and equality. Although Guatemala already had a very limited welfare state, the implementation of neo-liberal policies has eliminated the probability for the Guatemalan Government to develop safety nets to guard citizens against economic crises or downturns. Moreover, the neoliberal “restructuring,” or what Cohen conceptualizes as the dismantling of the welfare state, is only one of the policies that neoliberalism entails (1997: 32). According to Susanne Jonas, neoliberalism

refers to a general set of policies: privatization of state-owned enterprises; deregulation, that is, elimination of state ‘interferences’ with market operations; liberalization of trade and finances and lifting of protectionist trade barriers; and almost exclusive focus on export to the world market, accompanied by a harsh critique and dismissal of earlier strategies oriented toward building internal markets; dismantling of welfare institutions, including drastic cutbacks in state-supported social programs and ‘social subsidies’; structural adjustment and austerity policies, prioritizing balanced budgets. These are all viewed as requisites for the ultimate imperative: attracting investment by foreign capital (2000: 218-219).

The restructuring of the Guatemalan economy has implications for both the solidification of democracy—or the fulfilment of the PA—and for women. Jo Fisher submits that the content of the PA questions the Guatemalan Government’s willingness, and most importantly, ability to implement them. This is amply exemplified by the government’s stand on gender issues. “At a time of public spending cutbacks, women’s issues can be seen as a luxury that the state can ill-afford,” especially as the government is presently prioritizing repaying foreign debt or attracting foreign investment (1993: 207-8). Although governments are willing to sign conventions that favour women, they are very aware that neoliberal policies and a shrinking welfare state will

significantly reduce the already scant resources needed to carry out their commitments (Luciak 2001: 233-234).

Women have had to organize due to the cutbacks in social programs and to the dismantling of an already limited welfare state. The new economic policies have certainly made women seek “new strategies for survival” (Alecio 1995). One of these strategies is the entrance into the informal economic sector to make up for increasing poverty and falling wages since the economic restructuring. “While women represent 50.85% of the Guatemalan population of 10.2 million and 60% of the working population in both formal and informal sectors, they make up only 19% of the economically active population in the formal economy” (Central American Analysis Group and Valerie MacNabb, Guatemala City, 1998). These figures seem to be consistent with the increase of private investment in Guatemala’s economy, which has climbed steadily in percentages of Gross Domestic Product from 10.5 in 1980 to 14.8 in 1999.⁷

Scholars such as Stephen posit that the economic hardship of export-led capitalist development—which neo-liberalism advocates—has, for the most part, fallen on women’s shoulders (1992: 75). More specifically, as Safa argues, women have become a source of cheap labor for factories to remain competitive in the international market (1995: 4). Women workers are preferred in export-led industries because they are “cheaper to employ, less likely to organize and have greater patience for the tedious, monotonous work characteristic of assembly operations” (ibid 2). In 1993 Latin American female labour increased to the point that “the International Ladies Garment Workers’ Union estimated that there were half a million workers in export manufacturing

⁷ <www.ifc.org/economics/pubs/dp44/dp44.pdf>

in Mexico and 320,000 more in the Caribbean and Central America, the majority in apparel and related trades" (ibid 3).

The new economic policies, coupled with the demographic changes the war caused, have resulted in the increased feminization of poverty. Due to the loss of many males during the war women head a third of Guatemalan households (Central American Analysis Group and Valerie MacNabb, Guatemala City, 1998; World Bank News, January 31, 1997). According to CEPAL (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), the percentage of Guatemalan households headed by women in urban areas increased from 20% to 24% between 1990 and 1999.⁸ These figures explain, in part, why women have emerged as important political actors in the post-war period (Alecio 1995: 36). Alecio indicates,

During the last ten years, because of such low levels of income and the resulting poverty, different strategies of survival have emerged. They include an increase in trade between communities, principally by women, including many widows due to the violence of the 1980s, who gather fruits or beans in their communities and walk anywhere from two to six hours to sell or exchange them for other products in the different villages (1995: 28).

Despite women's new strategies for survival and entrance into the labour market, 70% of female-headed households are poor and 49% are extremely poor (Central American Analysis Group and Valerie MacNabb, Guatemala City, 1998; World Bank News, January 31, 1997). Moreover, urban women's average income in the unskilled labour market has decreased per capita from 1.6 in 1989 to 1.3 in 1998.⁹ Women in the agrarian sector bear the greatest burden of the country's poverty by working as much as

⁸ The statistics in this paragraph come from
<www.eclac.cl/mujer/proyectos/perfiles/comparados/t_pobreza1.htm>

⁹ Refer to <http://www.eclac.cl/mujer/proyectos/perfiles/comparados/t_trabajo11.htm> for more details.

18 hours a day without remuneration (Central American Analysis Group and Valerie MacNabb, Guatemala City, 1998).

In addition, women's work outside the home—the result of a shrinking household income due to privatization and social spending cutbacks—has resulted in women's "triple burden." This concept means that women's total hours of work in the labour market, the household and the community have increased dramatically. On top of their traditional workload at home, women have increasingly become involved in community development activities to cope with government cutbacks in the areas of health, education and social security—services that the government no longer provides or never provided (Alecio 1995: 37; Stephen 1997: 217; Moser 1993: 174).

Due to women's tight schedules—which are rooted in the increasing pressure to ensure their own and their families' survival—it is very difficult for them to take on the role the PA awarded them. On the one hand, neoliberal policies encourage women to mobilize—to make up for falling incomes and social spending cutbacks—and, one other, challenge women's ability to become political actors to contribute in the creation of a more just and participatory society. In other words, one of the consequences of the policies is that social spending cutbacks further reduce women's opportunities to become political actors because fewer resources are invested on gender-specific programs.

This case study demonstrates the government's limited successes in investing to provide services for its population. While it is true that the government provided services for its female population in Izabal, it did so through a very small budget and even smaller scale than the PRVM-Izabal. Laura, the coordinator of a government institution, the *Procuraduria de los Derechos Humanos*, indicated that the support her organization gave the PRVM-Izabal was moral, not financial. She explained that her

institution's budget was very small and that it was actually the project which had helped it financially to implement many activities (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 24 June 2002).

The government's limited success in this area seems to be inconsistent with the support efforts of the international community. The World Bank is working closely with the Guatemalan Government and donor countries pledged \$1.9 billion in January 1997 to assist in the provision of better education, roads, water and health services (World Bank News, March 1998). A gap in the actual provision of services vis-à-vis foreign aid influx is a troubling obstacle for the creation of a collective and just society. The gap seems to be related to high levels of corruption among high-ranking government officials—which continues to be a prevailing characteristic of Latin American political culture. The latinamerica press.org reported that a number of Guatemalan Government officials had connections to drug trafficking rings.¹⁰ Moreover, according to the 2002 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, Guatemala ranked in the 81 place in terms of corruption, where the highest rank was 102 for Bangladesh.¹¹

The involvement of international development agencies affects to some degree Guatemala's transition to democratic rule, which is vulnerable and—indeed—still consolidating. Since organizations such as the World Bank prescribe the policies, neither the National Assembly, nor the Guatemalan population participate in “planning the course of their country” to the extent the PA stipulate (Sinclair 1995: 14). Sinclair suggests, “Currently, if the Central American countries want access to international credit, they must be willing to accept the lenders' harsh terms. To reject credit or to gain credit on the borrowers' terms...is economic suicide” (ibid).

¹⁰ <www.lapress.org/summ.asp?lanCode=1&couCode=10>

¹¹ <<http://www.transparency.org/cpi/2002/cpi2002.en.html>>

While the PA seem to have provided numerous spaces for women's involvement in society, this thesis will demonstrate that these are only partial requirements for women's successful mobilization. Simply put, the existence of room for activism does not automatically translate into success, especially if there are obstacles that weigh against women's organizations.

Conclusion

The PRVM-Izabal exemplifies women's activism in the post-PA period. This is why this thesis focused on examining whether this particular organization did or did not take full advantage of the opportunities that the context, particularly the PA, provided. This chapter showed that women indeed have mobilized under the opportunities and guarantees that the PA provide. More specifically, it has been demonstrated that both the fulfilment of the PA and the resulting pursuit of resources due to neo-liberal policies have encouraged women's activism.

It is important to emphasize at this point that while economic policies have caused women to mobilize to make up for the dismantling of the welfare state, these policies have at the same time undermined women's activism because fewer and fewer national resources continue to be invested in gender-specific programs. The implication here is that the government seems to delink economic and political agendas in an attempt to undermine social movements. This chapter examines briefly the degree to which those limitations existed and the extent to which they challenged women's mobilization. Examining how women responded to these challenges was of importance as well. Before delving into this question in detail, however, we need to analyze how the organization operated in its context by paying particular attention to the services it provided.

CHAPTER THREE: “THE PRVM-IZABAL: OPERATING AND SUCCEEDING IN THE CURRENT GUATEMALAN CONTEXT”

‘We cannot let others do or decide for us. We have to get involved fully in taking action rather than being still spectators. Instead, we have to participate; we have to get involved in every process that has to do with improvements’

Employee 1, Puerto Barrios, Izabal.

Introduction

This chapter examines how the PRVM-Izabal—which will be interchangeably referred to as “the project”—operated by studying its programs and services. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that the PRVM-Izabal was successful in achieving its goals because of its external and internal strategies. To provide evidence to support this claim, the chapter will refer to two of the organization’s most evident successes: a) fulfilling the five objectives set forth by the organization and b) empowering both the women beneficiaries of its programs and, to some extent, its employees.

The first part of the chapter will provide background information on the organization to further familiarize the reader with it. The second part will identify the organization’s objectives as well as external and internal strategies it used to achieve its goals. To provide evidence for its main argument, the chapter will draw upon interviews with the employees, government officials as well as program beneficiaries and their family members. The third part will specifically deal with how the project exceeded its original platform by empowering its employees to some extent.

The PRVM-Izabal

The PRVM-Izabal was part of a three year *national* project (October 1999 to September 2002), also named *Proyecto Reducción de Violencia contra la Mujer*

(PRVM), which set out to operate in Guatemala City, Quiché, Totonicapán and Izabal.¹² The diagram below presents the components of the national PRVM. Due to funding and time limitations involved in field research, this thesis researched only the PRVM-Izabal, one of the branches.

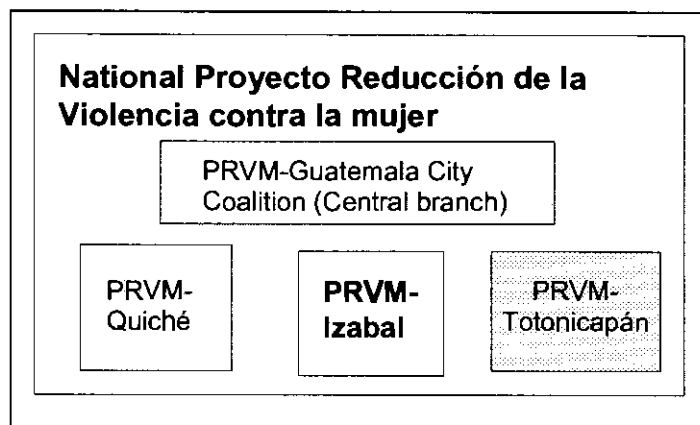


Figure 1 Entities of the Proyecto Reducción de Violencia contra la Mujer (PRVM)

The national PRVM emerged as a result of a call for funding proposals from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which funded all of the entities illustrated in the graph through the PRVM-Guatemala City. In response to guidelines of the USAID, the *Asociación Mujer Vamos Adelante* (AMVA, Women Let's go Forward) facilitated the formation of a coalition of three independent women's organizations—which included itself, and two more other organizations, the *Centro de Investigación, Capacitación y Apoyo para la Mujer* (CICAM, Centre for the Investigation, Education and Support for Women) and the *Consejo de Mujeres Mayas de Desarrollo*

¹² For the implementation agenda of the PRVM in all of its branches, see "Appendix 7."

Integral (CMM, Council of Mayan Women for Integral Development). The coalition then submitted its proposal for a project to address the issue of intra-family violence. Each of these organizations was to contribute to the creation and management of the executive branches, or the PRVM-Izabal, the PRVM-Totonicapán, and PRVM-Quiché—refer to the following diagram. For instance, AMVA was to manage the administrative affairs of both the coalition and the executive branches; CICAM was to press for legislation to favour women at national level; and CMM was to provide logistics and support activities to the coalition, especially developing women's health programs for the executive branches (*Informe Monitoreo Intermediario, Octubre 2000 a Marzo 2001: 5*).

The coalition itself had faced many challenges and had undergone many changes to find a balance between respecting the integrating organizations' independence and living up to its horizontal structure—which was to be consistent both with feminist organizational ideals and Guatemala's transition to democracy. Although it was beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate, it was discovered that there were internal problems within the coalition. The exact nature of these problems was not examined in-depth, but it is safe to state that the coalition's consensual, participatory and horizontal structure was very weak, which caused an inconsistency between its practical workings and its desired framework (*Informe Monitoreo Intermediario, Octubre a Marzo 2001: 4; Evaluación Interna, September 99 to August 2001*).

The coalition's internal problems ranged from exclusionary decision-making to the CMM's failure to perform its job due to its having to take over another organization's obligations when the project had already started (*Evaluación Interna, September 99 to August 2001: 3*). The coalition's internal problems and structural weaknesses—in combination with other factors—prevented its self-sustainability, although USAID had

planned for this end so that the coalition could develop future projects on its own. As will be discussed later, these challenges affected the work of the PRVM-Izabal.

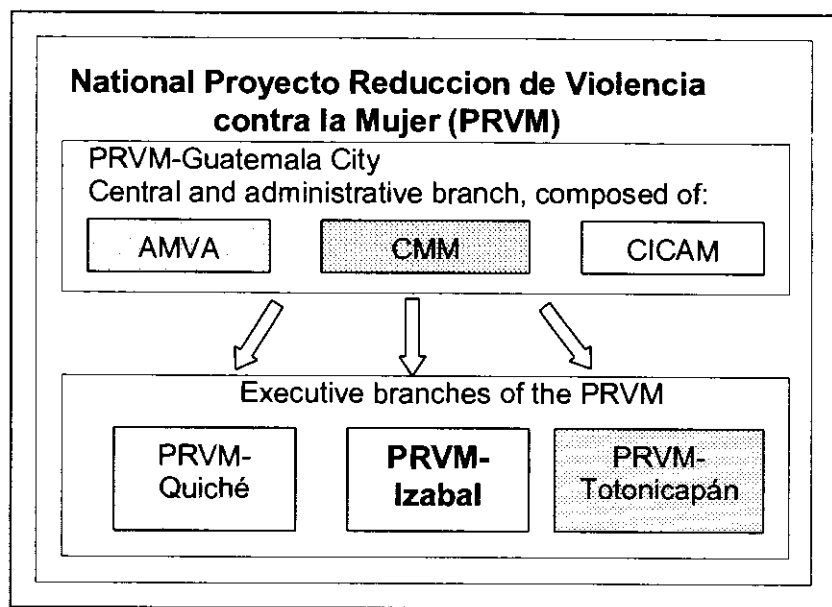


Figure 2 Structure and communications of the PRVM-Izabal

By virtue of developing and managing the branches, the PRVM-Guatemala City, or the central administrative branch, largely shaped and determined the executive branches' mission statement and operation. As the above diagram illustrates, most of the decision-making process flowed from the central branch down to the executive branches, but this is not say that there was no direct communication among the executive branches themselves.

The division of the PRVM into branches occurred due to the funding limitations of the USAID, which restricted the scope of the national project to Totonicapán, Izabal and Quiché—three of twenty-two Guatemalan departments, or provinces. These geographical areas received funding priority because they had the highest incidence of intra-family violence in all of Guatemala (interview with Employee 11, Puerto Barrios,

Izabal, 17 June 2002). Areas such as Quiché and Totonicapán, which had a high proportion of indigenous populations in Guatemala, needed to have programs dealing with violence as they had suffered a great deal of repression during the civil war.

Izabal, on the other hand, needed to establish programs dealing with intra-family violence because it experienced a population influx due to the civil war. Uprooted or expropriated indigenous populations migrated mostly from Alta Verapaz and settled in Izabal to escape the civil war. According to several of the project's employees and to Izabal's governor, the increase in intra-family violence had occurred in Izabal because the male indigenous population brought with them, and practiced, patriarchal and sexist attitudes towards women.

Despite a limited geographical presence in Guatemala, the PRVM and its branches had an overarching purpose, which was to eradicate or considerably reduce intra-family violence. The coalition and the branches also had the following five objectives: 1) to make women in the selected geographical areas aware of their rights; 2) to eradicate or at least to decrease the occurrences of violence against women; 3) to reform national public policies through consciousness-raising workshops; 4) to improve governmental services for victims survivor of violence; and 5) to create pressure groups.

A. Location and scope of the PRVM-Izabal

The PRVM-Izabal operated in the department of Izabal, which is located in the Atlantic Coast and borders Belize to the North and Honduras to the South-east.¹³

¹³ See the maps in the "Appendix 1" and "Appendix 2" to learn more about the location of Izabal and the scope of the PRVM-Izabal.

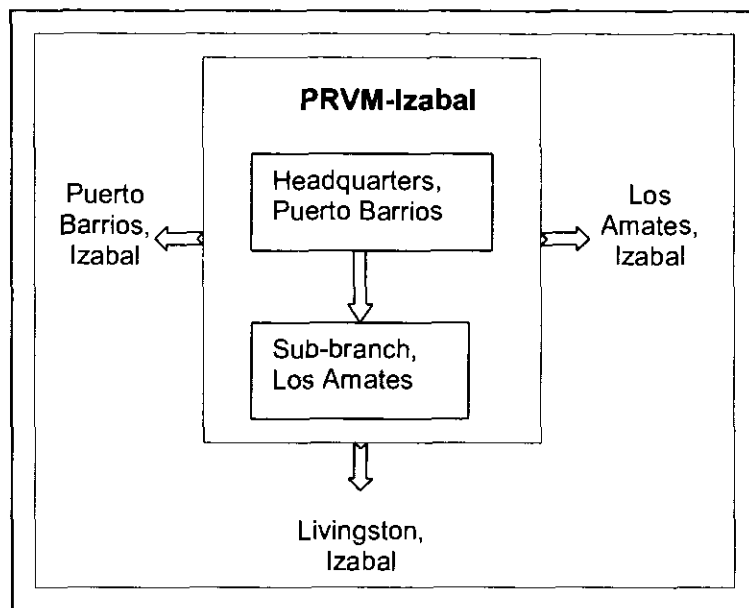


Figure 3 Scope of the PRVM-Izabal

As the diagram illustrates, the PRVM-Izabal functioned in three of the five municipalities of the Izabal department: Puerto Barrios, Los Amates, and Livingston. The headquarters of PRVM-Izabal were in the department's capital city, Puerto Barrios. This office operated as the direct link between the PRVM-Guatemala City and the rest of the branches. The PRVM-Izabal served mostly urban, mestizo women as well as both wealthy and poor women in Puerto Barrios and Los Amates. However, the organization served the surrounding populations of both Puerto Barrios and Los Amates, which consisted of poor, rural and often illiterate and indigenous women.

In addition, the PRVM-Izabal did not cover Livingston per se. The coalition had never instructed the PRVM-Izabal to expand into the area, nor did the PRVM-Izabal have the resources to fully expand there. Apart from working the *Procuraduría de Derechos Humanos de la Mujer* to open up the *Oficina de La Mujer*, the project's only

involvement in Livingston had mostly been through several consciousness raising workshops. Although Livingston's population is largely mestizo and Garifuna, the project's workshops had only targeted the staff of the Peace Court of Justice, who were male and mestizo.

Although the PRVM-Izabal intended to cover only the Puerto Barrios area in its three years of existence, it could not ignore the need of many women victims of violence in other municipalities. As a consequence, it expanded in Los Amates through the creation of a sub-branch and a No Violence Solidarity Network. In May 2002 the PRVM-Izabal expanded also into the municipality of Livingston through the development of the *Oficina de la Mujer* (Women's Office)—which was to be under the care of the Human Rights Attorney's Office. The latter represented a joint endeavour between the project itself, the *Cooperación Española*, and a government organization—the Human Rights Attorney's Office. This expansion took place to Livingston because the municipality lacked many institutional resources and infrastructure. Transportation constraints, in particular, made it very difficult for women victims of violence who lived in the periphery areas to access the services available to them. Since there were no adequate roads that connected the two municipalities, many rural women had no choice but to pay a Q.50.00¹⁴ return fare for a boat ride to access Puerto Barrios from Livingston. This is a hefty expense for these women, considering that the average monthly salary in the area is Q.600.00.

¹⁴ Q.50 was the equivalent of Cnd \$10.00 at the time of the field research, June 2002.

B. Composition and structure

The PRVM-Izabal is an organization *of and for* women. Taking into consideration all the positions in Puerto Barrios and Los Amates, the PRVM-Izabal was composed of thirteen staff-members, two of which were male and occupied the support posts of driver/messenger and night watchman. Women held positions that were essential to the functioning and the fulfilment of the branch's goals. The PRVM-Izabal had one coordinator, one assistant coordinator, one secretary, one accountant, one legal consultant, two health agents, two development agents, one part-time health/development agent, one general assistant/janitor plus a driver and a guardian.

The composition of the PRVM-Izabal staff is very diverse. At the time of the research, three of the employees were not *ladinas* but had Q'eqchi' Mayan, Garifuna and other African/Caribbean origin.¹⁵ The employees' ages varied between early twenties to mid-thirties. The education level of the members was also diverse. Some of them had specialization in gender studies. Other members were finishing up their degrees while others were high-school graduates. Several employees were married and had children while others were single or were single mothers. Finally, the employees brought different work experience into the PRVM-Izabal. Some had previously worked in the areas of human rights, gender issues, grass-roots development, and popular education. These characteristics not only affected the organization's internal dynamics but they also are representative of Latin America's different feminisms (Westwood and Radcliffe 1993: 5; 24).

¹⁵ One of the employees had Jamaican and English decent. See the "List of terms and acronyms" for definitions or explanations of the ethnicities mentioned in this paragraph.

The structure of the PRVM-Izabal attempted to reconcile the staff-members' diversity. The Monitoring Report—an evaluation document for the project—cites the Project Proposal that the central branch or coalition had submitted to the USAID when it solicited funding for the creation of the national PRVM and its branches. As the excerpt from the report indicates, the coalition had planned for the administrative and executive branches to have a consensual, horizontal and participatory structure,

The technical proposal emphasizes horizontal and decentralized administrative, technical and financial responsibilities. It takes into account that the coalition is a structure that seeks both privileging democratic mechanisms in the decision-making process and more participation in the member organizations. The decision-making process is to be exercised at both levels—the administrative and executive—and as much in the central branch as in the local branches (*Monitoreo Intermediario Octubre 2000 a Marzo 2001*, Guatemala, September, 2001, 10).

Despite that principle, a hierarchical relationship developed between the PRVM-Izabal and the coalition or central branch. This issue will be addressed in detail in the next chapter. For now it can be said that the hierarchical relationship between the PRVM-Izabal and the coalition in Guatemala-City reflected a number of challenges that hindered the success of the PRVM-Izabal.

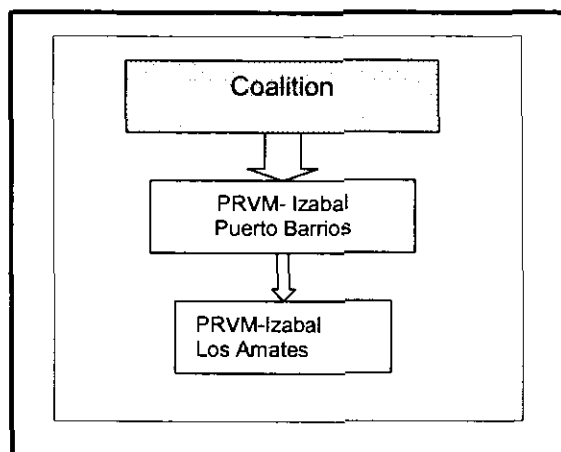


Figure 4 Hierarchical structure of the PRVM-Izabal

A hierarchical structure within the PRVM-Izabal was also evident. The *Reglamento del Proyecto No Violencia*, or guideline for the national project and its corresponding branches, listed each of the branch's structure in a hierarchical fashion, "Each branch will be under the responsibility of one coordinator, one assistant coordinator, and legal assessor, and one psychologist assessor..." (*Reglamento del Proyecto No Violencia*). The *Reglamento* not only distributed responsibilities among the staff but it is also contained motivational rewards to recognize the personnel's work (ibid). Although all of the staff-members received a monthly salary for their work, financial recognition within the PRVM-Izabal occurred according to their hierarchical position. This issue will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

The *Reglamento*, too, outlined the organization's rigid division of labour, which had not allowed staff-members to expand their knowledge by being exposed to diverse job experiences.¹⁶ The rigidity sometimes made field work employees feel as though

¹⁶ For a list of the jobs that each of the employees performed, see "Appendix 6" section.

office staff did not understand or appreciate the harshness of field work (observations and field notes, Puerto Barrios, 10 June 2002). Despite structural inflexibility, at the time of the field research the project was making efforts to expose some of its employees to different jobs. This may indicate that the organization attempted to respond to its employees' requests for work variety. Employee 4 explained this phenomenon, "I do not know very well the work that the *compañeras* do in the communities because I am always here in the office...they said that there would be a week when we are going to get to know it but we will have to take turns because the office cannot close" (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 12 June, 2002).

C. Empowerment through activities, programs and services

Before demonstrating how the PRVM-Izabal empowered women and how it achieved its five objectives successfully, it is important to define "empowerment"—the key reason for which the organization provided programs and services for women. Many feminists conceptualize "empowerment" as "the control one feels over one's own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (e.g., will-power and personal control, in contrast to individual power-over, which focuses on controlling others" (Iannello 1992: 44; Yoder and Kahn 1992: 384). Feminists conceptualize empowerment in that manner because they consider it to be the opposite of "power," which they perceive as domination and coercion or—more specifically—as "the ability of actor A to get actor B to do something that actor B would not otherwise do" (Iannello 1992: 43).

Thus, and quite contrary to power, empowerment enables actors instead of rendering them powerless. Empowerment not only generates more autonomy, more participation in decision-making, and more access to resources but it also increases the

total capacity for effective action rather than increasing domination (Gruber and Trickett 1987: 353-54). As Deere and León suggest,

“the term ‘empowerment’ has been used in a multitude of ways, and not always in an emancipatory sense....But implicit in the different uses of the word is the notion of people acquiring control over their own lives and defining their own agendas; it is usually associated with the interests of those dispossessed of power and assumed to be an expression of desired change without specifying what that change implies” (2001: 3).

The organization focused on empowering women by strengthening their self-esteem so that they could lead a violence-free life, which would eventually allow them to participate in grassroots development (Employee 1, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 25 June 2002). The PRVM-Izabal provided in- and out-of-office services and programs that included, but were not limited to: the creation and maintenance of self-help groups; the carrying out of consciousness-raising campaigns; and the maintenance of support networks with local NGOs as well as government organizations (GOs). The project also engaged in comprehensive and thorough *incidencia* campaigns, which were similar to lobbying with the exception that they were both related to and supportive of the organization's *main goals*.

A great deal of out-of-office activities involved working with local media outlets for consciousness-raising. The sub-branch in Los Amates, along with its No Violence Network, had run a radio show since March 2002 on *Radio Comunitaria FM* every Wednesday from 10:30am to 11:00am. This campaign, which could reach even the smallest villages in Izabal, was possible because the employees in Los Amates had sought out free radio air time for an indefinite period (interview with Employee 10 and Employee 6). The show featured short cues in Q'eqchi' and Spanish that focused on making the community aware that women were part of Guatemalan society and that, therefore, they had the right to have education, work rights, equal salaries and access to

health services (Los Amates, 19 June 2002). A Puerto Barrios woman revealed that the project had aired similar public awareness shows on the local television station and on *TuFM*, one of the three Puerto Barrios' radio stations.

The PRVM-Izabal in Puerto Barrios performed media campaigns in Spanish, Q'eqchi' and Garifuna to break the silence about intra-family violence and to publicize the existence of the *Ley de violencia Intra-familiar* (VIF). The Puerto Barrios faction had launched its media campaign six-months earlier than the sub-branch in Los Amates. The Puerto Barrios office not only had pursued and received free television and radio air time but it also had paid for those services. When asked why the media campaign had stopped, some employees explained that it was no longer possible to obtain those services for free and that it was too expensive to sustain these campaigns over a long period of time.

The work of the PRVM-Izabal transcended consciousness-raising, as it also provided in-office services to assist women victims of violence in the population at large. These services included the reception of complaints, the provision of psychological and legal counselling services, as well as the accompaniment of women to the Family Court and to other government institutions. Another important service that the project provided was locating temporary shelters for victims of violence while they finalized their divorce or while the Family Court established and enforced security measures—which were part of the VIF and could be renewed after six months. These measures included denying the aggressors the use or possession of fire arms and access into the victim's home.

Although these programs and services empowered women in the community, the PRVM-Izabal specifically empowered victims of violence through self-help groups. The methodology involved in working with these groups initiated out of women's practical experience with intra-family violence. Those experiences became systematized in five

modules on gender, self-esteem, violence, legislation, and health, which ultimately aspired to empower women at the grass-roots level through consciousness-raising (Employee 1, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 4 June 2002).

At the time of the field research, the PRVM was working with fourteen self-help groups on a weekly basis. The groups were located in several villages in Izabal, such as Las Pavas, Santa Isabel and Quiriguá. The majority of women who belonged to the self-help groups had been victims of violence, but others had never experienced it. Regardless of that difference, the project's learning-by-doing approach encouraged women to learn negotiating skills to reduce violence or to deal with it. Moreover, this methodology emphasized that the project's development agents were only to *facilitate* the participants' learning process, as the women themselves were to learn from one another by sharing their experiences (Interview with Employee 1, Employee 3, and Employee 2).

Making the self-help groups self-sufficient was the main objective of developing and working with them. Some of the groups that were in the last stages of the modules were functioning on their own and were receiving minimal guidance from the PRVM-Izabal. The groups were given both knowledge and some tools to be successfully independent, and this included receiving the Self-help Group Manual, a handbook that outlined guidelines, accompaniment processes, and treatment for women survivors of violence (Internal Evaluation Report, September 1999 to August 2001). Once they learned to deal with intra-family violence, women shared their knowledge, experience and skills by helping and empowering others and became active participants in the community. Of special significance was women's empowerment through their practicing of knowledge and skills *in their homes*, which ultimately politicized this space as well as their role within it.

Achievements and strategies

This section will assess the organization's success against each of its objectives to demonstrate that it was successful in fulfilling its five major goals. This section will also show that the PRVM-Izabal had successful results in the post Peace Accords (PA) period due to its effective external and internal strategies. Because of space limitations, this section will analyze and assess only some of those strategies. An analysis of the organization's external and internal strategies will follow the discussion of each success.

Goal 1: Making women aware of their rights

The project's success in making women aware of their rights was concrete or more clearly visible in its work with the self-help groups. To evaluate the organization's success in fulfilling this goal, it is necessary to cite the opinions and responses of women involved in the self-help groups, which became available through participatory observation in three different meetings of the self-help groups as well as from interviews and surveys with two self-help group participants, "Doña Margarita" and "Doña Gloria." As acknowledged in the methodology section, it may be possible that the participants' responses may have been influenced by my presence.

An example of the project's success in achieving its first goal was found in the opinions of self-help group participants. A woman in a meeting openly explained that she was more willing to be independent and to go out because she realized that she, too, had the right to enjoy herself and not just take care of her family (Las Pavas, Izabal, 18 June 2002). Several other women in the same meeting indicated that they had not been able to express themselves until they joined the groups and that this was something they appreciated greatly (ibid). Women in a group of *La Libertad* also indicated that they were interested in learning how to organize health campaigns

because their involvement in the project's Women's Health Week Campaign had made them realize the importance of exercising their right to health care services (*La Libertad*, Livingston, 21 June 2002).

The two interviewees and survey respondents suggested that the project educated women about their rights through the provision of satisfactory programs and services.¹⁷ Five questions were asked to evaluate the implementation of the project's programs, which the respondents considered to be equally accessible to all of the participants. The answers also revealed that the project's development agents provided services efficiently, as they were always ready and willing to help the participants of the self-help groups. The only complaint one of the respondents openly expressed in one of the meetings was that it was at times difficult to understand the agents because they "almost spoke another language," full of "elevated" words (Las Pavas, Izabal 18 June 2002).

The survey respondents were asked a second set of questions, which sought to determine the quality of the services delivered. The women considered that the services were provided in an interesting, well organized and educational. The last set of questions was to establish whether the project had empowered the beneficiaries. The participants' responses revealed that the project's programs provided them with a sense of control as they could achieve goals, could evaluate their own work, and could change the programs as they deemed suitable.

Although the experience of these individual women illustrates the project's success in meeting its first goal, the organization's success was also noticeable at the community level. "Don Marcos," Doña Margarita's husband, submitted that despite her

¹⁷ Refer to the "Appendix 8" for a detailed list of survey questions and answers.

illiteracy his wife was a very active participant both in the community and in the self-help group. He explained, "the change I have noticed is that she has overcome her being humiliated—mostly now, since she is a little more active...more than anything, she participates in any group" (Las Pavas, Izabal, 18 June 2002). "Doña Gloria" said that she knew about similar stories, making the impact of the PRVM-Izabal larger than it may have seemed on the surface. When I asked her how many people she thought benefited from the project's work in her village, she replied, "I would say that about a hundred people benefit because, suppose that in a family, the mother participates and her family is made up of eight people, then, that would mean that eight people are being helped....I think that in this case it has helped many because...[women] take the message home" (Las Pavas, Izabal, 18 June 2002).

To achieve its first goal, making women aware of their rights, the project engaged in consciousness-raising and large advertising campaigns through several media. Through its production of radio shows and visual materials such as posters, stickers and pamphlets, the project publicized the existence of laws and PA guarantees for women. The project sought strategic alliance with general directors of television and radio stations to change attitudes towards gender issues. Lucia's remark that even men in Los Amates began to recognize women's rights evidenced the effectiveness of such strategy. The participants in the self-help groups, too, provided evidence to suggest that the project's consciousness-raising strategy was very effective.

Working directly with women through in-office services and workshops was another strategy that the project used. The project's success in this goal was due to its learning-by-doing approach. Although the project worked with uprooted populations and offered no material rewards, the learning-by-doing approach both allowed self-help group participants to feel empowered or in control over their own groups and provided

them with opportunities for self-improvement and education so that they could learn skills to participate in grass-roots development. The result of this strategy was that the members became more interested in organizing and maintaining independent groups to exercise their rights. Thus, through its work with women at the community level the PRVM-Izabal helped in the implementation of the PA that focused on civil society participation and community development.

Goal 2: Eradicating or eliminating intra-family violence against women

The project's efforts to educate women about their rights had helped it achieve its second objective, which focused on decreasing violence against women. "Tania," Doña Margarita's daughter, exemplified the project's success in making her parents' marriage more stable and less prone to violence. More specifically, she indicated that her parents did not fight any more and were now happier (Las Pavas, Izabal, 18 June 2002). Don Marcos corroborated Tania's answer by claiming, "[the marriage] has improved....We used to lead a very bitter...life: problems here, problems there. Now, well, we have calmed down a lot. We do not exist in that wrath—or hate—that we used to maintain in our home" (Las Pavas, Izabal, 18 June 2002).

Doña Margarita clarified that learning skills to deal with domestic violence as a result of participating in the self-help group had prepared her to encourage and sustain her husband's changed ways: he had alcoholism through his involvement in church-sponsored activities. Both Doña Margarita and Don Marcos provided examples of their mutual understanding and implied that they did not even engage in verbal abuse due to their participation in their respective community groups.

Findings from the *Informe Monitoreo Intermediario* from October 2000 to March 2001 provide further evidence for the organization's success in meeting this goal. Forty-

four participants, who belonged to groups in each of the branches, were asked to rank the level of interest they had experienced during their self-help group participation to measure the national project's success. The Grupo Barrio el Pozón and Grupo de la Finca Yuma, two PRVM-Izabal groups, participated in the random survey. According to the findings, 83% of the women found the topic of negotiation with husbands very interesting (*Informe Monitoreo Intermediario, Octubre 2000 a Marzo 2001*: 36). In regards to sharing their knowledge, 83% of the participants stated that they shared their knowledge with their family, especially with their husbands, whereas 66% shared it with their neighbours (ibid).

The project's efforts to accomplish its second goal focused a great deal on working on self-esteem, as it considered that women's low self-esteem was one of the root causes of intra-family violence. The project promoted empowerment to encourage women to report intra-family violence at the same time it provided in- and out-of-office services, such as psychological and legal advice. These activities, which gave women knowledge and tools to handle or to overcome violence, allowed them to make informed decisions and to have control over their lives.

Consciousness-raising not only targeted individual women but the community as well. To decrease the occurrence of intra-family violence the PRVM-Izabal conducted workshops in community venues—such as schools and churches—and organized community forums and panels to challenge the public belief that intra-family violence was a “natural” and private affair. The campaigns aimed at training the community to deal with intra-family violence. The responses of solidarity networks and the self-help group participants demonstrate that these strategies were effective in promoting democracy and peace at the grassroots as well as household level.

Goal 3: Affecting public policy

The PRVM-Izabal affected public policy by changing the attitudes of departmental and municipal government authorities. The project has engaged in inter-institutional coordination with government officials to make the government promote and protect women's right to lead a violence-free life. In this way, the project ensured that government institutions applied correctly the laws that aimed at preventing, sanctioning and eradicating violence against women—especially Decree 97/96 and the VIF (Employee 1; Monitoring Report, October 2000 to March 2001).

For the most part, government officials in Puerto Barrios, Los Amates and Livingston did not resist the project's intervention to produce policy changes at the departmental level. Several officials submitted that NGOs such as the PRVM-Izabal often made it easier for government institutions to fulfil their responsibilities. According to a project employee, the Puerto Barrios' Health Chief acknowledged that the PRVM-Izabal had done it a favour by promoting and organizing the Health Week event because the Ministry of Health had to meet a quota of health services for women (Employee 1, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 7 June 2002).

Similarly, Nancy, a Public Ministry official who also worked in the No Violence Network, claimed that there had been an influx of individual women's reporting of VIF violations, making the success of the project's work evident in her ministry. She recognized, too, that the work of NGOs such as the PRVM-Izabal was important because it both encouraged the government to provide more efficient and professional services to deal with intra-family violence and verified that the government was implementing laws in a correct and transparent fashion (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 24 June 2002). Despite local government officials' apparent high regard for the project, few of

these individuals seemed to have some suspicion towards it. This issue will be addressed in detail in the next chapter.

For now it can be said that the project achieved its third goal, affecting public policies, through four strategies: 1) working with administrators of justice; 2) establishing strategic alliances with local NGOs and GOs; 3) seeking the support of individuals in high government positions; and 4) documenting violations of the VIF, which would help improve or change it. The project's first tactic worked because it did not generally alienate government officials, who were fundamental in the implementation of various laws that protected women. Rather than antagonizing these individuals, the project made regular friendly visits and telephone conversations; paid for consciousness-raising workshops so that the officials could not reject participating; and made workshop participants feel good by giving them diplomas for completing the workshops. Simply put, the maintenance of a friendly and collaborative relationship with government authorities ultimately made these individuals aware of their duty and more willing to implement both the VIF and the PA guarantees for women correctly.

The project established alliances with representatives of local NGOs and GOs through the solidarity networks. The project's work concentrated on making the representatives sensible to the issue of intra-family violence so that they could carry out *incidencia* campaigns and press for public policy reform. The project's success in this area was especially evident in the commitment of the networks' members to continue their struggle even after the project concluded. The maintenance of "watchdog" organizations such as the No Violence Networks served to ensure that the PA guarantees and the VIF were duly and properly implemented.

The creation of the solidarity networks was a strategy to redress the project's difficulty to deal with the Family Court Judge, who was the project's main target as he

made ultimate rulings for all intra-family violence cases in Izabal. A number of employees indicated that the judge resisted the project's activities because of his personal differences with the PRVM-Izabal coordinator. The coordinator, on the other hand, indicated the judge was simply apathetic to the project's cause. Regardless of the exact reasons for the judge's opposition, the project found two ways to get around his resistance. One was by selecting two employees other than the coordinator to approach his office whenever the need arose. The other was the coordinator's efforts to establish a strategic alliance with the Human Rights Attorney's Office to create the No Violence Networks in Puerto Barrios and Los Amates to lobby and constantly work with the judge.

The project used its third and fourth strategies—seeking support from individuals in high government positions and documenting violations of the VIF, respectively—to affect public policy in several instances. The third tactic was used when it contacted the departmental governor, Governor Sanchez, to obtain the permission of the National Police Personnel Chief to allow his staff to participate in the consciousness-raising workshops. The project, too, contributed to reforming the VIF and Decree 97/96 by registering and ensuring that governmental institutions registered and sent their registrations into the ministry of Judicial Statistics for evaluation and improvement.

Goal 4: Improving government services for victims of intra-family violence

Judge Luna—a Judge in the Puerto Barrios' Peace Court of Justice—indicated that the project had improved government services for victims of violence by teaching women and the community in general what to do should they face intra-family violence (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 13 June 2002). In this way, the PRVM-Izabal had improved services for women victims of violence by promoting the fulfilment of the VIF. Article V

of the VIF stated that certain government institutions were obliged to register the violations of the VIF and to remit them to the national ministry of Judicial Statistics. The ministry could then evaluate and determine the measures to prevent, sanction and eradicate violence as well as to formulate and apply the necessary changes (*Ley de Violencia Intra-Familiar, Proyecto Reducción de la Violencia contra la mujer, sede Izabal*).

The project's success in improving government services for victims of violence was evident in its record for encouraging local institutions to fill out the ballots to document the number of intra-family violence cases. While the project's Registry of Ballots for 2000 lists the Public Ministry, the National Police, the Peace Court of Justice and the Family Court of Justice as government institutions that consistently filled out and collected the ballots, the Monitoring Report shows that the registry of violations increased between October 2000 and March 2001 because the Human Rights Attorney's Office joint that process (*Monitoreo Intermedio, October 2000 to March 2001, Guatemala, September 2001, 25*). The project's registry records also indicate that only the Peace Court of Justice filled and collected the forms in Los Amates. This was in itself a significant improvement because no institution performed this duty prior to 2001 (*Registro de Denuncias de Violencia Intra-familiar, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 2001*).

Secondly, the PRVM-Izabal improved governmental services through consciousness-raising campaigns for justice administrators. Since its goal was to improve services for victims of violence, the project approached all of the local governmental institutions to conduct this campaign one month at a time. César, a Public Ministry official who had completed all of the modes of the consciousness-raising workshop, indicated that he became both more sympathetic to the organization's cause and more aware of his responsibility as an administrator of justice to learn about the VIF

and to fulfil it. He explained, “That [issue] gets to you, not only as a man but also because I have come to realize that there were things I had omitted previously, that I had not done as a public functionary—even though I had the obligation. Maybe it was because I did not really know about the law” (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 24 June 2002).

Six out of six officials who were participating or had participated in the consciousness-raising workshop at the time of the field research also revealed that they had become more sensitive to the problem of intra-family violence; that they were more willing to learn about the issue; and that they had gained more or better knowledge about the law.¹⁸

Although one of the participants was not asked the specific survey question due to time limitations, five respondents rated the project’s workshops. The majority, or three out of five, gave the project’s workshops 10 out of 10, the highest possible rating. These officials were very satisfied with the learning experience the workshops provided and suggested that they appreciated the knowledge they had gained and the material they had received. Judge Luna proudly displayed a pocket version of the VIF that the project had given him to keep (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 13 June 2002).

The two participants who gave the workshops lower ratings, 6.5 and 7.5 out of 10, noted that the time assigned to get an in-depth knowledge about intra-family violence and the VIF was too short and unrealistic (Roberto, Livingston, Izabal, 20 June 2002 and Miguel, Livingston, Izabal, 20 June 2002). These individuals expressed their desire to receive similar workshops more often and for over a month to be able to get more thorough knowledge. When asked about this matter, some of the project’s employees

¹⁸ Judge Luna, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 13 July 2002; Catherina, Los Amates, Izabal, 19 June 2002; Alfredo, Los Amates, Izabal, 19 June 2002; Roberto, Livingston, Izabal, 20 June 2002; Miguel, Livingston, 20 June 2002; César, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 24 June 2002.

said they could not accommodate such demands and explained that even getting permission to conduct the workshops for the period of a month had been difficult since the justice administrators' supervisors did not think the officials had enough time to undertake longer workshops.

The project sought alliances with other local and international NGOs and GOs to improve governmental services for victims of violence, its fourth goal. The creation of the *Oficina de la Mujer*, whose creation was due to the participation of a government institution—the Human Rights Attorney's Office—urged the government to provide more and better services for women, especially in isolated areas such as Livingston. The work with women at the community level ensured the provision of government services, such as health check ups. The provision of these services was an obligation that the government undertook as a result of the PA. The officials' attitudes towards the project involvement in facilitating the provision of government services for its citizens evidenced the effectiveness of these strategies. In other words, the project's activism exemplifies the role that NGOs have in organizing civil society to facilitate and encourage the government's provision of services.

Goal 5: Creating pressure groups

The PRVM-Izabal created pressure groups in Puerto Barrios and Los Amates. The project's strategies, which will be discussed shortly, had helped it overcome the difficulties involved in the creation and maintenance of the networks. For now it is important to mention that out of the three national branches of the PRVM, the PRVM-Izabal had been the only one to successfully establish pressure groups to further *incidencia* and legal processes (*Evaluación Interna, Proyecto Reducción de la Violencia Contra la Mujer*, September 1999 to August 2001, 5). At the time of the field research,

the networks included representatives of local NGOs and governmental organizations (GOs), such as the Izabal Governor's Office, the Human Rights Attorney's Office, the National Police and several ministries.

Participatory observation and interviews revealed that the networks were becoming independent entities. Five out of five members interviewed, including the project's coordinator, expressed their interest and desire to continue their work despite the fact that the PRVM-Izabal would cease to exist and to give them support.¹⁹ While most were not doubtful about the network's continuation, one member suggested that this task would be somewhat challenging, "What would be missing is peoples' willingness....Unfortunately people are so: if there is no incentive, there is no work, but we are keen on belonging to the network, keep working with it and seeing how we can become self-sustainable" (Lucia, Los Amates, Izabal, 19 June 2002). It was beyond the scope of this thesis to determine whether the networks continue to operate despite the project's conclusion.

The members alluded to the difficulty of getting the networks organized as the main reason to press for their continuation. Laura explained that it had taken between six and eight months to begin the structuring of the Puerto Barrios' network. This phase was possible only after those interested underwent a lengthy preparation and consciousness-raising process to be clear about the network's objectives (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 24 June 2002).

The project was successful in accomplishing its fifth goal, creating committed pressure groups, due to its emphasis on organizing monthly meetings. The project also

¹⁹ Karen, Los Amates, 19 June 2002; Lucia, Los Amates, 19 June 2002; PRVM-Izabal Coordinator, Puerto Barrios, Izabal (unspecified date to protect her identity); Nancy, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 24 June 2002 and Laura, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 24 June 2002.

emphasized regular communication with the networks' representatives to coordinate activities and to evaluate jointly-planned activities.

Other achievements: going beyond the mission statement

It is important to note that the PRVM-Izabal also empowered its implementers, although it had not specifically set out to do so. The staff's satisfaction with their role in the project was evident in how they, including a former staff-member, rated the project as well as its services and programs,²⁰

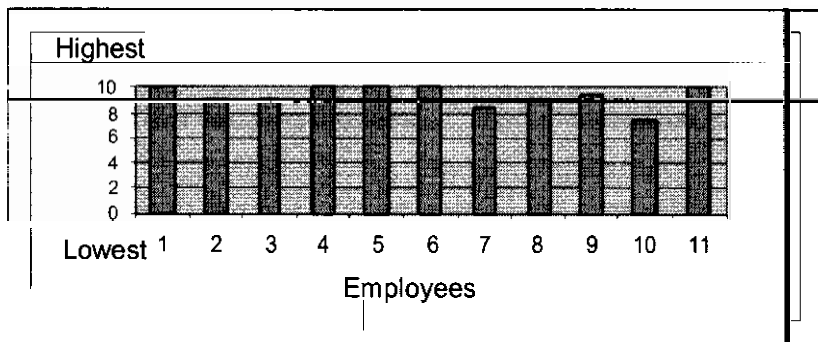


Figure 5 Employees' rating of the PRVM-Izabal

As the chart suggests, the lowest rating an employee gave the organization was 7.5 out of 10, the average of an answer that varied between 7 and 8. Although Employee 10 rated the project lower than did the rest, she indicated that the experiences from the project were important for personal and group self-improvement (Puerto Barrios, 17 June 2002). Those employees who rated the organization highly gave many

²⁰ The above chart: 1) averaged the answers of those participants who gave two different answers in the same or in a second interview—which was necessary for Employees 2 and 3 due to technical difficulties. A second interview was requested by Employee 7. 2) averaged the answers of an employee who stated, “I’d give the project between 7 and 8.” 3) did not include the answers of one employee of the sub-branch as well as the driver and guardian.

reasons for doing so, including: the belief that they will have good job opportunities in the future as a result of participating in it; the idea that the project fulfilled its mission and even exceeded its goals; and the belief that the project had done very well for being the first organization of that nature in Izabal.

All of the respondents felt empowered from their experience of working in the project.²¹ For some employees, empowerment had been possibly through a self-discovery process. Employee 10 stated that she had been raised with the idea that women did not have the freedom to express what they felt or wanted since they had to be submissive. She explained that the project had helped her to overcome these ideas, “[through] this learning process...I...can express and say what I think and what I feel” (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 17 June 2002).

For other employees, empowerment had been possible through empowering other women and—and more importantly—through working with one another. Some suggested that these factors had allowed them to become sensitive to many women’s problems (Employee 9, Employee 2, Employee 3, and Employee 7). The employees’ empowerment was evident in the solidarity or the support they gave one another. Employee 7 clarified that the secretary, the general assistant/janitor and the accountant were not required to register violations of the VIF, yet they had learned to take them and performed this task willingly as part of their peer support (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 12 June 2002).

²¹ Employee 1, 4 June, 2002; Employee 2, 5 June, 2002; Employee 3, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 5 June 2002; Employee 4, Puerto Barrios, 5 June 2002; Employee 5, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 5 June 2002; Employee 6, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 12 June 2002; Employee 7, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 6 June 2002; Employee 8, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 6 June 2002; Employee 9, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 11 June 2002; Employee 10, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 17 June 2002; and Employee 11, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 17 June 2002. This information did not include the responses of one member of the Los Amates sub-branch as well as the responses of the driver and the guardian because they were not interviewed.

Empowerment and solidarity among the employees aroused out of financial difficulties. They experienced these problems when they did not receive salaries for several months due to the legal procedures against AMVA—the coalition organization that administered the financial matters of the national project and its branches. Employee 4 indicated that prior to their financial difficulties the staff-members spent little time together, especially during their lunch and coffee breaks. She explained, “We didn’t bring money, or we brought money only for the taxi fare....Then, one would say, ‘look, I brought this.’ At times, we sat here and filled the entire table with food....Since that problem, we have become and have been united” (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 13 June 2002).

The empowerment of the project’s staff members and the fulfilment of the organization’s five external goals was largely possible due to its internal strategies, which included: 1) monthly, tri-monthly and yearly evaluation and reports on the project’s results; 2) weekly and constant internal planning or coordination; and 3) most importantly, the outright integration of its employees regardless of their race and membership seniority. Regular evaluations and planning occurred both due to the employees’ willingness to conduct their internal dynamics that way and due to the accountability requirements that the USAID had established.

All of the staff-members participated in the evaluation process as they wrote monthly reports on their respective job areas. All of the employees evaluated their activities in weekly meetings, which took place on Mondays in the headquarters. The meetings were very casual and informal, which allowed Puerto Barrios and Los Amates employees to coordinate future activities together, to discuss the success or failure of previous activities and to brainstorm ideas to come up with strategies.

The responses from non-ladino employees exemplified the organization's effectiveness in integrating all of its employees. One of the employees indicated that it had not been difficult for her to integrate herself into the group because her coworkers were very friendly and confided in her quickly. She suggested, too, that she was always included in group activities and that she had never felt rejected because of her ethnicity (Employee 2, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 5 June 2002). In- and out-of-office observations confirmed this interviewee's indication, as the ladino and the non-ladino employees spent a great deal of time together. They ate together whenever it was possible; they laughed together; they went home from work together and so on. All of the lower rank employees even teased each other and seemed to have personal relations that resembled that of sisters. Both the employees' responses and participatory observation revealed that this type of rapport did not exist in relation to the coordinator towards the lower rank employees.

The strategy of the project to integrate its new employees also contributed to its success, because all the employees were empowered, or felt they had capacity for effective action, through an equal sharing of knowledge. The induction process, which took about a month and focused on consciousness-raising workshops, allowed new staff-members to learn different tasks, such as registering violations of the VIF. All of the employees in the Puerto Barrios headquarters, from the secretary and the accountant to the development agents, assisted the new employees in this process. The responses from two new employees, outlined in the following graph, demonstrate that the PRVM-Izabal was successful in integrating new staff-members through the sharing of expertise and inclusiveness. Of special significance is their response to question 9, which denotes

the employees' perception of their empowerment, or ability to achieve goals, due to the project's strategies.²²

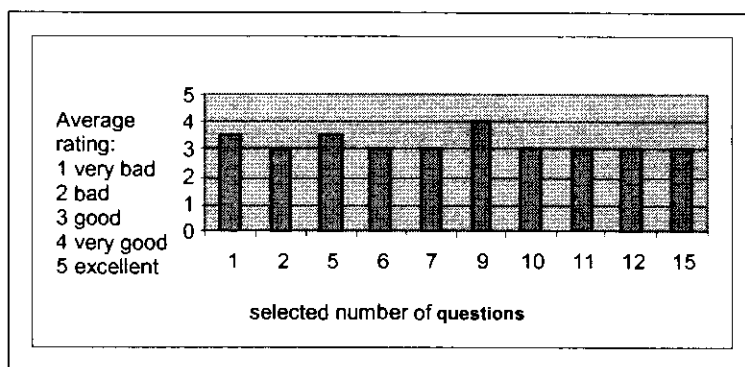


Figure 6 New employees' rating of their integration

Conclusion

This chapter studied how the PRVM-Izabal operated in its context by examining the programs and services it provided for women. Given that the project's accomplishments were too numerous to mention them all, this chapter focused on the project's ability to meet its major objectives and ability to empower the beneficiaries of its programs as well as its staff. This chapter demonstrated that the PRVM-Izabal was

²² The above chart averaged the responses of two new staff-members and was based on selected responses to a fifteen question survey:

1. My personal relationship with other employees is;
- 2) My personal relationship with the central committee (coalition) is;
- 5) The effort of the PRVM to integrate us, new staff-members, to the organization has been;
- 6) The effort of old employees to guide and welcome us has been;
- 7) The effort to include our opinions, suggestions, and points of view is;
- 9) The employees think that the project's strategies to achieve its goals are;
- 10) The effort of the PRVM to include my interests is;
- 11) The effort of the organization to include its employees' interests is;
- 12) The effort of the central decision-making committee (coalition) to respect each of the employees' independency is;
- 15) The effort of the PRVM to treat everyone in the project fairly and equally is:

successful in these two areas because of its effective external and internal strategies, which were examined in the last part of the chapter.

Through this chapter's analysis, it can be concluded that the project seemed to empower almost every woman that came in contact with it, which is of particular significance in the current political context. The PRVM-Izabal appeared to have rehabilitated many women victims of violence, which, by virtue of affecting many Guatemalans at the community and domestic level, needed to be addressed in the post PA period. The project assisted in the solidification of peace by making communities aware of women's rights and by preparing women to be grass-roots civil activists. Through its work with a variety of women, the PRVM-Izabal reinforced the inclusive agenda of the PA, as it encouraged women to become civil activists at a time where it is possible for NGOs to oversee and verify the government's implementation of the PA. Although the current Guatemalan context may seem favourable for women's organizations to engage in civil activism, the next chapter will show that economic and cultural factors challenged and consequently diminished the organization's overall success.

CHAPTER FOUR: “EXPERIENCING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CHALLENGES”

Introduction

Although Chapter Two and Chapter Three analyzed how the context prompted and facilitated the PRVM-Izabal’s mobilization, the analysis in this chapter will show that the context, too, presented some limitations for the organization. This chapter will demonstrate that economic and cultural factors within and without the PRVM-Izabal considerably challenged and limited its success. These factors will be defined and identified throughout this chapter to examine specifically how they limited the project’s success. The first part of this chapter will examine external and internal economic constraints, followed by an analysis of the external and internal cultural factors.

There were different levels of challenges. On the economic constraints side, the project’s financial dependence on the coalition was not only an external challenge, but it also affected its internal dynamics and functioning. On the cultural challenges side, some external constraints included the cultural setting in which the project operated and the employees’ attitudes—which they identified as being rooted in culture and as affecting the project’s internal dynamics.

Economic constraints

The current government cutbacks on social spending—which underline the trivialization and relegation of gender-specific concerns—limited the success of the PRVM-Izabal. This phenomenon is linked to larger *cultural attitudes* that permeate the government’s prioritization of women’s concerns. As Chapter Two indicated, the government provided some services for women but it did so to a very limited extent. The lack and inadequacy of government services—in addition to the government’s failure to

educate women about their rights—are some reasons for organizations such as the PRVM-Izabal to emerge in the first place.

On the surface the government did not seem to actively oppose the PRVM-Izabal. However, the project's staff members and even local government officials suggested that the government not only neglected and under-funded gender-specific projects but that it, too, undermined the organization's purpose to some extent by failing to prioritize the importance of intra-family violence (Employee 9, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 11 June 2002). As it was previously discussed, patriarchy and machismo seem to continue to influence many government officials' view of gender issues. Judge Luna indicated that the project was an example for state organizations because these institutions had neglected the prevention and eradication of intra-family violence (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 13 June 2002).

Some of the project's employees supported Judge Luna's claim by suggesting that if the government indeed prioritized intra-family violence, a foreign NGO would not have needed to initiate public awareness about it (Employee 3, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 6 June, 2002). When asked what she considered to be the most important obstacle for the project on the government's behalf, Employee 5 identified the government's reluctance to assume its responsibility to provide services for women, especially for legal counselling (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 5 June 2002).

One could suggest that the reason the government did not actively oppose the project was because it *needed* foreign aid to integrate women into the political system, a responsibility it undertook by signing the Peace Accords. Opposing the project in an outright way could have led to the withdrawal of USAID funding, which may have led the Guatemalan Government to take upon the provision of services the project provided with foreign funds. Thus, in this particular situation the government benefited more from

keeping quiet and getting a free ride than from opposing, as it did not have to fulfil its responsibility to citizens, yet it still appeared to be implementing neo-liberal policies that prioritized social spending cutbacks.

External and internal economic constraints: The PRVM-Izabal's relationship with the coalition and its effects on the organization's internal dynamics

As alluded to in the previous chapter, the PRVM-Guatemala City, or the central branch, dealt with the PRVM-Izabal and the other branches in a hierarchical and bureaucratic manner. Context and culture may have influenced the central coalition's decision to select a bureaucratic structure for its branches to work under. The coalition may have opted for a financial hierarchical management to demonstrate legitimacy and accountability in its dealings with USAID, the founding organization. It is possible to make this assumption for several reasons. First, some authors have posited that funding organizations prefer to deal with organizations that have "fiscal and management devices" because they fear "it would be a bad choice to invest in...unconventional organizations" (Staggenborg 1988: 597; Rothschild-Whitt 1979: 523).

Secondly, and more importantly, the coalition may have chosen a bureaucratic structure because feminism in Guatemala is still in its nascent stage and, as a result, Guatemalan women have not yet been exposed to a variety of organizational structures. As was discussed in the section on *Marianismo*, women in the years prior to the peace negotiation process were organized around human rights struggles. Since the Peace Accords, women have been organizing themselves around *gender issues*, such as equality before the law and pay equity. As such, these organizations only began to emerge and to increase in numbers since the early 1990s (Central American Analysis Group and Valerie MacNabb, Guatemala City, 1998).

Although the coalition that managed the PRVM-Guatemala City had originally aspired to have a horizontal structure, bureaucracy and hierarchy had become unintended yet constraining structures. This development may to some degree be attributable to highly bureaucratized and hierarchical norms that existed in the Guatemalan society. Simply put, bureaucratic and hierarchical structures—which have traditionally been associated with patriarchy—may have seemed “natural” for the branches in their efforts to learn and use the tricks of the “bureaucratic game,” especially as they needed to interact with such organizations at the government and societal level. This course of action may be related to the fact that these organizational models have existed in Latin America for a long time. As will be addressed later, in its struggle to survive in a bureaucratic, patriarchal and hierarchical environment, the PRVM-Izabal reproduced the very structures of inequality that it intended to eliminate. Having said that, let us now examine how the project’s financial structure limited the organization’s effectiveness.

The relationship of the PRVM-Izabal with the coalition and USAID was far too complex to allow the organization to carry out activities efficiently. This complexity is illustrated in the next diagram. Although the previous chapter explained that the central branch was made up of three organizations, it is necessary to clarify that AMVA was the administrative faction that acted as the bridge between the PRVM-Izabal and USAID.

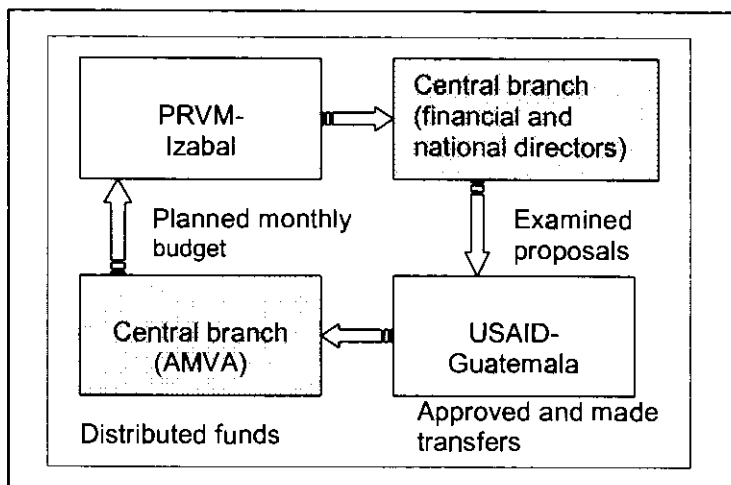


Figure 7 Financial structure of the PRVM-Izabal

The accountant's detailed explanation of the PRVM-Izabal clarified the diagram further. She suggested that since every expense that the project incurred had to be backed up by invoices, all of the employees had to compile them at the end of every month. Then she, the accountant, developed the monthly liquidation and gave it to the coordinator to revise it. The coordinator in turn sent all the documentation to the accountant and auditor in the central branch, who sent the balanced summary to USAID-Guatemala. USAID-Guatemala verified the accuracy of the information and retroactively released funds to AMVA, the organization within the coalition that administered the national project and its branches' financial matters.²³

The financial bureaucracy and any problems that resulted from it affected the operation of the PRVM-Izabal. Chapter Three made reference to how budgetary restrictions limited the project's duration and scope. The internal Monitoring Report of October 2000 to March 2001 further exemplified other limitations by stating, "the

²³ This interview's date is not clarified to protect the accountant's privacy.

bureaucracy involved in the soliciting requirements for funding and the cycle of funding influx provoke a delay in the disbursement of funding to the branches" (*Informe Monitoreo Intermediario*, Octubre 2000 a Marzo 2001, Guatemala, September 2001).

Furthermore, Employee 9 posited that the fulfilment of many activities depended largely not only on the approval of the coalition but also on the financial support the project received both from it and from USAID. She stated, "the project's national director makes the [financial] decisions but she also must consult with the coalition...But, who will say, "yes or no," is really USAID because they give us the money. Then, it is of no use to want to carry an activity out if one is not going to have the financial support" (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 11 June 2002).

The project's financial bureaucratic structure not only restricted the activities it could perform but it also caused dissatisfaction and tension among the staff members. Most of the employees indicated that they had the energy and ambition to accomplish more objectives, yet they often felt that financial limitations restrained them. Employee 4 further alluded to the internal tensions that the structure produced by remarking that some employees were often stressed out because of the internal financial problems. She pointed out that going to work was a substantial sacrifice for those who commuted. She stated, "we feel very stressed out due to the problems that have happened. Some times we do not feel like coming to work because of those problems. Right now what is bothering us a lot of are the financial problems because the deposits for each branch are being made too late" (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 13 June 2002).

Tensions due to delayed funding became evident after an employee of the PRVM-Quiché sued AMVA. While the legal problem was resolved, AMVA froze all the accounts under its control. This turn of events led to the retention of salaries all the branches' employees between November 2001 and January 2002. The employees of

the PRVM-Izabal learned about this crisis in May 2002 and resented that they were not informed about it earlier. Three individuals strongly indicated they were entitled to learn about the situation because, as employees, they needed to have an explanation as to why they were not receiving their salaries (Employee 3, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 5 June 2002; Employee 4, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 13 June 2002; Employee 9, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 11 June 2002).

The relationship between the coalition and the PRVM-Izabal also seemed to discourage some input from the branches, as it centralized all the financial decision-making process in the hands of those in the coalition. This weakened the relationship between the PRVM-Izabal and its founding coalition, as most PRVM-Izabal employees felt alienated and as though they did not have much support from the coalition. Employee 9 indicated that they had always had the support of the national director but they had rarely had the coalition's support. This development occurred even though the Project Proposal that the coalition submitted to the USAID called for the coalition's accompaniment in all sessions and work of the branches (Employee 9, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 21 June 2002).

The financial structure further alienated the PRVM-Izabal employees by restricting their access to certain information. This limitation caused disappointment, confusion, frustration, and even suspicion among a number of PRVM-Izabal employees (*Monitoreo Intermedio Octubre 2000 a Marzo 2001*, Guatemala, September, 2001, 10). Three employees insisted that they had the right to know how much budget they had available to fulfil their roles (Employee 9, Employee 4 and Employee 7). When asked how much of the branch's budget was allocated for their respective responsibilities, none of the employees could give an exact figure. Although the Monitoring Report of October 2000 to March 2001 specified that the national director was to be the ultimate financial

authority for both the central and departmental branches, the chart illustrates the employees' confusion over who was in charge of distributing funds. The employees' responses may also indicate that they understood the project's complex economic bureaucracy,²⁴

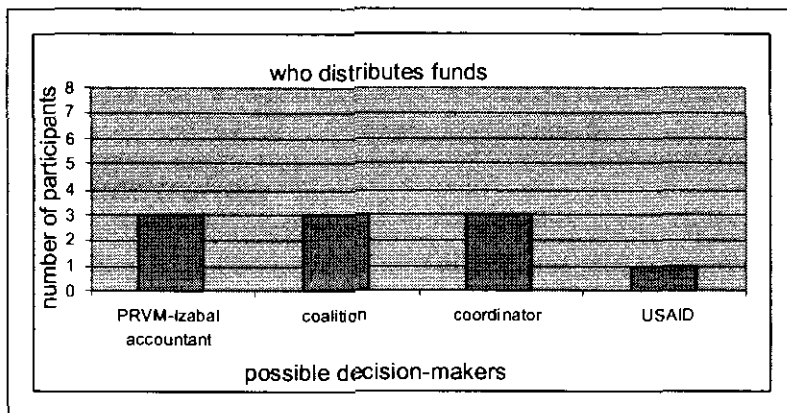


Figure 8 Funding distribution

One outcome of the project's relationship with its founding coalition was that alienation was replicated within the project itself—an issue that will be elaborated on later. Employee 7 stated, “within the office it is the coordinator who is in charge of distributing the money. At any given moment, we are not part of saying how much of what will be used. Instead, she makes the decisions about how much can be spent. And our national director must authorize if that expenditure is too large” (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 6 June 2002). This phenomenon ultimately made some employees feel powerless. Employee 7 continued, “if people do the work, they have the right to be

²⁴ The chart: 1) included only the members of Izabal's main branch in Puerto Barrios; 2) did not include the opinions of the support staff, such as that of the driver and the guardian, as well as the opinions of the members in the sub-branch of Los Amates; and 3) had double count because the members simultaneously identified several sources of income distribution.

informed about why changes are made, where they come from, and what benefits and cons there will be as well as with what objective those changes are made" (ibid).

Employee 3 reinforced the constraining elements of the organization's structure by explaining, "we generally do not touch any money....If, for example, we need some material, we ask [the accountant] for it and she goes to get it. Generally, [businesses] only deal with her" (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 5 June 2002).

Cultural constraints

In addition to subtle government opposition and economic constraints, external and internal cultural attitudes diminished the success of the PRVM-Izabal. Of particular importance was the impact of the cultural setting on the project's operation, which initially resulted in the community's distrust towards the project.

Cultural constraints challenged the project's ability to act with effectiveness and to the fullest possible extent. These limitations were particularly represented in a number of internal challenges that at times limited the project's effectiveness. The shortness of the field research did not allow full investigation of factors that may have contributed to the project's internal tensions. However, it was clear that the project experienced problems that inevitably led to its inability to internally promote its mission statement. It is worth noting that despite the apparent internal problems, the lower rank employees perceived that their relationship was consensual and open for the most part. As will be discussed later, these individuals perceived that despite the project's internal dynamics they had been able to learn from working with one another and had become empowered from seeking understanding and accommodation.

External challenges and cultural constraints for the PRVM-Izabal: The context

In addition to the problems that resulted from the relationship with the coalition and USAID, the PRVM-Izabal grappled with external challenges that emanated from the context or the cultural environment in which it played a role. The following excerpt suggests that the project had to struggle against people's rejection to deal with the subject of intra-family violence, something they tended to consider to be trivial,

as the name suggests, Puerto Barrios is a port city...there is a lot of indifference to programs, projects and all these questions. There is more attention to music—to the port environment—more than there is to an education project or a project that intends to help certain people. [Working here] has been very difficult because I feel that the population has been very obstinate; however, we have already made ourselves noticeable (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 25 June 2002).

The atmosphere of a port-city also reflected larger and prevailing sexist or macho cultural attitudes, which challenged the project's work in two ways. First, it caused some degree of rejection among the male population in the areas where PRVM-Izabal worked. Lucia, a member of the No Violence network in Los Amates, explained that it had been difficult to create the network in that municipality because the men initially thought the network aimed at brainwashing women. She considered it a shame for the network to disintegrate, especially it had transformed those attitudes, "many men make comments. These are men who used to be substantially *machista*, who didn't allow their wives to make decisions at home....We even have a radio show in Los Amates....and those messages have now made the men accept, at least, that we women have rights" (Los Amates, Izabal, 19 June 2002). Moreover, Employee 4 provided an example of that rejection when she discussed the frequent harassment, humiliation and even threats that some of the employees had received from a battered woman's partner (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 13 June 2002). While most employees indicated that they had not suffered

rejection as a result of their participation in the project, some stated that they had faced it, particularly in the form of mockery (Employee 10, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 17 June 2002; Employee 9, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 21 June 2002). Employee 8 remarked,

They make jokes to my husband, such as, 'look at the time she comes home after giving bad advice to women.' They were implying, 'not only what she does but also you don't tell her anything.'...I felt a lot of [rejection], especially from men because I was sort of taking women's blindfold off....They thought it was a job I didn't have to do—even within my own family. They would tell one of my sisters-in-law, who was a victim of violence, 'no, don't talk with her too much because she will give you bad advice' (emphasis in original; Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 6 June 2002).

The interview with Izabal's governor, Governor Sanchez, also revealed that the project was not readily accepted in many communities partly because of the aforementioned attitudes, and, for this reason, she herself conceded that the project should be praised for working in such a society (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 17 June 2002). She discussed the initial resistance that the project encountered by explaining that when the project first began to work in some communities she had to go to conciliate men and women because the men thought women had organized to plot against them. She also indicated that while these sentiments still existed, they had started to change (ibid).

Secondly, cultural attitudes prevented women in the selected communities from participating in the project or from seeking its help. Take, for instance, women's constant change of heart when it came to seeking the project's help. When asked how often women could get the project's help or services, Employee 7 responded, "whatever number of times they come. We have had cases, even, when women come to report [a VIF violation] and they withdraw it because they made up with their partners. And then they come the next week and say that they indeed want to make the complaint and we are obliged to take it. If fifteen times they come, fifteen times we must look after them" (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 6 June 2002).

The interviews with the employees of the PRVM-Izabal and local officials such as police officers and Peace Court of Justice administrators suggested that women's constant change of heart occurred mainly due to their fear of becoming stigmatized. This reaction was especially true because machismo and sexist attitudes generally made the community see (police) intervention in intra-family violence in a negative light (Policia Nacional Civil, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 22 June 2002). The saying, "*entre hermanos y casados, nadie debe meter manos*" (between brothers and married couples no one must intervene) reinforced the cultural idea that intervention in "private or domestic" issues was not socially acceptable. Cultural attitudes such as this one generally made women hesitate about breaking abusive patterns for good.

Eradicating many cultural beliefs that made women afraid of breaking the silence about intra-family violence was a critical challenge for the PRVM-Izabal. Given the cultural and social pressure to save face, seeking the organization's help was not an option for many women. As Employee 5 pointed out, women of high social standing in particular were initially unable to open up about intra-family violence,

at the beginning women did not want to break the silence. I believe that the greatest problem was for women of high social standing because they always thought, 'what are my acquaintances going to think?' or, 'everyone knows me in the town, I have a name here,' and even, 'what will people say about the fact that so-and-so was being beaten...'" She continued, "But I believe that here in Puerto Barrios women have learned to break the silence (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 5 June 2002).

As some local officials pointed out, women's insistence on "dealing" with violence on their own worsened rather than bettered the situation in the long run—and getting women to think otherwise had become another obstacle for the project. Miguel, a Peace Court of Justice officer in Livingston, revealed his frustration with women's attitude by arguing that women seemed to almost voluntarily accept and encourage abuse—even though they had legal guarantees and support from the local authorities. He explained,

battered women should be oriented and prepared, so that they, more than anyone, accept the help that we or other institutions could offer at a given moment.” He continued, “something very clear is that when a procedure is initiated, it can be sustained...the problem that we have many times is that there are women who say, ‘but I love him,’ ‘but I miss him.’ Then women themselves are sending out the message for the situation to continue and never end (Livingston, Izabal, 20 June 2002).

The prevalence of these ideas highlights the complexity of intra-family violence in that the victims’ self-esteem is damaged to the point that they think that they themselves provoke the violence and that they themselves are to blame for their suffering. These feelings are usually accompanied by a feeling of helplessness, which is why some women did not seek help and why the organization worked on women’s self-esteem.

Some employees suggested that damage to women’s self-esteem often occurred through force, threats or manipulation. These courses of action not only mirrored but reinforced macho attitudes and values since they often incited women to withdraw their complaints (Employee 2, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 5 June 2002; Policia Nacional Civil, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 22 June 2002). Women pursued this route due to their fear to provoke more violence and to their economic dependency on their partners, which caused them concern for loss wages should their partners go to jail. These examples show that women’s attitudes can extend beyond and include cultural customs about male and female roles.

There were multiple repercussions of women’s reporting a violation of the VIF—when women in fact sustained the complaint.²⁵ Most of the institutions that were obliged to registered violations filled out a ballot and transferred it to the Family Court of Justice, so that the judge could dictate the VIF security measures requested by the victims. The measures included expelling the aggressors from the victim’s household; obliging the

²⁵ To learn more about the procedures to implement the VIF, refer to “Appendix 10.”

aggressors to pay a family food pension; and taking away the aggressors' rights to parental custody. The aggressors' removal from the household to provide immediate resolution was of special significance for the fulfilment of the VIF. As confidential interviews with two Puerto Barrios' police officers suggest, the implementation of this measure was difficult due to the systemic and cultural problems mentioned earlier.

The police officials argued that although they intervened to protect victims of violence, the very police officers that had provided help generally faced charges of abuse of authority and property invasion without warrant the next day. If women did not press charges against the police officers, they usually withdrew their complaint and refused to prosecute the aggressors. This turn of events, as the justice administrators suggested, had frustrated the police and had made them reluctant to get involved in "domestic" or a "couple's" violence—even in cases that involved severe bodily harm—for fear of facing possible charges or unwarranted disciplinary action (Roberto, Peace Court of Justice, Livingston, Izabal, 20 June 2002). As some of the project's staff members suggested, getting the police to cooperate had in itself become an obstacle and a challenge for the PRVM-Izabal.

But getting the police's cooperation in the struggle to assist victims of violence was not the only challenge the project met in its dealings with governmental institutions. Two government officials were somewhat suspicious of and resentful towards the project because, according to them, it at times disregarded its limited capacities as an NGO. While they clarified that they appreciated the project's help, these officials feared that the project had over-estimated its influence, as it had occasionally walked into governmental institutions with an overbearing and interventionist attitude—which they did not deem to be proper for an NGO (Nancy, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 24 June 2002 and Laura, Puerto

Barrios, Izabal, 24 June 2002). More specifically, they cited such organizations needed governmental institutions to have any real effect and influence.

Internal cultural challenges and constraints

As alluded to earlier, the project had a number of internal tensions, which at times limited its effectiveness and led to its inability to internally exercise fundamental elements of its mission statement—particularly its struggle for women’s equality. While it was difficult to pin-point the internal sources of tension—which could have been related to structure; personality conflict; the employees’ expectations about the project; as well as women’s inexperience in working together—this analysis specifically assumes that they were related to culture since both the coordinator and the lower rank employees interpreted them as such.

According to these individuals, the permeability of gender stereotypes and sexist or negative cultural attitudes into the project occasionally made it very hard to work together effectively, particularly with the coordinator. Unlike the coordinator, the lower rank employees believed that the internal problems were also related to the project’s structure. This rationale may explain why these employees perceived that their relationship and decision-making process were more open and consensual than they were with the coordinator. Moreover, the employees argued that the project’s structure reflected the culture and exacerbated their inexperience of working together as a woman’s organization. This section will explore these issues and will conclude with a discussion of how the project’s internal dynamics seemed to contradict its own mission statement.

A. Struggling with negative cultural attitudes within the project

A number of employees posited that the assimilation of gender stereotypes had particularly affected some employees. The employees' perception may be related to *Marianismo*—which implies femininity and power are incompatible with one another. This concept may explain and be related to the employees' belief that gender stereotypes had filtered into the project's internal dynamics. Some of the literature that examines the female leader-follower dyad²⁶ overlaps with *marianismo* and the employees' perception. Bernandez and Denmark's articles suggest that there is connection between gender stereotypes and what is expected from female leaders. In Denmark's research, for example, the female respondents indicated that female leaders seemed always wary that others were trying to undermine their authority and—as a result of their fears that they were not taken seriously—they tended to become too dominant to prove that they were better or equal to men (1993: 355). Moreover, Bernandez posits, “The prevalent view of the culture has been that the female sex is inferior to the male and less competent to exercise functions socially assigned to males” (1983: 43).

Bernandez's article notes, too, that in her research female group members “moved back and forth from idealization of the leader with expectations for nurturance, acceptance and empowerment to rejection and anger because the leader does not provide for them” (1983: 45). As will be elaborated on in the chapter, these findings relate both to the coordinator's leadership and to the lower-rank employees' assessment of her leadership. Having said that, let us now examine the reasons why the employees'

²⁶ There is extensive literature on this subject. For more information refer to Denmark 1993 and Bernandez 1983.

sensed gender stereotypes were present in their organization and their perception of how these affected the group's internal workings.

Six employees cited that one internal challenge that weakened the organization's ability to function effectively was some employees' inability to overcome their assimilation of sexist attitudes and gender stereotypes (Employee 1, Employee 3, Employee 4, Employee 8, Employee 9 and Employee 10). While these individuals suggested that it was difficult to work with employees who had assimilated some gender stereotypes, they understood that early socialization had a great deal to do with the promotion of gender-biased beliefs. Employee 8 exemplified this claim by stating, "At the beginning there was a phase of rejection [towards me]. It may have been because of the distrust that we women have towards one another—prejudices that have been ingrained in us since childhood that warn against trusting another woman...but, little by little...they accepted me" (Puerto Barrios, Izabal 6 June 2002).

Some employees suggested that other workers' assimilation of gender stereotypes influenced the work relations and internal mechanism of the PRVM-Izabal. Employee 8 went on to explain that the staff often struggled with the damaging consequences of gossip,

I feel that in a women's work group we are badly accustomed, and we have that defect...what we could call gossip...we let ourselves be influenced by it. When there is one or two individuals who distort the group, there is always going to be conflict: identifying those individuals to face them because 'they take, bring and say.'...that is the major problem, I believe, in this staff (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 7 June 2002).

While gossip did not occur a hundred-percent of the time, the participatory-observation findings indicated that working in this environment could be difficult, as gossip was noticeable several times. Gossip seemed to exacerbate the already existing problems within the organization's structure as well as the employees' inexperience in

working with other women. The problems related to gossip will become more evident as the discussion continues, but, for example, one employee described that the coordinator at times intended to use gossip to reinforce the hierarchical structure, and, more specifically, to alienate those who belonged to the lower ranks. This employee revealed that she had had problems with the coordinator, who had expected her to engage in gossiping to inform on her co-workers. The employee explained that the coordinator might have been disappointed in her because she had never engaged in gossiping and always provided her with essential information only.²⁷

Few employees pointed out others used gossip as a conflict management tool, which also harmed the project's internal workings. Gossip may have emerged as an internal dynamic because the employees had never received preparation in group conflict management and resolution as part of the induction or ongoing team-work training. Due to this factor and to the employees' opinions about the structure—which will be addressed shortly—some employees did not or could not vent their feelings, particularly to the coordinator. This weakness allowed employees who had gossiping tendencies to make assumptions and even to venture into communicating what others themselves could not express explicitly. Thus, it seemed that the project needed to improve its conflict management and communication techniques for the staff to learn to be assertive, open and honest with one another.

The expectations that the employees usually brought with them when they joined the project and their eventual disappointment also weakened the internal dynamics of the group. The expectations the employees brought may have been related to culture. Several old and new employees responded that they expected the organization to

²⁷ This employee's name and interview date are not mentioned to ensure confidentiality.

provide an internal ambiance that did not replicate external patriarchal attitudes.

Employee 11, a new employee, exemplified this point by stating, “I had many things in common with the project....It is a little *different* from what we have normally lived, which is a patriarchal society....that attracted me to become part of a project such as this one” (emphasis added; Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 17 June 2002).

As Employee 4 pointed out, however, disappointment ensued among some employees when the internal workings did not seem to meet their expectations. Employee 7 suggested that she was disappointed because she had expected and assumed that the project's structure would encourage a democratic and even nurturing environment. She manifested these points by saying, “Well, if I could change something it would perhaps be the way it is led; make it so that it is less authoritarian [and so] that we share ideas instead. [And] for the leader to agree with the entire personnel, in good harmony” (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 6 June 2002). Employee 8 similarly posited that while many more goals had been achieved, many more could have been fulfilled with a more open-minded and more democratic leader (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 6 June 2002).

Furthermore, Employee 4 mentioned one employee's belief that she would not have any problems since the project dealt with violence against women and struggled for women's rights. She posited that the employee had become extremely disappointed because she had had the most problems in the organization, and even had become a victim of the coordinator's verbal and physical abuse. Employee 4 also mentioned the disillusionment some employees experienced when they learned, despite the project's mission statement to fight for women's right, that the organization did not offer many benefits for its female workers—an issue that will be elaborated on in the last section of this chapter (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 13 June 2002).

B. Struggling with the inexperience of working together

In addition to undergoing disappointment as a result of their unfulfilled expectations, the lower rank members believed that the project's structure promoted undemocratic leadership, alienation and abuse. The section "External Challenges" suggested that although the national project had proposed to operate in a horizontal and participatory fashion, its structure and relationship with the PRVM-Izabal had become hierarchical, which in turn had filtered into the PRVM-Izabal. That section implied that the creation and reinforcement of hierarchical management at the national and branch level may have been related to context and culture as Guatemala is undergoing an early transition to democracy. In this way, Guatemalan society is slowly learning and adjusting to democratic attitudes and values, something it never experienced in decades of dictatorship and military rule.

Some of the project's employees could not reconcile the project's internal dynamics with external democratic developments (Employee 3, Employee 4, Employee 8 and Employee 9). Employee 9 exemplified this point by suggesting, "I have felt that my rights as a woman have been violated on the coordinator's behalf. I believe that she has treated each of us in an imprudent way, outside of the context that we are working here....Imagine the burden that we bear because we are conscious of the rights we have and they are violated" (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 11 June 2002).

A number of employees perceived and insisted that internal tensions were a consequence of women's inexperience in working together, especially because some seemed to abuse their positions of authority once they occupied them (Employee 3, Employee 8 and Employee 9). These employees seemed to connect their perceived idea of women's inexperience in holding positions of authority to their coordinator's assimilation of negative cultural attitudes. They argued that because of these factors the

coordinator practiced an unchallenged authoritarian leadership. Employee 4 exemplified these points, “mostly the problem here has happened with the coordinator, as she says that she does not like it that others surpass her because she is the coordinator here. As we say here, she is a *coordinator*. She is supposed to *coordinate* with each and every one of us and she is not our boss because a boss is one thing and a coordinator is another” (emphasis in original; Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 11 June 2002).

The employees referred to the coordinator’s double standards to further exemplify her authority abuse as well as her inexperience in working with and leading other women. Employee 9 explained these points by asserting, “she is always demanding from us: that is, to be punctual, not to miss work. But she can do all that. She can leave us alone to do many activities and if, for example, I miss one day because I am sick, she gets mad...That’s where the incomprehension towards us comes from.” She continued, “At times, she has yelled at us....That is the major abuse: the treatment that she gives us” (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 11 June 2002).

Employee 3 thought the coordinator abused her position because she hogged the project’s only vehicle at her will for her own use and scolded her for not fulfilling her duties (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 5 June 2002). Few employees even revealed that the coordinator’s ultimate abuse of authority was when in the spur of the moment she threw a telephone receiver at a particular employee.

While the coordinator did not explicitly address this issue, she made a comment that suggests that she, too, believed that the assimilation of cultural attitudes hampered the project’s ability to accomplish goals effectively. More specifically, she expressed her idea that abuses arose when women in general absorb macho attitudes,

“have you noticed any changes in the life of the women who participate in the project’s programs and services?”

"yes...the internal aggressiveness of each [woman has decreased] because in many occasions, remember, the whole system is absorbent and at any moment we women take in those aggressive and machista attitudes....hearing how women have become empowered...has been an enormous satisfaction."²⁸

Although the lower rank employees and the coordinator had very different perceptions of how the permeation of such cultural attitudes affected the project's internal dynamics, they agreed that those attitudes had caused instability within the branch. While some lower rank employees believed that the coordinator's authoritarian leadership and aggressive attitude were partially responsible for high employee turn-around, the coordinator attributed the organization's instability to women's assimilation of macho attitudes, which manifested themselves in apathy for the PRVM-Izabal. The coordinator explained, "people are too apathetical. It was very difficult to find personnel that fulfilled the requirements to become part of the project. We had many personnel changes many times."²⁹

C. Contradicting the organization's mission statement through structure and internal dynamics

Some employees concluded that the assimilation of gender stereotypes or negative cultural attitudes in combination with women's inexperience in working together had led to the project's internal contradiction of its aims (Employee 3, Employee4, Employee 7, Employee 8 and Employee 9). The founding coalition and the coordinator's inability to prevent and to balance out the development of a hierarchical structure at the branch level made some employees believe that the organization promoted inequality.

²⁸ This interview's date is unspecified to protect the coordinator's identity.

²⁹ This information comes from the aforementioned interview.

For instance, some employees indicated that the distribution of salaries according to hierarchical positions not only reinforced inequality but also defeated the principle of equal salary that the organization attempted to achieve for women. The following excerpt demonstrates that the project failed to find a balance between acknowledging the employees' different technical backgrounds and recognizing their need for inclusiveness and equality,

"I believe that some *compañeras* have less work and yet earn more....[If I could change something] I would make it so that salaries correspond to the amount of work each does because right now it is according to position...."

"do you know who earns the most?"

"well, according to hierarchy, the coordinator, followed by the legal assessor...The secretary earns the least....what I do not agree with, for example, is that the driver, the accountant and the agents earn the same [salary]....I have certain university level....I do not devalue the driver's work at all...because he has a hard job and it is honest work. But I think that each job should be taken into account" (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 5 June 2002).

Employee 8 further explained how the organization's contradicted its own mission to promote women's rights and equality. She explained the project's violation of labour laws designed to protect women resented and discouraged many of its employees,

I believe there is a great deal of dissatisfaction....because in this project there were violations [of labour] laws that are nationally established....In this project...we work...by salaries, that is, there are no economic benefits and if we are working for women's rights and in the project itself those rights are violated, I believe that goes against the very mission and vision of the project (Puerto Barrios, 6 June 2002).

Other employees provided examples of how the organization contradicted its mission to improve women's lives. For instance, they cited that they did not have medical insurance, paid holidays or overtime benefits (Employee 9 and Employee 4). What upset some employees in particular was the fact that they did not receive overtime payments, even though they worked extra hours. Although the contracts did not

specify the employees' work schedule, the coalition had lengthened their work-day and reduced their initial coffee and lunch breaks (Employee 4, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 11 June 2002). Employee 4 juxtaposed this situation to the general population's belief, "the majority of people out there think that we are making lots of money. And it is not so....we have heard comments that people think we even get paid in [American] dollars....my family is surprised that we do not even have any benefits" (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 13 June 2002).

Employee 9 attributed the contradiction of the organization's mission statement to the misinterpretation of the *Reglamento* (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 11 June 2002). She suggested that some basic principles of the *Reglamento*, which emphasized the acknowledgement of individual effort, were not adequately followed. Article 30 of the *Reglamento* stated, "the awarding of a merit medal is created as an incentive for individuals who give services in a fulfilling fashion and with commitment to the project in the attention of battered women" (*Reglamento del Proyecto No Violencia*). Employee 9 insisted that although this and other similar articles existed, those at the top did not recognize the efforts of the lower rank employees, which caused disappointment among most employees.

When asked where the motivation and recognition should have come from, Employee 9 responded, "firstly, I think that motivation should come from the coordinator. Secondly, it must come from the central offices...yes, she [the coordinator] has given us motivation; she has congratulated us and everything but other times, it is the total opposite. From the people in the capital [coalition], there have been very few times that they have—it's like the *reglamento* is not followed....we have not received that acknowledgment" (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 21 June 2002). Furthermore, the recognition was desperately needed for the project's successful operation, especially because it was

the first organization to work on the issue of violence against women in the area. The failure to recognize the employees' efforts was damaging for the project's internal dynamics because the employees had accomplished so much and needed to have further motivation to achieve more goals. Although the organization exemplified the work that Guatemalan women were doing to improve their lives, the project seemed to discourage or devalue women's contributions and work by failing to give rewards to its own female employees.

Another factor that seemed to disappoint the employees was the unequal sharing of acknowledgement when it was granted. Employee 8 clarified,

well, what has worried me the most and I have observed is that others' work is not recognized. I pointed out that in group work the difficulty is that there is no equal effort: some try harder. But the acknowledgement goes to someone else or to the whole group. I believe that we all need motivation and that our work should be recognized (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 7 June 2002).

Perhaps the greatest source of disappointment for the employees came from the internal decision making mechanisms, which also contradicted the project's mission statement. While the technical proposal of the coalition called for the decision-making structure of each branch to be horizontal and participatory, some PRVM-Izabal employees implied that they did not see themselves as active participants in the decision-making process and that they considered that most decisions came from those at the top—either from the coalition, the national director or even the PRVM-Izabal coordinator.

The answers from most members indicated that they associated decision-making with hierarchical positions. When asked how decisions were made within the PRVM-Izabal, Employee 2 replied, "if we want to coordinate something...we have to tell her [the coordinator] because she has the final word; she decides everything." She went on to emphasize that they could not do anything if they did not have her "final word" (Puerto

Barrios, Izabal, 10 June 2002). Participatory observation in the Women's Health Week Campaign revealed that it was difficult for some employees to accomplish goals when the coordinator was not around to make decisions. This was a serious problem for the project's functioning because ultimate authority had been delegated to someone whose duties required her to spend a lot of time away from the office. As a result, the employees, not the coordinator, had to deal with the conflictive consequences of the coordinator's decisions (field notes and observations, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 10 June to 13 June 2002).

Despite the employees' insistence that on the whole the decision-making process was not participatory and inclusive, their responses to specific questions about the organization's decision-making process were inconsistent with that perception. As shown in the next graph, most of the employees believed that the decision-making process was participatory and consensual for the most part, especially when there were difficulties.³⁰ *These responses are consistent with the participatory observation from meetings that involved only lower rank staff members* (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 11 June to 13 June and 17 June 2002). Consensual and participatory decision-making, even when difficulty and conflicts aroused, seemed to be a natural procedure in these meetings. The lower rank employees allowed each other time to express their points of view and listened to one another carefully. They even tried to calm those who would raise their voice and seemed to be very upset.

³⁰ The chart: 1) only included the responses of the members of Izabal's main branch in Puerto Barrios; 2) did not include the opinions of the support staff, such as that of the driver and the guardian, as well as the opinions of the members in the sub-branch of Los Amates; and 3) had double count because the members simultaneously identified several sources of decision-making.

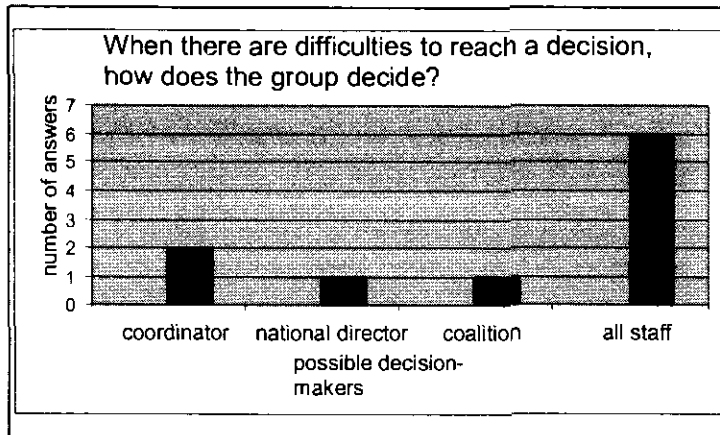


Figure 9 Decision-making when there are difficulties

Moreover, the following graphs suggest that a slight majority considered the entire staff had a say in the organization, particularly in planning its work and operation. The definition of “empowerment” alluded to earlier suggested that one of its properties was the ability to do or achieve goals, which—as the first of the following charts suggests—is what the majority of the employees felt they were capable of doing within the PRVM-Izabal. Similarly, the second graph illustrates that half of the staff felt it had control over deciding the implementation of the organization’s activities. This perception may have been due to the fact that most planning meetings occurred amongst lower rank staff members. For instance, the development agents met consistently to plan and coordinate their own activities. They in turn met with the assistant coordinator, to whom they were accountable.³¹

³¹ The charts: 1) were based on the interviews with employees of Izabal’s main branch in Puerto Barrios; 2) did not include the opinions of the support staff, such as that of the driver and the guardian, as well as the opinions of the employees in the sub-branch of Los Amates; and 3) had double count because the employees simultaneously identified several sources of decision-making. It is important to note that three out of five members prioritized the entire staff in their answers. Alternatively, three out of five members mentioned the coordinator before they mentioned other sources of decision-making.

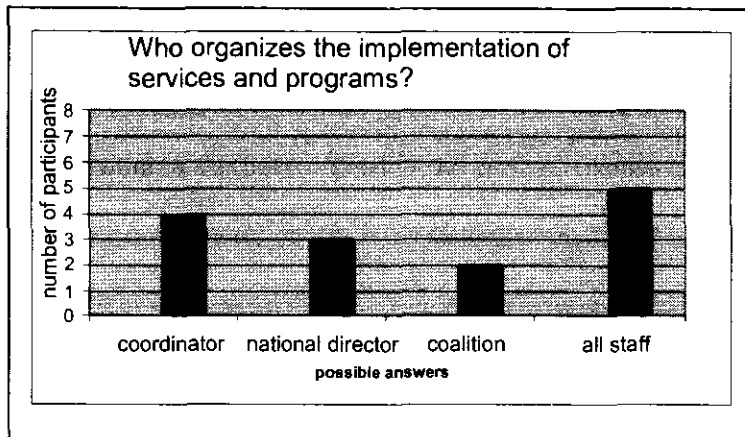


Figure 10 Organization of programs and services

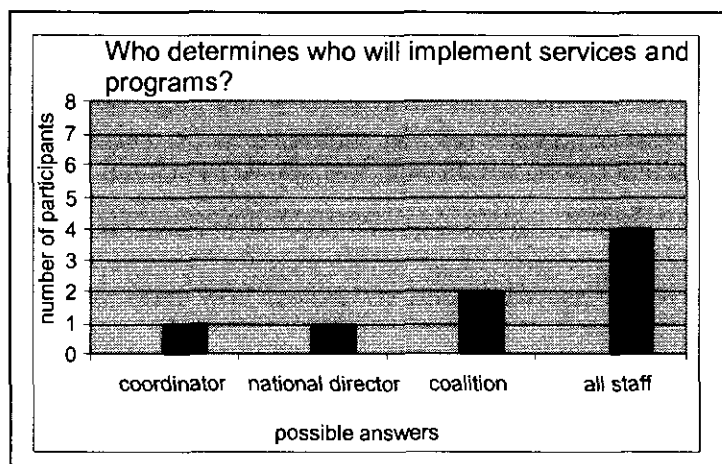


Figure 11 Decision-making about programs and services

Although these findings suggest that the decision-making of the PRVM-Izabal was participatory on the whole, this procedure occurred only or mostly among employees in the lower ranks. In other words, higher-ranking employees—particularly the coordinator—did not always engage lower-ranking ones in their own decisions. The interview with Employee 7 indicated that the organization’s hierarchical structure seriously prevented the realization of participatory decision-making process. She

explained that the very hierarchical divisions within the project made most employees hold back from fully participating in the decision-making process. She pointed out, “we almost never reach a decision. We almost always restraint ourselves from whatever we want to say...and we never reach a conclusion due to, as I told you, ethics. Some times we do not want to lose respect.” As will be elaborated on shortly, constant holding back had demoralized the employees. Employee 7 went on “after keeping it in for too long, one comes to morally accept those people” (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 6 June 2002).

Employee 8 further explained that the staff members were unable to vent ideas to the coordinator because they did not want to challenge her authority,

when it came to the *compañeras*, things were vented....Many times they would reach a consensus and they would say, ‘yes, you are right.’...Now, with whom consensus has not been reached is the coordinator, because she is radical. She has a domineering character and she does not recognize her mistakes. More often than not, the majority of them fear her a little, if not a lot...But more than the fear, they do not dare to tell her things (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 6 June 2002).

The members who opened up and discussed these issues supported the aforementioned claim and concluded that the tensions that internal dynamics produced affected to some extent the staff’s performance.³² Employee 8 suggested,

there is no proper confrontation [with the coordinator]...people perhaps wish to answer...but they repress themselves and that...causes resistance, resentment, and...at times, ...depression. That person becomes demoralized and her level of effectiveness at work becomes low...I never heard a dismissal threat but I constantly heard the *compañeras* say among themselves, ‘well, all of us are necessary but no one is indispensable; whoever wants to leave can do so.’ Confrontations do not occur or are avoided precisely because of that—not to have to leave either voluntarily or forcibly (Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 7 June 2002).

³² Employee 3, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 5 June 2002; Employee 5, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 5 June 2002; Employee 7, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 6 June 2002; Employee 4, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 13 June 2002; Employee 9, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 11 June 2002 and 21 June 2002.

Conclusion

This chapter examined how economic and cultural factors considerably challenged and limited the success of the PRVM-Izabal. Both economic and cultural factors were related to the culture and the context in which the organization operated. The chapter demonstrated that economic constraints reflected the cultural attitudes of the Guatemalan Government, which continually refused to prioritize gender-specific issues and to invest resources to integrate women's needs into the national agenda.

The chapter also showed that cultural constraints diminished the success of the PRVM-Izabal at the external and internal level. At the external level, the project had to struggle with the distrust that the community in general felt towards it. This distrust and resistance may have been related to the project's dealing with an issue that seemed new or even trivial for some people in the community. These issues may have been threatening to some men in the community because of prevailing cultural and sexist patterns. The project attempted to change those cultural attitudes at the same time it needed to encourage people to participate in its activities, especially if its agenda included—but was not limited to—lending services to victims of violence and creating solidarity networks. The chapter showed that potential beneficiaries and solidarity network participants were skeptical about participating in the project's programs because they were unfamiliar with its purpose; these individuals would only participate so long as they were clear about the project's objectives.

At the internal level, the project's employees were aware of the contextual and cultural problems that their organization faced. Their responses showed the difficulty of advancing an agenda and goals for which there was little fertile ground, even within the project itself. Despite these apparent difficulties, the conclusion will suggest that we

should not focus too much on the organization's difficulties but on what it did and how it was able to achieve so much despite of all its challenges.

CONCLUSION:

“Providing lessons for women’s NGOs in new democracies”

The PRVM-Izabal illustrates that women’s nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have an important role in the solidification of egalitarian developments in new democracies. Although these organizations have room for political mobilization and activism in current Guatemala, the PRVM-Izabal showed that such organizations continue to have limited capacity for action. Although the Peace Accords created opportunities for women’s organizations, this thesis showed that economic factors and cultural attitudes diminished the success of the PRVM-Izabal and at times limited its effectiveness. While the Guatemalan Government has demonstrated an interest in creating a more inclusive and equal society, the current neo-liberal policies that it is pursuing hinder its ability to integrate women into Guatemala’s economic and political development.

Organizations such as the PRVM-Izabal provide services that the government cannot offer so that women can become full participants in national politics. While these organizations are beneficial and important, one of the consequences of their role is that they may encourage the Guatemalan Government to forget about fulfilling the obligations it undertook through the Peace Accords. Despite this risk, the PRVM-Izabal seemed to have excelled in pressing government officials to fulfil their duties through its strategies, including the creation of pressure groups, *incidencia* campaigns and consciousness-raising activities.

Guatemala’s early transition to democratic values and attitudes affected the work of the PRVM-Izabal as well. NGOs such as the PRVM-Izabal have found themselves struggling with deeply-rooted non-democratic societal attitudes. The analysis of the

case study revealed that these attitudes were reflected in three ways. The first was among the communities at large, which initially had rejected and very minimally continued to reject the organization's platform. Another exemplification of the organization's struggle with cultural challenges was women's continued reluctance to get involved in the project's activities even though they were geared to assist them. While the relationship of the PRVM-Izabal with government institutions was collaborative for the most part, the organization continued to encounter some distrust from a few government officials. This resistance may indicate that government officials had yet to adapt to new democratic values, where government institutions are to cooperate with NGOs for the fulfilment of the Peace Accords.

Although the status of the PRVM-Izabal as an NGO limited its capacities, the thesis showed that the organization was able to develop strategies to overcome those limitations. One of its strategies was building strategic alliance with local government institutions to implement various laws that protected women. This approach seemed to be very effective, as it had decreased the probability of developing a sour or antagonizing relationship with *the majority* of local officials. Moreover, in its three years of existence, the PRVM-Izabal's strategies had managed to considerably lessen the initial resistance it encountered. For instance, it managed to eradicate misconceptions among the male population about its intents and it also diminished the reluctance of victims of violence to seek help.

All of the organization's achievements fostered more democratic developments at the departmental, community and household level. This success was particularly evident in the self-help groups, where women learned organizational skills to become civil actors, to demand their rights and to share their knowledge with others. The success shows that the work of an NGO can play an important part in the development

of a more inclusive and collective society, especially after the country's experience with dictatorships, civil war and violence.

While the current opening and context indeed seem to foster a more social and just society, it was demoralizing for the project's employees to encounter the violation of women's rights within the project. For instance, the evidence suggested that the project was unable to respect and promote its employees' rights internally, as it violated many laws that protected women and did not seem to seek out participatory or inclusive objectives. These difficulties may not have been intentional, but may have been related to economic and cultural constraints. The coalition had proposed operational guidelines that may have seemed attractive to USAID in order to gain that agency's funding approval. However, this approach failed to recognize that the project was to operate in a context where democratic attitudes and structures are just beginning to take root. These constraints ultimately made the project fail in promoting women's rights at the internal level. Thus, the examination of this case study hopes to inspire women's organizations to learn from the PRVM-Izabal's trials and to improve on the work that this organization achieved, particularly in the area of fostering more democratic behaviour and structures at the internal level.

Even though the organization had a considerable high degree of success in such an "experimental society," the PRVM-Izabal could have had further success by overcoming its problems, particularly those at the internal level. The achievements of the PRVM-Izabal were significant, however, because of the very difficulties it encountered. Moreover, the organization accomplished a great deal although it was both one of the first women's organizations to operate in Izabal and one of the first such organizations to deal with the issue of intra-family violence in that region. As one employee suggested, "nothing is perfect and one can only aspire to improve, to prevail,

instead of getting worse. But there are little things that have to happen in order to improve because we have to overcome our weaknesses and we have to strengthen the opportunities that we have" (Employee 10, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 17 June 2002). Moreover, the majority of the employees suggested that their experiences provided important lessons for other women's organizations. Employee 9 concluded, "we have just begun to give our first steps. And to be the first ones—I believe—we have done pretty well. There are always going to be obstacles; there are always going to be problems....but they have been overcome; they *can* be overcome. And [this organization] is an example for other organizations [as it shows] that this issue can be addressed" (emphasis added; Employee 9, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 21 June 2002).

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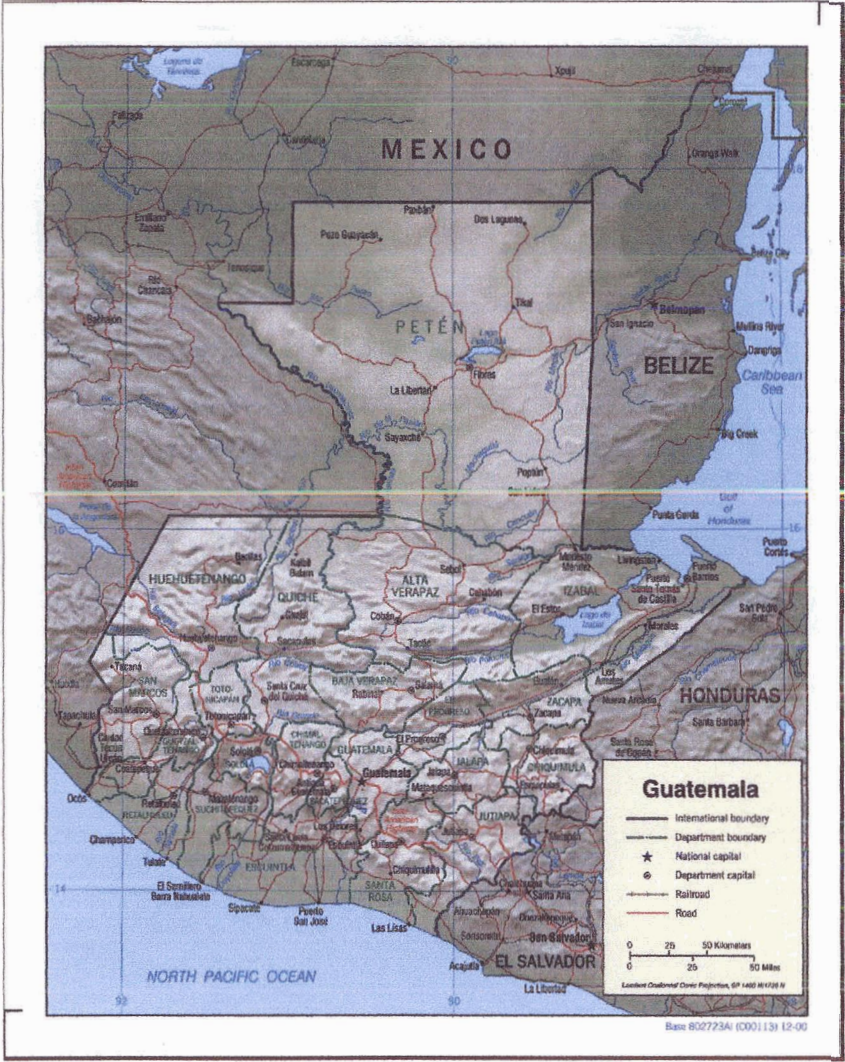
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LOCATION OF GUATEMALA AND IZABAL

As the map illustrates, Izabal is located in the Atlantic Coast, and borders Belize to the North and Honduras to the South-east.³³



³³ Source: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/guatemala_pol00.jpg>

APPENDIX 2: SCOPE OF THE PRVM-IZABAL: PUERTO BARRIOS, LOS AMATES AND LIVINGSTON

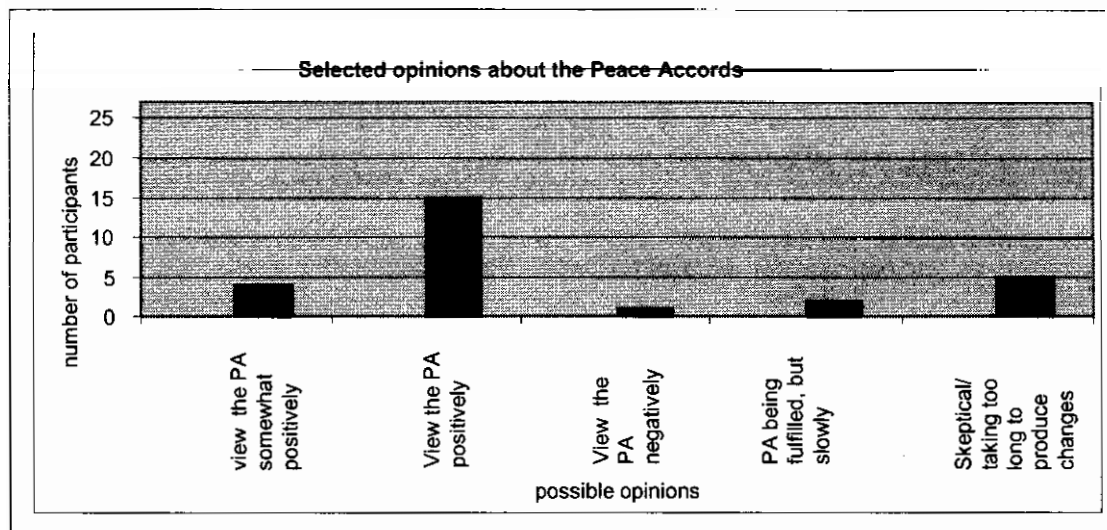
The map below shows the location of both Puerto Barrios and Livingston, two of the municipalities where the PRVM-Izabal operated.³⁴



³⁴ Source: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/guatemala_pol00.jpg>

APPENDIX 3: GUATEMALANS' OPINIONS ABOUT THE PEACE ACCORDS

The following chart illustrates³⁵ that a slight majority of the participants in the survey had very positive views about the Peace Accords (PA).



As the chart indicates, 15 out of 27 participants, or 55.5%, had a positive opinion about the PA. The reason for their responses varied, and included: the end of the civil war; the space they provided for more civil society participation; the increase room for women's participation in politics; and the willingness of both society and the government to change. Those who viewed the PA in a somewhat positive light indicated that their implementation could definitely benefit from a decrease occurrence of corruption and that they would be significant only if they favoured women. There were other interviewees who believed that while the PA had visualized many important issues, they

³⁵ The chart 1) was based on responses from 27 individuals; 2) reflects the opinions of many participants, including those of the staff members of the PRVM-Izabal, the husbands of PRVM-Izabal ex-members, and government officials; 3) does not represent the opinion of one interviewee because she did not answer the question.

were being implemented at a very slow pace. The participants who were skeptical about the PA pointed out that their existence did not necessarily mean they would be implemented; that the process must be nourished; that they had achieved very little; that more remained to be done; and that the end of the civil war was not enough to implement the PA.

APPENDIX 4: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Subject	Purpose
Local authorities, including the departmental governor, judges and administrators of justice	To examine the relationship between PRVM-Izabal and its local government
Representatives of organizations that worked with the PRVM-Izabal, including the founding coalition	To examine the relationship of PRVM-Izabal with its solidarity and support groups
Beneficiaries of PRVM-Izabal's programs and services	To weigh the success of the organization's programs and services
Children, husbands/partners of beneficiaries	To determine if benefiting from PRVM-Izabal's programs changed women's lives at the household level
Former and current employees of the PRVM-Izabal	To analyze the organization's internal relations and dynamics

APPENDIX 5: METHODOLOGY AND ETHICAL GUIDELINES

Many ethical procedures were followed to make the participants' feel at ease during their interviews. All of the participants received a letter that explained the nature of the research and that stated all the terms and conditions for participation. Copies of the letters were submitted to the Simon Fraser University Director of Research Ethics and met the university's ethical approval weeks before the field research began. The terms and conditions stated in the letter explained that the participants were to have volunteer participation; that their interviews were for the sole purpose of academic research; and that they were able to withdraw for their own reasons at any time without consequences. The letter, too, specified that the participants' interviews were going to be tape recorded; that they were to receive fictitious names to ensure confidentiality; and that they could request translated copies of the thesis. The employees' names were randomly replaced with labels such as "Employee 1," "Employee 2" and so on, while the rest of the participants were assigned fictitious names. All the participants' complete responses were numbered and coded to facilitate transcription.

The following tables outline methodology used for each of the participant groups:

Local authorities to assess the relationship with the local government

Variable Name	Measurement	Methodology	Contact means
Contact with local officials	How the organization contacted local officials (telephone calls, demonstrations, personal interviews)	Interviews	Contact information provided by PRVM-Izabal; independent search
Gender consciousness of local officials and government officials	PRVM-Izabal's interaction with government officials	Same as above	Same as above

Representatives of support groups to evaluate the organization's effectiveness

Variable Name	Measurement	Methodology	Contact means
Contact with solidarity networks	PRVM strategies to work with other organizations	Interviews, document analysis and participant-observation	Contact information provided by PRVM-Izabal

Beneficiaries of services and programs, including their family members to test the organization's effectiveness

Variable Name	Measurement	Methodology	Contact means
Beneficiaries' feedback on PRVM programs and services	How the beneficiaries rated the work of the PRVM	Surveys and interviews with beneficiaries	Same as above
Gender consciousness at household level	The effects of the project's programs on husbands/partners and children	Interviews with family members of beneficiaries	Same as above

Employees of PRVM-Izabal to assess the organization's internal dynamics

Variable Name	Measurement	Methodology	Contact means
Authority distribution	How authority was distributed	Participant-observation, interviews with employees and document analysis	Independent search
Decision-making roles	Employees' satisfaction with their decision-making roles	Participant-observation in decision-making and interviews with employees	Same as above
Division of labour	Employees' satisfaction with the division of labour	Participant-observation and interviews	Same as above
Distribution of resources, including information	What or who determined the distribution of resources	Interviews and document analysis	Same as above
Acknowledgement or award distribution	How acknowledgement and awards were distributed	Same as above	Same as above
Empowerment	Employees and beneficiaries' empowerment	Participant-observation, interviews and surveys	Same as above

APPENDIX 6: LIST OF EMPLOYEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

Below is a short list of some of the responsibilities that each of the employees fulfilled within the PRVM-Izabal.

1. coordinator

- to constantly coordinate activities with persons who provide support work to the project;
- to supervise and evaluate the execution of the project; and
- to authorize and to sign documents related to budgets in conjunction with the Financial Department.

2. assistant coordinator

- to direct the functions of the development agents and to jointly supervise their work with the coordinator;
- to supervise jointly with the coordinator the work of the legal and psychological assessors as well as the work of any other person who gives professional support to the project; and
- to propose work plans and to participate in their elaboration.

3. legal assessor

- to receive and to impart workshops on the application of the law to prevent, sanction and to eradicate intra-family violence;
- to write up the denunciation battered women make and to be responsible for those denunciations until the victims receive their security measures; and;
- to present monthly reports to the coordinator.

4. psychological assessor

- to organize and to facilitate workshops on violence against women, especially those geared towards personnel in education, health and justice;
- to supervise and to support the processes for self-help groups; and
- to participate in the proposal, elaboration and validation of materials that are to be used in workshops and other related activities.

5. accountant

- to manage and to control the project's finances based on the assigned funds for each branch according to the project's budget;
- to direct and to participate in the elaboration of the budget and to plan its execution; and
- to control and to manage in an exact and updating fashion all debits and incomes.

6. development agents

- to receive psychological and legal workshops for the legal orientation of women that require the services and the attention of the project;
- to facilitate the psychological attention for battered women's emergencies; and
- to encourage the incorporation of battered women in self-help or support groups.

APPENDIX 7: IMPLEMENTATION AGENDA OF THE PRVM

Due to implementation purposes, the implementation of the PRVM was divided into two phases. The first phase occurred from October 1999 to March 2000. The project's main objective was to make intra-family violence visible as a public concern rather than a private issue. As a result, the first phase focused on:

- analyzing and revising current statistical research on violence against women;
- questioning attitudes, practices and knowledge of administrators of justice and;
- questioning mass media attitudes towards violence against women (interview with Employee 4, Puerto Barrios, Izabal, 5 June 2002).

The second phase ran from October 1999 to September 2002. Its work was based on building upon the spaces gained in the first phase and to solidify and to sustain women's (political) strengths in both their homes and communities. This phase gave emphasis to:

- conducting consciousness-raising workshops for the comprehension of issues, such as gender, violence and self-esteem;
- imparting consciousness-raising campaigns for the institutional fulfilment of laws and attention for women victims of violence;
- creating self-help groups and other alternative measures to assist battered women and;
- forging coordination between NGOs and GOs that worked on violence against women (ibid).

APPENDIX 8: SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM TWO SELF-HELP GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Questions about the implementation of services	Participants' Response
I don't like to participate in the project's programs because the same people benefit all the time	False
Having access to an equal provision of programs contributes to the cohesion of the organization (self-help group)	True
The <i>compañeras</i> that implement the programs are always willing and ready to answer my questions	True
The <i>compañeras</i> that implement the programs are always willing and ready to help me	True
The implementers/facilitators are well-trained	True

Questions about the quality of services	Participants' response
The PRVM-Izabal's nature motivates me to participate in its programs	True
The programs are always interesting and dynamic	True
The programs are always well organized	True
The programs are always educational	True

Questions about empowerment	Participants' response
We always accomplish our goals at the end of each program (module)	True
We always receive encouragement to evaluate the programs and to make suggestions to improve them	True
We always receive encouragement to evaluate our own progress and development	True
I feel satisfied with the PRVM-Izabal's programs	True
Taking everything into account, the programs are very accessible	True
I would recommend the PRVM-Izabal's programs to other women	True

APPENDIX 9: SUMMARY OF EXTERNAL STRATEGIES OF THE PRVM-IZABAL

Goal	Strategy
1) To make women aware of their rights in the selected geographical areas	<p>Took advantage of donated time for promotion campaigns in several media outlets</p> <p>Developed and maintained self-help groups until they became independent</p> <p>Published pamphlets and pocket copies of the VIF</p> <p>Purchased t-shirts, stickers, posters, and other media to inform women of their rights</p> <p>Provided in-office and out-of-office services and assistance in Q'eqchi' and Garifuna</p> <p>Provided consciousness-raising campaigns in churches, schools, universities and other institutions</p> <p>Sought support from other organizations to impart workshops for self-help groups</p>
2) To eradicate or to decrease the occurrences of violence against women	<p>Empowered women through in- and out- office activities</p> <p>Gave women tools or knowledge to handle or to overcome violence</p> <p>Provided psychological and legal advice</p> <p>Worked on women's self-esteem to eliminate what it considered to be one of the root causes of intra-family violence</p> <p>Organized community fora and panels about intra-family violence</p> <p>Sought community financial and moral support for women's activities</p>

Goal	Strategy
<p>3) To reform national public policies through consciousness-raising workshops for justice implementers</p>	<p>Lobbied or negotiated with local authorities to obtain support and approval to impart consciousness-raising campaigns for administrators of justice</p> <p>Sought support from the Governor to obtain approval from local institutions, especially the National Police, to receive consciousness-raising workshops</p> <p>Sought alliance with the Human Rights Attorney's Office to make the Family Court Judge, the ultimate local decision-maker for intra-family violence issues, more willing to cooperate</p>
<p>4) To improve governmental services for victims survivor of violence</p>	<p>Created alliances with the Human Rights Attorney's Office, and <i>Cooperación Española</i> to develop the <i>Oficina de la Mujer</i> in Livingston</p> <p>Provided temporary shelters for victims of violence</p> <p>Organized women for the provision of government or other services such as health check ups</p> <p>Verified the government's proper application of laws related to women and intra-family violence</p>
<p>5) To create pressure groups so that, after the project's conclusion, they could continue to work on the eradication of violence against women</p>	<p>Organized consciousness-raising workshop for pressure groups to make them sensible and committed to the cause</p> <p>Created two No-Violence Networks in Los Amates and Puerto Barrios, Izabal</p> <p>Planned activities and monthly meetings to develop a clear division and an action plan</p> <p>Coordinated the evaluation of activities and strategies</p> <p>Planned for the institutionalization of the networks to ensure the provision of services for women victims of violence</p>

APPENDIX 10: PROCEDURES TO REPORT VIF VIOLATIONS

The implementation of the VIF started with different procedures, depending on the institution that registered the violation. Here are three possible scenarios to give the reader a better idea:

The PRVM-Izabal. When a victim did not have physical injuries, the project simply registered the violation and transferred the ballot to the Family Court of Justice for the judge to dictate the VIF security measures. When a victim presented physical injuries, the PRVM-Izabal registered the violation and transferred the complaint to the Public Ministry so that the victim could be medically checked by the forensic doctor. The Public Ministry prepared a report based on the doctor's information and sent it to the Family Court of Justice for the judge to dictate the security measures. After receiving the security measures, women could solicit divorces and the project sent them to public legal offices to get assistance.

The Puerto Barrios' police. When the victim goes directly to the police, it classified the cases and sent the registered violation to the Family Court of Justice. If the victims had physical injuries, the case was transferred to the Public Ministry for forensic checkup and then was sent back to the Family Court of Justice for the last mediation tribunal. The judge dictated VIF security measures as he saw it.

The Regional Women's Protector of the Human Rights Attorney's Office. The institution registered the violation and asked the victims whether they wanted mediation or security measures. When victims chose mediation, the institution requested the aggressor's presence to sign an agreement between the victim and the aggressor. However, if the victims requested security measures, their cases were transferred to the Family or to the Peace Court of Justice, depending on the location, for them to order security measures. The Regional Women's Protector kept a record of the verdict to conduct a case follow up. If the victim experienced harassment after receiving security measures, then they had to go directly to the Family or Peace Court of Justice judge, who would then call the aggressors to charge them with disobedience and would also order the Public Ministry to carry out their arrest.

APPENDIX 11: ETHICAL APPROVAL**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**

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May 29, 2002

Ms. Maria Perdomo-Portillo
Graduate Student
Department of Political Science
Simon Fraser University

Dear Ms. Perdomo:

**Re: Social Activism in the Current Political Guatemalan Context:
A Case Study of the Proyecto Reduccion de Violencia Contra la Mujer (PRVM)**
Revision – Title Change

In response to your request May 28, 2002, I am pleased to approve, on behalf of the Research Ethics Board, the title change in the research protocol of the above referenced Request for Ethical Approval of Research originally approved on May 6, 2002.

Best wishes for success in this research.

Sincerely,

Dr. Hal Weinberg, Director
Office of Research Ethics

c: M. Cohen, Supervisor

/bjr