

COMMITTEES

CoDevelopment Canada: HSA's help crucial in improving lives

The Committee for Equality and Social Action (CESA) is responsible for a donation budget of \$35,865 annually (approximately half a percent of dues revenue). The committee reviews many donation requests, and allocates donation funds to approved requests. This year, the committee reviewed and debated the merits of more than 50 requests before deciding on the final distribution of this year's donation budget.

HSA is a long-standing partner of CoDevelopment Canada, and together we have been able to make a significant difference in the lives of many people in Central America.

In 2001/2002, HSA provided support for two groups through CoDev who in turn did amazing work in their communities.

GRUFEPROMEFAM (Feminist Group for the Improvement of the Family)

Location: Guatemala City, Guatemala

The ongoing project with GRUFE is called "Training and Advocacy to Improve Working Conditions and Quality of Life for Women Maquila Workers."

The idea is to provide women who work in sweatshop factories with training on workers rights, women's human rights, self-esteem, and domestic violence.

These women face similar issues as workers in Canada, but in the extreme: non-existent job security, increased workload with decreased staffing, and unacceptable working conditions.

GRUFE is now giving regular workshops in two communities and the overall number of people participating has increased from an average of 15 women in a workshop to an average of 18-25. It is very encouraging that GRUFE is developing a permanent presence in these communities, and that the number of workshop participants continues to grow.

The feedback from participants has been very positive and many have expressed a desire for more frequent workshops (two per month). This year, GRUFE also provided legal support to several participating women for cases of domestic violence and labour problems.

Overall, the organization has strengthened considerably over the year, and continues to grow.

APSIES (Salvadoran Association for Community Health and Social Services)

Location: Lolotique, El Salvador

APSIES has been a partner with HSA and CoDevelopment Canada for more than 11 years. This extensive relationship is the product of trust and hard work.

The present initiative is called "Empowering Women and Improving the Health of Children," and involves a multi-faceted approach to health in rural communities.

The health sector in El Salvador receives little or no government support, and what little support there is does not reach the rural communities. APSIES continues to deliver impressive results, especially in their work in decreasing childhood malnutrition. Child malnutrition has dropped from 25.66 per cent in July 2001 to 13.51 per cent in May 2002 in the 18 communities of the Municipality of Lolotique.

As well, APSIES' work with women in the micro-region continues, as there is an increasing number of women participating in workshops, and growing support from men in the community.

A committee has been formed in Lolotique to deal specifically with the issue of domestic violence, both in prevention and education and in dealing with individual cases. APSIES is working closely with local authorities in Lolotique such as the Mayor's office, the Justice of the Peace and the National Civil Police to ensure women are given the proper support and advice.

All in all, the Southern partners supported by HSA through CoDevelopment Canada are organizations to be proud of. Your help is a vital part of the global fight for social justice, and is one step to deepening our understanding of the issues affecting us all. **R**

The members of your Committee for Equality and Social Action are:

- Jackie Spain (Chair & Region 9 Director)
- Cheryl Greenhalgh (Region 3 Director)
- Janice Morrison (Member at Large, Region 9)
- Renie Groome (Member at Large, Region 7)
- Marcela Dudas (Member at Large, Region 10)
- Sheila Vataiki (staff)

For information on this committee's activities and policies, contact Sheila Vataiki at 604 439 0994 or 1800 663 2017 (e-mail sheila@hsabc.org).