



# **Evaluation of the Development Cooperation through Norwegian NGOs in Guatemala**

**Evaluation Report 5/2007**

**Executive Summary**



**Norad**

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# 1 Executive Summary

Norad has commissioned this evaluation in order to increase the knowledge of the effects of development cooperation through NGOs, in particular of the aggregate effects at national level. A number of Norwegian NGOs have been working in Guatemala since the earthquake in 1976. In connection with the process leading up to the Peace Accords in 1996, Norwegian NGO aid to Guatemala increased, both in total amounts and in the number of organizations involved. This process also resulted in official Norwegian development cooperation with Guatemala, with the objective of supporting the implementation of the Peace Accords. The Norwegian strategy for aid to Guatemala focuses on democratization, the justice sector, and indigenous rights.

The Terms of Reference (Appendix 1) for the evaluation are comprehensive. The emphasis is placed on assessing the *outcomes of the Norwegian NGO aid at the national level*, as well as on analyzing the *mediating and contextual factors* that influence the implementation and outcomes of the development programs carried out by Norwegian NGOs and their partners. The ToR further asks for an analysis of a number of process factors, from the underlying program theory of interventions, through development inputs, to implementation and outputs. The evaluation should focus on the NGOs' long term development cooperation with public Norwegian funding. The evaluation was carried out by a team of nine researchers, with the main part of fieldwork taking place between October 9<sup>th</sup> and November 1<sup>st</sup> 2007.

The following six Norwegian NGOs were selected for the evaluation:

- Save the Children Norway (SCN)
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)
- Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)
- Norwegian Pentecostal Mission (PYM)
- Forum for Women and Development (FOKUS)
- Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO)

All have been working in Guatemala for more than five years, and together they cover a wide range of different types of programs, sectors and partner organizations.

## Findings

### *Overall conclusion*

While the amount of aid channeled through Norwegian NGOs is relatively limited, and the outcomes at national level are consequently also limited in scope, we still conclude that the outcomes identified are significant in their contexts, positive, and highly relevant. The combined outcomes of increased knowledge of rights, better conditions for participation, strengthened democratizing potential of civil society, and improved quality and coverage of education, are important contributions towards the creation of a more just and democratic Guatemala.

### *Coherence*

Even though the Norwegian NGOs work with very different types of partner organizations, and support a wide variety of different projects, there is considerable coherence in terms of basic orientation, target groups, and types of outcomes. Five of the six organizations have a clear and explicit rights-based approach. All organizations target marginalized groups, with a focus on women, indigenous peoples, children, landless peasants, agricultural laborers and other organized workers. Outcomes are concentrated in the sector we have termed *Democratization, Human Rights and participation*, with the most important results at the individual and organizational levels.

This consistency in terms of approach, target groups and outcomes is very much in line with the Norwegian policy, as expressed in the guidelines for civil society support, the guidelines for development cooperation with indigenous peoples, and the strategy for development cooperation with Guatemala.

#### *Value added*

In addition to the funding, there are elements of ‘value added’ by the Norwegian NGO in all the partnership relations. Perhaps most clearly, this is found in the focused and systematic capacity and alliance building that SCN contributes to its partners, or the complementary and sometimes indirect political support that LO gives to the work of Unsitragua. In the majority of cases, the Norwegian NGO also facilitates links and contacts to other organizations, national or international. Advice, technical inputs and critical dialogue on program development are other common elements in the partner relations. In a few, but crucial cases, the link to an international donor organization has provided protection to organizations working in repressive contexts. The Norwegian NGOs have generally been quite careful not to impose their own agendas on their partners.

#### *Indigenous rights orientation*

In general the Norwegian NGOs and their partners show an awareness of the special requirements of working in a country with a large and marginalized indigenous population. Many of the projects are focused specifically on addressing the problem of exclusion of indigenous peoples. Still, in some cases there is room for improvements in taking into account the indigenous dimension of the social context of the projects, and in at least one case, awareness of the issue is clearly deficient.

#### *Gender awareness*

In the majority of cases, the programs show sufficient awareness of gender issues – this applies to projects specifically oriented towards women, as well as a number of other projects. In some cases, the programs would have benefited from a clearer gender orientation.

#### *Implementation*

In the overwhelming majority of cases, the implementation of projects is efficient and in accordance with plans.

#### *Effects on Guatemalan civil society and state-society relations*

In monetary terms, the aid channeled through Norwegian NGOs is modest, and national level outcomes are consequently limited.

In sum, Norwegian support strengthens a wide variety of different types of organizations, but with an emphasis on those that work with and represent marginalized groups, with a rights-based approach. The Norwegian support promotes cooperation between civil society organizations in different ways, thereby counteracting the tendency towards fragmentation identified by many observers as a weakness of Guatemalan civil society.

In the short term, Norwegian support is not particularly effective at reducing the distance between civil society elites and the grassroots, or at resolving problems of lack of internal democracy, two other characteristics frequently mentioned as weaknesses of Guatemala’s organizational sphere. However, in the long run, the work that Norwegian NGOs and their Guatemalan partners do to foment local participation and citizenship among marginalized groups has the potential to contribute to reduce these problems.

The Norwegian aid is supporting Guatemalan civil society organizations in engaging with the state through the new spaces for dialogue that have opened after the Peace Accords, and enabled the organizations to make better use of these spaces. In practical terms, the outcomes of these dialogues have often been limited, as agreements are not implemented, mostly due to lack of capacity or political will in state institutions. In some instances, experiences of cooperating with state institutions are more positive at the municipal level.

There are no indications that the outcomes in terms of increased participation and strengthened organizations have so far succeeded in influencing the state to redistribute

economic resources. Effects in terms of ensuring the implementation of the Peace Accords have also been limited.

*Other outcomes*

Within the educational sector, there are considerable outcomes, in particular of the work of SCN's partner organizations in developing appropriate pedagogical methodologies and improving access to education for marginalized groups (indigenous, poor, working and handicapped children).

There are some, but fairly limited outcomes in terms of improving income and promoting economic development.

**Recommendations**

The evaluation team makes the following recommendations:

- Norwegian NGO aid to Guatemala should not be reduced
- Maintain strategic focus on promoting participation and democratization
- Consider more systematic use of core funding
- Increase attention to indigenous rights
- Consider the integration of components for economic development
- Establish meeting points for Norwegian NGOs and their partners
- Develop more systematic monitoring of results





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