

Diakonia Program for Democracy and Human Rights, the El Salvador Case

A qualified monitoring

**Vegard Bye
Martha Doggett
Peter Hellmers**

Department for Latin America

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Sida Evaluation 99/16

**Department for Latin
America**

Evaluation Reports may be ordered from:

Infocenter, Sida
S-105 25 Stockholm
Telephone: (+46) (0)8 795 23 44
Telefax: (+46) (0)8 760 58 95
E-mail: info@sida.se, Homepage <http://www.sida.se>

Author(s): Vegard Bye, Martha Doggett, Peter Hellmers.

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SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY
Address: S-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden. Office: Sveavägen 20, Stockholm
Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64
Telegram: sida stockholm. Postgiro: 1 56 34—9
E-mail: info@sida.se. Homepage: <http://www.sida.se>

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Executive Summary

(with principal conclusions of the study)

1. Since the peace agreements for El Salvador were signed in 1992 the challenge of democratic transition and consolidation has been addressed in many ways by national and international actors. The Swedish NGO Diakonia is probably the major conveyor of Swedish government efforts to support this process, through its Central America human rights and democracy program. This is the report of the Qualified Monitoring Mission (MT) which has assessed Diakonia's 1997 – 1998 sub-program in El Salvador, in the context of its regional program, the official Swedish strategy for cooperation with El Salvador and Central America, and the situation in El Salvador. The El Salvador sub-program, implemented through Diakonia's Salvadoran non-governmental partner organizations (POs), focuses on local participatory democracy, in an interplay between civil society and municipal governments.
2. Whereas the MT had intended to make active use of indicators appearing in the Program Document (ref. Inception Report) as a tool for measuring the impact of the projects and the program as such, it turned out that data on these indicators were unavailable. This made the task of assessing impact much more difficult, practically excluding any quantitative measurement.
3. Six out of eleven POs were selected for scrutiny based on written reports, interviews, and field visits. The MT found that most of these six POs had achieved most of the objectives set out in Diakonia's application to Sida. Four of them (PROCAP, SACDEL, FUNDE, FUNDAUNGO), are among the pioneers supporting municipal governments and local civic groups in participatory planning of local development, separately and through their Network for Local Development. Close to 80 out of the country's 262 municipal authorities (i.e., 30%) have received extensive support, where people who once made war on one another now work closely together in local development committees. Whereas the MT raises some questions related to coordination and division-of-labor among these groups, the Diakonia program has no doubt been part of a historic process taking place in El Salvador, contributing to conciliation as well as democratic transition and consolidation at the local level.
4. The adequacy of the program's results (i.e. the results of the sum of the POs' activities) has been assessed in relation to various human rights and democracy dimensions, expressed in Diakonia's objectives in El Salvador and the region, official Swedish objectives, as well as developments in El Salvador.
5. One dimension is the strengthening of civil society at the local level. In all municipalities visited by the team, covering the work of all four above-mentioned organizations, the range and depth of civic participation achieved in local decision-making is impressive, certainly by European standards (including Swedish, we believe). In addition to the practical implementation of participatory methods, some of these organizations also work on a more theoretical level, with the development of quite innovative methods of participation. The mode of work covers a broad spectrum of communities, from the poorest and most war-ridden rural municipalities to the capital city with its slums and huge socio-economic contradictions. The two remaining POs, ARPAS and Las Dignas, do not seem to have been engaged as effectively as one could have wished in support functions (communication and gender, respectively) related to the local democratic processes promoted by the four other organizations. It will be an important task for Diakonia to improve these linkages in the coming period.

6. The same four organizations (PROCAP, FUNDAUNGO, FUNDE and SACDEL) are the four most relevant organizations regarding the strengthening of local government. Actually, we are speaking about three different issues: the strengthening and professionalization of local government; the improvement of municipal finances; and increased municipal autonomy through de-centralization of responsibilities. On all three topics, impressive achievements have been made, from a very poor point of departure when the first post-war and really democratic local elections were held in 1994. The most significant indicator is that a political consensus about the necessity of de-centralization and strengthened and participatory municipal government is emerging in the country, including in the traditionally elitist government party.
7. Closely related to the issue mentioned above is the question of strengthened local influence on national decision-making. In most cases, the strengthening of local government requires effective lobbying on the national level, where necessary decisions first must be taken. In this sense, the Diakonia program, through its POs, has been both adequate and highly effective, although it is impossible to establish the exact cause-effect relationship of the most significant decisions. Restructuring and increasing municipal taxes, increased allocation of state resources to municipalities, and the de-centralization of responsibilities are all the result of highly qualified work and effective lobbying. Civic and municipal channels seem to have been more effective than party-political channels, but there are indications that parties, as a consequence of their direct exposure to voters on the local level, perceive the necessity of becoming more receptive to local demands.
8. Strengthened democratic culture, in the sense of greater pluralism and attitudes favoring peaceful conflict resolution, is a difficult variable to measure. The most important achievements in this program have been active collaboration across party lines in previously very polarized and war-ridden areas, and the general acceptance of consensus-oriented decision-making processes involving the community. ARPAS, the association of community broadcasters, has waged an impressive battle, against heavy odds, to open democratic spaces in mass communication. In sum, there is no doubt that the program has contributed to the strengthening of a democratic culture locally. The problem is that a similar process is not taking place on the national level.
9. As to a strengthened democratic role for women, available figures regarding female participation in local democratic activities of the program are not bad, bearing in mind El Salvador's strong macho culture. The women's group supported by the program may have achieved important results in raising the profile of issues related to women, but the relevance for the local democracy program has been marginal. Particularly two of the organizations have been concerned with the general consciousness-raising of youth and the identification and training of a new generation of leaders. While important, we nonetheless have no clear picture of its success.
10. Compared to the objectives of Sweden's official cooperation with Central America and El Salvador, there is no doubt that the Diakonia program is making a positive contribution to several of them, and that the program has a focus which is fully relevant. Of the three areas given priority by Sida in El Salvador, strengthened democracy and the modernization of the state (both understood in the local sense) have been effectively addressed, whereas the third topic, human rights has only been indirectly affected by the program. The MT calls into question, however, whether Diakonia has fulfilled its role as conveyor of Swedish development competence and experiences, something that is emphasized both by Sida and by Diakonia's POs in El Salvador. The MT therefore recommends (i) that better coordination is established between Diakonia and Sida in their respective human rights and democracy programs in

Central America/El Salvador, aiming at complementing each other; (ii) that Swedish historical and contemporary experiences in local democracy are actively shared with interested Salvadoran institutions, by Sida or Diakonia, depending on the circumstances.

11. When comparing the adequacy of this democracy program to the present situation in El Salvador, it is a quite obvious choice for an NGO to focus on the local level. This is presently by far the most dynamic area for democratic transition and consolidation in the country, and where it is possible to make a difference. Many of the projects supported by Diakonia in municipalities around the country have been nothing less than “schools in democracy” for a population that hardly has known real democracy. It is most significant that these processes have demonstrated the intimate relationship between democratic processes, social reconciliation, and socio-economic improvements, as well as the interplay between civil society and formal institutions. Recent research indicates that democratic government at the local level is a necessary condition for democracy generally. When analyzing the Diakonia program in relation to some key theoretical variables of democratic participation, our impression is that we are speaking about significant achievements in the processes promoted by this program.
12. Cost-effectiveness of such a program is almost impossible to measure, particularly in the absence of indicators. There are some quite impressive quantitative results to report, however, e.g. in terms of increased municipal revenues and community projects financed on the basis of activities under this program. The bottom-line question of cost-effectiveness is how much democracy the approximately 24 million SEK invested in El Salvador over these two years have produced. That is impossible to say. We know that the situation for local democracy has changed dramatically over the last years. As late as 1994, studies concluded that the strength of local government was extremely limited in El Salvador by comparison with the rest of Latin America, and that prospects were quite pessimistic. When we know how much better the situation is now in comparison to these forecasts, and also that the Diakonia program has been a crucial source of support for the POs playing a lead role in the strengthening of local democracy in 30% of the country’s municipalities, a two-year investment of this magnitude seems to be highly cost-effective. This is particularly true if steps are taken in the next program to translate local democracy gains into a democratic consolidation at the national level.
13. Even if local participatory processes are becoming part of the mainstream political agenda in El Salvador (including for the government party ARENA), these processes are still quite fragile and in need of consolidation. Therefore, the MT believes that there is still a considerable need for Swedish NGO support in the same areas. The recommendation is that the Diakonia program become more targeted (e.g. follow-up of plans, tax policy advice, and other functions of special competence), that it offers back-up support where official processes do not work, that national lobbying is reinforced, and that support functions such as local broadcasting and gender be better integrated into the mainstream local democracy projects.
14. Regarding national lobbying, more attention should be paid to some obvious weaknesses in the local representative democracy in El Salvador, such as the electoral monopoly of political parties and the general role of the latter, the lack of proportional representation in the municipal council, and the “strong mayor” system.

15. At the same time, if the Diakonia program has the ambition to continue playing a pioneer role in the democratic transition and consolidation in El Salvador, it should start identifying new innovative functions. The MT recommends identifying potential local human rights activities to be included in the next program. In addition to human rights, the next Diakonia program should also more systematically address what we term “economic democratization.” Examples of this are the search for alternative development models and further tax reform work. In addition, it should be considered whether the Local Development Committees, established through the participatory planning processes, could be involved in small-scale economic community activities, e.g. through a micro credit program.
16. The MT was asked to come up with methodology for a more systematic analysis of results in a local democracy program, and for instruments to analyze project results on a program level related to the overall democracy and human rights objectives. Such an exercise requires careful elaboration of baseline information as well as valid and measurable indicators at the outset of a new program period. Additionally, systematic research must be done, combining theoretical, historical-cultural insight with sound empirical work, e.g. in a joint effort by political scientists and anthropologists. Such a task is probably beyond the capacity of Diakonia, and should rather, if Sida wants to pursue it, be commissioned by Sida, involving a combination of Salvadoran and Scandinavian research institutions.
17. Turning to some specific topics raised in the T-o-R, the MT first believes that results of the program could be improved if Diakonia took a more proactive approach to identifying and seeking out new POs as well as new linkages with individuals and groups in a position to contribute to the substance of the work. Diakonia would also do well to consider new ways of soliciting substantive feedback and input to its work from POs and other appropriate interlocutors in El Salvador.
18. The sustainability of the program, projects, and the PO activities may be measured in different ways. The MT believes that some of the POs have become too dependent on a few donors, among them Diakonia, whereas others relate to a good range of donors. The sustainability of the local participatory activities depends on whether they are being incorporated into the official agenda of municipalities and state institutions, and that seems to be occurring to a significant degree, although this process is still fragile.
19. While Diakonia would like to be perceived as having something more to offer the POs than a traditional donor-recipient relationship, promoting the concept of “added value,” the MT in reality found little semblance of this. The professional standard of the Regional Office (RO) staff has not been adequate to provide the POs with the dialogue and liaison to “Sweden as a country” that many of the POs desire. The RO model is a problem in itself in this regard, and the MT recommends that the RO must have a full-time director and at a minimum, permanent national coordinators in each of the program countries. The POs highly appreciate Diakonia’s flexibility when activities must be adjusted in response to changing circumstances.
20. Diakonia has been faithful to Sida’s action plans in the appropriate areas, but some re-consideration seems required on the gender topic. In particular, the program seems to have supported isolated gender activities rather than applying a mainstreaming strategy (i.e. integrating gender concerns systematically into the different activities of the program).

21. Too little attention has been paid to project monitoring of the democracy program, particularly after the “Mitch” disaster. The insufficient dialogue with POs stemming from this has led to one very unfortunate decision of cutting funding quite drastically without due notice. The more formal monitoring has been suffering from a lack of indicators, but this problem is presently being addressed in conjunction with Sida. When evaluated, Diakonia seems to absorb feedback well and takes appropriate corrective measures.
22. In sum, the success of this program seems to be more the consequence of a good selection of POs (at least most of those assessed by the MT) and the excellent work carried out by these, than by Diakonia’s own follow-up performance.

Acronyms

ARENA	National Republican Alliance (Alianza Republicana Nacionalista)
ARPAS	Association of Radios and Participatory Programs in El Salvador (Asociación de Radios y Programas Participativos en El Salvador)
CABEI (BCIE)	Central American Bank for Economic Integration (Banco Centroamericano de Integración Económica)
CELCADEL	Latin American Center for Training and Development of Local Governments (Centro Latinoamericano de Capacitación y Desarrollo de los Gobiernos Locales)
CIREFCA	
COAMSS	Council of Mayors of the San Salvador Metropolitan Area (Concejo de Alcaldes del Area Metropolitana)
COMURES	Corporation of Municipalities of the Republic of El Salvador (Corporación de Municipalidades de la República de El Salvador)
FESPAD	Foundation for the Study and Application of the Law (Fundacion de Estudios para la Aplicación del Derecho; also known as CESPAD-CEPES)
FISDL	Social Investment Fund for Local Development (Fondo de Inversión Social de Desarrollo Local)
FLACSO	Latin American Faculty for Social Sciences (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales)
FMLN	Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation (Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional)
FUMA	Maquilishuat Foundation (Fundación Maquilishuat)
FUNDACAMPO	Foundation for the Training of Peasant Leaders (Fundación para la Capacitación de Líderes Campesinos)
FUNDAUNGO	Ungo Foundation (Fundación Dr. Guillermo Manuel Ungo)
FUNDE	National Foundation for Development (Fundación Nacional para el Desarrollo)
FUSAI	Salvadoran Foundation for Integrated Support (Fundación Salvadoreña de Apoyo Integral)
IULA	International Union of Local Authorities (Unión Internacional de Autoridades Locales)
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank (in Spanish, BID)
ISDEM	Salvadoran Institute for Municipal Development (Instituto Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo Municipal)
Las Dignas	Association of Women for Dignity and Life (Mujeres por la Dignidad y la Vida)
LDC	Local Development Committee
MT	Monitoring Team (also known as Qualified Monitoring Mission)
NGO	Non-governmental Organization (ONG)
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Autoridad Noruega para la Cooperación al Desarrollo)

PD	Democratic Party (Partido Demócrata, an FMLN splinter)
PCN	Party of National Conciliation (Partido de Conciliación Nacional, former military party)
PDC	Christian Democratic Party (Partido Demócrata Cristiano)
PO	Partner Organization
PNC	National Civilian Police (Policía Nacional Civil)
PROCAP	Program for Training and Support to Municipalities (Programa de Capacitación y Apoyo a Municipios, also known by the name of its Salvadoran entity, FUNDAMUNI, Fundación de Apoyo a Municipios de El Salvador)
PRODECA	Danish Human Rights Program in Central America (Programa de Derechos Humanos en Centroamerica)
“La Red”	Red de Desarrollo Local, the Network for Local Development, or “the Network”
RTI	Research Triangle Institute
RO	Regional Office
ROF	Regional Open Fund (Regionala Öppna Fonden)
SACDEL	System for Assistance and Training for Local Development (Sistema de Asesoría y Capacitación para el Desarrollo Local)
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (known in Spanish by the acronym, Asdi)
SJDPA	Jesuit Development Service (Servicio Jesuita para el Desarrollo)
SRN	Secretariat of National Reconstruction (Secretaría de Reconstrucción Nacional)
T-o-R	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Program (PNUD)
UNICEF	United Nations Childrens Fund
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

1. Program Context

For much of El Salvador's civil war, the guerrilla movement known as the Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation (FMLN) dominated some one-third of the country. One consequence of the fighting and social polarization was that many mayors were driven or fled voluntarily to other parts of the country. Viewed as an enemy who challenged FMLN hegemony, some mayors and other local officials such as justices of the peace (*jueces de paz*) were killed when they refused to abandon their posts. The return of these "mayors in exile" became the subject of an ancillary agreement to the peace accords, the comprehensive settlement brokered by the United Nations, which brought an end to El Salvador's twelve-year civil war in January 1992. In this agreement the parties pledged to facilitate the mayors' return – with UN accompaniment, if desired – by 30 September 1992.¹ The Secretariat of National Reconstruction (SRN) promised to rebuild and renovate city halls, many of which had been burned, along with the archives, by the insurgents. A section of the ancillary agreement dealt with "Mechanisms of Community Participation", encouraging the formation of "reconstruction and development committees" to advance reconciliation and new forms of citizen participation. The agreement urged that town meetings, or *cabildos abiertos*, be held more frequently than every three months, as stipulated in the Municipal Code. Provision was also made for the formation of Committees of Social Oversight designed to assist and monitor municipal councils in the execution of SRN projects. The agreement was transitory in nature, calling for both sides to respect the temporary provisions for public security and cooperate with efforts to resume public services. Diakonia's support of efforts to promote democracy at the local level while professionalizing municipal management is grounded on these early postwar experiences.

While the cease-fire was obviously a huge step forward, for many communities those early years of peace were turbulent. Along with the mayors, many civilians had fled in response to the Army's repression designed to clear the zones of non-combatants. After the war, many now tried to resume life in their places of origin. Some found their homes occupied by strangers, or discovered that their land had been cultivated for over ten years by neighbors now reluctant to leave the plots. Land tenancy, long sticky in El Salvador, had grown still more complicated. With the war over, expectations for basic services were also high; people wanted water, electricity, roads, schools, and health clinics, and expected the authorities to deliver. In zones once controlled by the guerrillas, alternative forms of public administration, conflict resolution, and social services had grown up which now were expected to share the scene with traditional authorities, or perhaps disappear altogether. The FMLN ended the war with a strong network of affiliated non-governmental organizations (NGOs), many of which were active in the zones, especially in making up for the lack of services from the state. Onto the scene came other Salvadoran and international NGOs; among these, the American Friends Service Committee, which drawing on its expertise in conflict resolution, attempted to create an environment conducive to mutual tolerance by bringing together deeply alienated members of communities long torn apart. That early work by the Service Committee led to the formation of what is now FUNDAMUNI/PROCAP, a Diakonia partner organization (PO).

What little "development" occurred during the war years was largely in the capital city, San Salvador. With peace, attention turned to the rest of the country, traditionally ignored and punished even more by the conflict. Incited by the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, the Social Investment Fund, (FIS) was formed in the early 1990s to receive and channel development

¹ See the agreement signed in San Salvador on 16 September 1992: Programa para el Restablecimiento de la Administración Pública en Zonas Conflictivas del 30 de septiembre de 1992, as cited in "Ejecución de Los Acuerdos de Paz en El Salvador. Recalendarizaciones, Acuerdos Complementarios y otros Documentos Importantes," p. 15-19 (United Nations, 1997).

funds from abroad. Recast in 1996 as the Social Investment Fund for Local Development (FISDL), the fund was given an enhanced role in local development which it has yet to fully embrace. In response to work done by some NGOs, FISDL and its German advisors began taking steps to ensure that projects submitted by mayors enjoyed some level of community support. Citizen input in development took the form of a Local Development Plan, which was drawn up by community leaders brainstorming about local needs and prioritized project proposals. The earliest efforts of what has become known as “participatory planning processes” were spurred by Diakonia partner organization SACDEL, which helped a community in Morazán prepare the first such plan in 1994.

With peace, the guerrilla army became a political party, and contested its first elections as the FMLN in 1994, losing the presidency but winning control of twelve municipalities. In El Salvador’s winner-take-all system, a party forms a slate including the mayor and the councillors (members of the municipal council = *concejales*). A presidential commission formed after the 1994 contest proposed four reforms, which languish in the Assembly. These provide for a single document of identification, abolishing the current dual system requiring a citizen ID as well as a voter registration card; residential voting, allowing citizens to cast their votes near home; professionalization of the electoral tribunal; and proportional representation on municipal councils.² In the 1997 by-elections, the FMLN made a strong showing, winning 27 members of the Legislative Assembly and 100 municipalities.³

El Salvador has now had three elections since peace was signed in 1992, and with each, voter participation has steadily declined. Last March, over 60% of the registered voters chose not to cast a ballot for President. The candidates and their messages apparently failed to spark interest. While there is no doubt that El Salvador is a country transformed from what it was in 1980, the peace accords and the process they unleashed were flawed and progress has been uneven. All new in some ways, in other ways the country has not changed at all, while in others, conditions have actually deteriorated. The poor get poorer; the buying power of the middle class has declined; and wealth is again concentrating in new and smaller circles. For some, the fruits of peace are not evident or are insufficient. Disillusioned with the process, many have no faith that things will improve, and even less faith that they as citizens can have any input in how their country develops. With ARENA, *Alianza Republicana Nacionalista*, founded by the radical right led by Roberto d’Aubuisson firmly in control of politics at the national level, Salvadorans appear to have found more opportunities for participation and political expression at the local level. Following the 1997 elections, ARENA was suddenly forced to share some power with their recent adversaries. The experience may explain shifting attitudes within ARENA, in particular support for de-centralization. And for the left, city hall became a school for public administration as the FMLN tackled government at the local level for the first time.

² The latter aspect is of particular significance for local democracy. El Salvador seems to be the only Latin American country still lacking this. The opposition parties, notably the FMLN, have since long been supporting proportional representation. The government party ARENA, now seems to be in the process of accepting this, possibly applying the “majority-plus” system which is practiced in some other Latin American countries, under which the party that wins the most votes is automatically granted a majority of council seats while the remaining seats are distributed among other parties on the basis of proportional representation.

³ In 1997 ARENA won 28 seats in the Assembly (down from 39) and the FMLN won 27 (up from 21); the remaining seats are occupied by smaller parties, for a total of 84. In those elections ARENA lost 82 municipalities. The majority of El Salvador’s population now lives in municipalities run by the FMLN or coalitions to which they belong.

One criticism of the peace accords was that virtually the only actors were the two parties to the agreement. Other Salvadorans, the rest of civil society, even other political parties were not involved. The UN Mission was criticized for limiting its interlocutors to the FMLN and the Government. The postwar years have shown that the give-and-take of an open democratic process does not come easily to the two dominant parties or the smaller ones of the opposition. Power is seen as access to the perquisites of power and the opportunity to tightly control the national agenda. Excluded, many Salvadorans did not develop a sense of ownership of the process. This lack of ownership may help explain voter apathy, and explain as well why many Salvadorans seem to have thrown themselves into local initiatives of governance and planning with newfound enthusiasm.

Also in 1997, an important step was taken in efforts to devolve power and resources from the central government to the country's 262 municipal governments. The point of departure was very bleak: El Salvador was one of the most highly centralized countries in Latin America. Heretofore, only 3% of the national budget has been managed by local governments, while the average for the rest of Latin America is 15%. In addition, municipalities could charge fees for services and impose a local asset tax, pending approval of the Legislative Assembly.⁴ In response to a convergence of forces and interests, the Assembly raised the central government transfer to the municipalities from 1% to 6% of the national budget. Among those pushing the issue and lobbying for its approval were several Diakonia partners, which later formed the Network for Local Development.⁵ A portion of this 6% earmark (3.8%) is sent automatically to the municipalities from the Salvadoran Institute for Municipal Development (ISDEM). ISDEM is an autonomous government agency mandated to provide technical backup, training and financing to the municipalities. The remaining portion (2.2%) is transferred to the municipalities in project support, pending approval of project plans by FISDL engineers.⁶ Securing adequate resources and using them responsibly is a major challenge facing municipal councillors around the country.

El Salvador's 262 mayors are finding that the very serious problems faced by their municipalities bind them together in a way that transcends political affiliation, class, and geography. Eighty-six percent of El Salvador's population has no access to piped water; in San Salvador, where water does flow from the faucet, fecal matter and other pollutants make it undrinkable. El Salvador ranks at the bottom in Latin America concerning access to water in rural areas. Where garbage is collected, disposal consists simply of an open dump. In San Salvador a left coalition government sought to craft a solution to the garbage problem in the metropolitan area by involving all 14 mayors in the research and planning. Their efforts have yielded Central America's first sanitary landfill, but not without cost. The four ARENA mayors dropped out of the project and ARENA's right flank misses no opportunity to attack and undermine the project. (Notably, President-elect Flores has pledged his support.)

⁴ In addition to state transfers, municipalities in El Salvador have two sources of income: a) service fees (*tasas*) are fixed by the municipality itself. The fees which municipalities may charge include services such as streetlights, water, and garbage collection as well as for the issuing of documents such as birth certificates and other transactions (*trámites*); b) assets taxes (*impuesto sobre activos*) must be approved by the Legislative Assembly. El Salvador is the only country in Latin America where the property tax is collected by the state rather than by the municipality. Elsewhere throughout the region, the property tax is the single most important source of locally generated revenue for municipalities (Nickson, op.cit.;44).

⁵ The network, or Red de Desarrollo Local, includes Diakonia partners FUNDE, SACDEL, PROCAP/FUNDAMUNI, FUNDAUNGO, and FUSAI as well as FLACSO, whose director participates in Diakonia's "Dialogue Group."

⁶ The breakdown of the 6% between ISDEM and FISDL arose from financial and political constraints, and is not codified as such in the law.

And the mayors are joined by other common issues: much of the country's population lives in rural areas attempting to eke out a living on a small plot of land in a form of peasant agriculture which is no longer viable. In general, the agricultural sector has been ignored for nearly two decades by the central government. At the outset of the war, three agricultural exports – coffee, cotton, sugar-cane – dominated the economy; today, only coffee has any importance. For its part, the FMLN negotiated land transfers, lines of credit, and technical assistance for peasants who no longer have any vocation to farm in an economy which does nothing to make farming attractive. What the collapse of the agricultural sector implies in part is a very small base of resources for the municipalities, hurt further by their own inability or unwillingness to tax appropriately. Some 59% of the municipalities have populations under 20,000; El Porvenir, Santa Ana, visited by the MT with partner organization FUNDAUNGO, has but 7,000 inhabitants.⁷ The viability of such small local governments is questionable, giving rise to suggestions that the number of municipalities be reduced, or, as a first step, that “micro-regions” be formed to encourage collaboration and economy of scale.⁸ Tasked with addressing these issues on behalf of mayors is the Corporation of Municipalities of the Republic of El Salvador (COMURES), the country's association of mayors.

Over seven years after the settlement, it is clear that the postwar transition that included implementation of the accords is over. The country has entered a new phase in its democratic transition in which a major challenge is the institutionalization of democracy. While it is clear that the phase is new, its rules and parameters are still being worked out as actors old and new test out their changed roles. Freedom of expression is perhaps being restricted more today by the ownership of the media than by any direct attempt at intervention. While the FMLN and other opposition forces are frequently covered in both major papers, which have left behind the crude rhetoric of the war years, these newspapers have a long way to go before they reach real credibility and professional standards. For some 70% of Salvadorans, radio is still their primary medium. Access to radio frequencies has traditionally been tightly controlled, a monopoly that was informally broken first by the clandestine guerrilla radio stations, both granted radio frequencies in the accords. Subsequently, community radio stations began broadcasting without a license, causing a crackdown in December 1995. Now legalized and linked by Diakonia partner ARPAS, these stations represent an untapped potential as a support in local development efforts and in educating and informing citizens.

ARENA's candidate, Francisco Flores, won the presidency in March on the first ballot and will assume office in June. It still remains to be seen just how much room for maneuver his government will be granted by those within his party who resist reform and a democratic opening. Early indications are that Flores and allies will seek to chart a course considerably different from Presidents Alfredo Cristiani and Armando Calderón Sol. His program for government, called “The New Alliance,” appears to firmly endorse “participatory decentralization” aiming to “convert local

⁷ The average population per municipality in El Salvador is approximately 20,000, among the lowest in Latin America (Latin America average: 32,000). Given the high population density in El Salvador, this means that the territorial size on municipalities in the country is exceptionally small, implying there are relatively short distances to the municipal office. The vast majority of municipalities in Latin America have fewer than 15,000 inhabitants, are essentially rural in character, have low population densities, and are relatively poor by comparison with the national average income per head (Nickson, 1995:31-32). Except for the territorial size, El Porvenir therefore seems to be a quite typical municipality, not only in El Salvador but in Latin America in general.

⁸ One counter-argument from a democracy point of view against increasing the size of the municipalities should be mentioned: it could reduce the political accountability of representatives to voters, by increasing the ratio of citizens to councillors and the distance from the remote hamlets to the municipal administration.

governments into key allies in national development, transferring in a direct, gradual and concerted fashion both responsibilities and financial resources to the municipalities....” In support of this, management capacity at the local level will be strengthened.⁹

However well intentioned, Flores’ decentralization efforts will confront many obstacles. In this context, NGOs promoting local development, accompanying processes of participatory planning, educating citizens about their rights and responsibilities, and providing technical assistance to local elected officials and civil servants in the municipalities are in a position to play a key role.

⁹ ARENA, “La Nueva Alianza, Programa de Gobierno, 1999-2004,”p. 18.

2. The Qualified Monitoring: Methodology

The methodology to be applied in this exercise was a matter of serious concern to Sida. For that reason, the MT was requested to prepare an Inception Report (Appendix IV) prior to Sida's final approval of the mission. The proposed approach and methods are therefore described at length there.

The proposed evaluation methodology was based on the understanding that each of the projects and Partner Organizations (POs) has been applying the indicators listed in the Project Document¹⁰. The list of indicators presented in the Inception Report, which was discussed at the 6 February seminar with Diakonia and the POs in San Salvador, is in most cases copied from this document. The Team learned that Diakonia had chosen not to make use of these indicators in its 1997 annual report to Sida. But we were led to understand, even from what the POs said at the seminar, that information on the indicators was available, and that it would be viable to base the evaluation on them. The POs were even invited to comment on the proposed indicators prior to the arrival of the MT; only one, *Grupo Maíz*, chose to do so.

Once the evaluation began, and collection of data on these indicators was attempted, it became clear that such information by and large was unavailable, although some relevant quantitative data has been received. Neither the POs nor Diakonia seem to have paid serious attention to the systematic collection of such data.

At a meeting with Diakonia in San Salvador on 23 March, the Team received a copy of a November 1998 report by Sida's Maria Holmquist addressing some methodological aspects of the Diakonia program. In this report it is pointed out, among the major methodological weaknesses of the program, that indicators or other ways of measuring the impact of the program are missing, and that the impact is therefore impossible to specify. The lack of a baseline – describing the situation at the start of the project – is mentioned as another weakness.

Furthermore, in a consultant's report on "Management and Control within Diakonia," commissioned by Sida and dated 15 December 1998, the same problem was pointed out. Among weaknesses in Diakonia's annual reporting is mentioned that "basis for assessment of the achievement of project objectives is insufficient, as empirical data for the main part is missing."¹¹ This report was first received after the MT arrived in El Salvador.

The Team can only regret that it was not made aware of these shortcomings when the methodological approach to the exercise was proposed in the Inception Report. The consequence is clearly, as pointed out by Holmquist, that any systematic measure of impact is quite impossible. This is particularly serious for the work of the Team, because Sida's main concern in the T-o-R seems to be "a systematisation of the results obtained from the activities," as well as "an analysis of the results" (T-o-R point 2.3.). This request will be almost impossible to satisfy given the above mentioned constraints. We would, therefore, have appreciated being informed fully about these constraints prior to the start of the work, e.g. during the process of discussing the Inception Report.

¹⁰ What is referred to as Project Document throughout this Report is Diakonia's revised application (Reviderad Ansökan) for 1998

¹¹ Öhrlings Coopers & Lybrand, p. 35

It is obvious that the time frame of the assignment does not permit an assessment of all eleven POs¹² in Diakonia's El Salvador program. Together with Diakonia and Sida, the MT therefore selected six of the organizations for special study. These were four of the organizations supporting local democracy activities in general (PROCAP, SACDEL, FUNDE, FUNDAUNGO), as well as two organizations with a particular focus in their work (ARPAS regarding local radio stations; Las Dignas regarding women). Some brief comments on the remaining organizations are to be found in section 3.7.

Leaders of each of these organizations were thoroughly interviewed, several of them on two occasions. The projects of four POs were visited in the field, and interviews were made with some of their partners in local democracy work (particularly representatives of municipal councils and local development committees). Eight municipalities were visited with this purpose in mind. In some of these municipalities, the MT also interviewed independent observers (*informantes*) who could offer an outsider's assessment of the work carried out. We had intended to make a more systematic use of such observers than time permitted. This was basically due to the extra time necessary for interview-based collection of the results of the projects.

In the absence of systematic data on the indicators, the MT analyzed the information that was made available on the POs' activities over the last two years, and carried out additional interviews in order to obtain as specific information related to expected results as possible. This information was checked against our own observations, particularly in the field visits.

Additionally, the MT interviewed a number of what we have called "national informants," people with good general knowledge of the situation in El Salvador, particularly related to democracy. These informants discussed with us our observations and concerns about the work of the various organizations. They shared with us their analysis of the current political situation in the country and priorities in the fields of democracy and human rights. This was especially helpful with regard to section 4.3. of the Report.

The MT had several interviews with Diakonia's staff, both that of the Regional Office, the Stockholm-based Central America coordinator (who came to San Salvador for the last week of the mission), and also with the organization's top management in Stockholm (15 April). On 8 April, we had a debriefing with Diakonia and a representative of the Swedish embassy in Guatemala, Ms. Ewa Dahlin. And finally, on 9 April, there was a debriefing with all the local POs, with the participation of the Diakonia staff.

The MT appreciates that the methodological basis of the work has serious weaknesses in relation to the tasks defined in the T-o-R, due to the lack of data on the indicators. The quantitative assessment is therefore impossible to make. Under section 5, we will make some recommendations as to how this may be improved in Diakonia's further work. We still believe that the qualitative assessments made in this report are relevant and express a valid observation of the achievements of the projects and the El Salvador sub-program.

We understand that Sida and Diakonia are collaborating on the application of a more systematic methodology, including indicators, in the next program (to start in 2000). We hope some of our recommendations may prove useful in this context.

The Monitoring Team consisted of Martha Doggett, Peter Hellmers, and Vegard Bye (Team leader).

¹² The MT considers the Diakonia-funded activities of each of the POs as a project. The totality of activities in El Salvador is referred to as the Diakonia Program, although in reality it is a sub-program under the regional Central America program.

3. Assessment of achieved results in the program¹³

3.1 PROCAP: Program for Training and Support to Municipalities

The overriding objective of PROCAP's work has been to support the municipalities in northern Chalatenango and Morazán to make a contribution toward development through processes that involve the population and municipal leaders and officials. In the view of the MT, there is no doubt that this objective has been achieved to an impressive degree (although some of the sub-objectives have not been achieved). The participatory, multi-party character of this process has been of particular importance for the democracy concerns which are at the root of this program. The MT's impression, gleaned from interviews with two ARENA mayors in municipalities supported by PROCAP, is that a good and positive democratic culture, with ample respect for political (and previously military) adversaries has taken root.

It is the opinion of the MT that the objective of "achieving development" is actually also important in terms of the democracy objective, because positive results in this respect renders credibility to the democratic procedures followed in the process.

In the light of these results, the MT does not find justified the sudden and dramatic cuts in Diakonia's 1999 funding for PROCAP. Under the new national circumstances of support to the municipalities and local participatory planning, PROCAP's comprehensive and long-term support to the same municipalities is not justifiable, either. It is time for PROCAP, as planned, to finish its all-encompassing work in its 18 municipalities. However, most observers, including other NGOs, agree that PROCAP's presence in Morazán and Chalatenango is still very much needed. PROCAP's intention to concentrate on work with micro-regions, as well as work to train a new generation of leaders, seems appropriate. Additionally, there are probably new municipalities in the same region which would need and welcome some PROCAP support, and some follow-up work to ensure sustainability could also be required in the 18 municipalities from which PROCAP is now pulling out. Diakonia's handling of this issue is addressed in section 6.9.

3.2 SACDEL: System for Assistance and Training for Local Development

Although it is not well reflected in the Program Document, SACDEL appears to work in three main areas related to local democracy which distinguish it from the other Diakonia-supported organizations (and the other members of the Network):

In the first place, SACDEL seems to be playing an increasingly important role in promoting proposals for de-centralization and strengthening the role of the municipalities, and in stimulating national debate and lobbying on these issues. Examples of this are the struggle for the 6% budget allocation for municipalities, for multi-party representation on municipal councils, attempts to raise municipal taxes, and finally proposals to transfer important issues from central government authority to the municipal level (such as land use planning, health, basic education, and water distribution). Some important battles have actually been won – like the 6% – or are in process. It is difficult to say, however, what importance SACDEL and other members of the Network have had in that respect.

¹³ In this section, we only reproduce the MT's assessment of the achieved results for each of the six organizations selected for scrutiny in the 1997-1998 program. A presentation of the organizations and the achievements as such are to be found in Appendix VI.

This work is of course of very high relevance to the democracy program.

The other distinguishing aspect of SACDEL's work is that it has been involved in institutional reform in some of the larger municipalities, particularly in metropolitan San Salvador, including the Municipality of San Salvador. The most impressive result is preparing the ground for quite dramatic structural reforms of municipal tax structures, which could radically increase the income of particularly large urban municipalities. This reflects a high level of technical competence. The fact that SACDEL's proposal for a new tax structure for San Salvador has been characterized as the only one filling the legal requirements reflects the tremendous national political significance of this work. Although this work is very technical, and perhaps should eventually be financed on a consultancy, fee-for-services basis, the democratic implications of it are so great that we believe that Diakonia support is fully legitimate at this stage.

Regarding the third aspect of SACDEL's work, the promotion of participatory methods for local development, we have to distinguish between the work in large and in medium-sized municipalities. Planning in medium-sized municipalities, including the coordination between municipal governments and local development committees (particularly in two municipalities in Usulután), is quite similar to the work carried out by PROCAP and others. The dynamics of it seems to differ, however, in the sense that the establishment of Local Development Committees is a consequence of work with development plans, rather than vice versa. Yet SACDEL has a role to play in this work, because it is a dynamic and creative organization which might stimulate innovative modes of work in model municipalities, possibly applicable in others.

The really innovative work done by SACDEL in this area is San Salvador. Although the MT has not had the opportunity to study this in detail, a participatory model which meets the special requirement of a large city with a significant slum population seems to have been developed.

The mayor's staff in San Salvador characterizes SACDEL as its "strategic advisor." Given the results achieved, particularly in the reform of taxes and service fees, de-centralization, and participatory investment planning, this is no small contribution to democracy in El Salvador. In many ways, working in a city with the complexities of San Salvador is much more difficult than in small rural municipalities where the bulk of Diakonia's other local democracy projects are concentrated.

3.3 FUNDE: National Foundation for Development

The MT agrees with FUNDE that it has become a "point of reference" in several debates of paramount importance to Salvadoran society today relating to social and economic development. Given its origins in the FMLN, it has established an impressive range of contacts in government, the private sector, academic institutions, and with key international actors such as the World Bank. FUNDE is sought out for its top-notch research as well as for its strong linkages at the base. Our FUNDE interlocutor mentioned the flexibility of Diakonia funding among the reasons why the organization is able to respond to the many demands placed on it, which now exceed its capacity to respond. The MT repeatedly heard praise of FUNDE from its peers, and from groups and individuals with whom it conducts research jointly. The director of another Diakonia PO referred to it as "the prototype of a committed organization." It is today one of the few real think tanks in El Salvador and is often mentioned as a counterpart to FUSADES, the AID-funded group dominated by certain sectors of the ARENA party.

Given its origins in the popular movement, FUNDE has been effective in disseminating its research and analysis to the base, in the hope that these sectors in turn are in a better position to understand their society and influence change. Likewise, its origins in the FMLN translate into strong ties with

FMLN mayors and members of the Legislative Assembly. Known for its capacity to propose alternatives, FUNDE staff is sought out by Assembly deputies considering new policies. The organization was invited to present its proposal on reform of the Central Bank and the financial system to the Assembly committee with jurisdiction in this area. This access places FUNDE in a good position to effectively lobby and engage policy-makers on key issues.

FUNDE says that local development was a concern from the beginning and its first diagnostic studies on municipalities were done in 1993. When the first FMLN mayors were elected in 1994, it was naturally to FUNDE that they turned for help. Today FUNDE is working with 15 municipalities and another five through its work in “microregions.” At the request of the mayor’s office, it recently elaborated a plan for citizen participation in San Salvador and is currently negotiating with the municipality on a modality to monitor its implementation. In referring to its work with municipalities in participatory planning processes, FUNDE says it is “less interested in producing a document [the Local Development Plan, Ed.] than accompanying the process and helping a bit with its implementation.” In comparison to some other POs doing this work, these efforts occupy a smaller portion of the organization’s total program. Its complementary research should be of use to all the groups, for example, a forthcoming study on FISDL. When called for, FUNDE also conducts research of use to a particular municipality, for example, a study of big business in Soyapango, a San Salvador suburb with a considerable industrial presence. FUNDE’s Network participant is currently preparing drafts for the plan to implement the local development proposal launched jointly by the Network for Local Development. As the new Flores government attempts to decentralize, the Network will be an important ally and resource. The totality of FUNDE’s work is highly relevant to Diakonia’s efforts to expand democratic space while influencing policy, and the organization should be a key partner for Diakonia in years to come. Given FUNDE’s strengths and interests, this relationship could be greatly enhanced by a more substantive exchange of analysis, experience, and information.

3.4 FUNDAUNGO: The Dr. Guillermo Manuel Ungo Foundation

FUNDAUNGO is known as much for research and publishing as for the outreach outlined above. In recognition of the quality of its work, Foundation staff served on three thematic working groups in the government-run process that produced the National Plan (*Plan de Nación*) released at the end of last year. With FLACSO, it conducted the Salvador case study for a regional research project called “Central America: Decentralization and Municipal Fortification.” In collaboration with the Nicaraguan UCA, it has conducted work on the attitudes and proposals of mayors on the isthmus toward decentralization. The findings were presented widely in public fora. This research has led to the establishment of strong linkages with researchers throughout the region and in the United States. As the decentralization process takes off, the Network for Local Development will become an increasingly important actor and FUNDAUNGO’s expertise will be key within the Network. For this reason, the Foundation should remain a strategic partner for Diakonia for years to come.

FUNDAUNGO is also fortunate to have inherited international relationships stemming from Dr. Ungo and the Social Democratic political party that he led, the MNR (*Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario*). Throughout the war years, the MNR was part of the political alliance, FDR, that maintained close political links to the guerrilla movement, the FMLN. As such, MNR represented the liaison between the guerrillas and the Socialist International (SI). It is perhaps because of these roots that the Foundation has, more than most organizations, chosen to put resources into working with political parties. In this work they are addressing a major need in El Salvador in a period when some are beginning to speak of a “crisis” in the party system. FUNDAUNGO is also to be praised

for its consistent efforts to reach out to the “official” institutions in the municipal field – ISDEM and COMURES – by planning and conducting joint training sequences. It is by getting to know these major actors that NGOs can hope to influence them and prod them to become institutions on which the municipalities can rely. The Foundation’s access may prove useful to the rest of the Network.

It appears to the MT, that FUNDAUNGO, perhaps more than other POs, has put considerable work into refining the methodological questions involved in designing projects and following their implementation. Staff says that this work, in collaboration with Diakonia, is ongoing. *We recommend that Diakonia examine this work in light of its applicability to the work of other POs.*

3.5 ARPAS: Association of Radio and Participatory Program in El Salvador

ARPAS has played a decisive role in the tough struggle for legal recognition of the community radios, and thus for what it calls the democratization of mass communication in El Salvador. All ARPAS affiliates now have legal status, either directly or through the common FM frequency. Radio is the primary, and in many cases only, means of mass communication in rural areas of the country, and as such a very powerful tool for those who want to influence popular opinion in the countryside. Had ARPAS not waged this struggle, this space for alternative information could have been lost today. Training activities with the aim of strengthening the local broadcasters technically and journalistically are also believed to have had a considerable impact on these radio stations’ strength and attraction among listeners.

Because of political circumstances, the legal struggle may have come to overshadow some of the other activities foreseen in the Diakonia project, such as the active promotion of popular education.

What is most conspicuously missing in ARPAS’ work, when seen in the context of Diakonia’s program for local democratization in the country, is the active networking with those organizations and processes promoting local participation in municipal and community development planning. The MT registered concrete cases where local development committees would have benefited from access to community radios. This process could have reached even considerably further in popular participation if it had been actively accompanied by a local radio. ARPAS’ argument is that they do not have the capacity to establish new transmitters, and that the POs working with local processes should rather take such initiatives and approach ARPAS for support. This may very well be the case (*ref. recommendation 1*).

The overriding objective of Diakonia’s cooperation with ARPAS has been “to unite the non-profit broadcasters of El Salvador, and thereby provide civil society with an opportunity to make use of radio, so as to consolidate peace and democracy in El Salvador.” There is no doubt that this objective has been reached to a considerable degree, particularly in the defense of the local broadcasters’ right to exist. But much more could be done to bring these radios more actively into the democracy work. One ARENA mayor visited by the MT related how the community radio station had played a destructive role vis a vis the participatory planning process, in her opinion, but that once she approached them and established a dialogue, things improved greatly. To date, the stations remain a largely untapped resource in educating the public about local development and citizen participation.

3.6 Las Dignas: Association of Women for Dignity and Life

According to UNDP, Las Dignas is one of 25 women's organizations working nationally. Additionally there are five networks or coalitions of women's groups. Las Dignas and its spin-off are the only women's group in El Salvador receiving Diakonia funding, and indeed, among the few in the region. *In our view, several factors suggest that funding decisions in this area should be re-examined.* Diakonia has opted to focus on human rights and democracy issues in the region, while at the same time tightening the PO relationship as well as funding criteria. Sida encourages a "mainstreaming" approach to gender and emphasizes the importance of activities targeted toward men (see Appendix VIII on Sida's gender policy). While Diakonia lists gender among its four areas of priority – along with democratization, economic justice, and human rights – it too has stated its preference for encouraging all projects to take steps to ensure full female participation, rather than sponsoring projects directly geared toward women. We urge Diakonia to consider a few questions: Has Diakonia chosen to fund Las Dignas in order to demonstrate its gender sensitivity? Alternatively, was it Dignas' work with women at the municipal level that motivated Diakonia to solidify its relationship with Dignas by transferring it from RÖF funding to full status as a Partner Organization? In this context it should be noted that only one of the seven operational goals included in Diakonia's presentation to Sida on Las Dignas relates to municipal work. Examining questions such as these may help lay the groundwork for the funder and its partner to establish a more substantive relationship, and for Dignas to fulfill its stated goal to focus on fewer activities which it does well.

It is clear that Las Dignas has come a long way since 1990 and has earned respect for its public campaigns on issues such as violence against women and child support, as well as its research. It has shown a remarkable capacity for self-examination and re-tooling that served it well in responding to a changing society. Yet one long-time observer of the organization said this very quality was at once its strong point and its downfall, because it was in a constant state of reflection and transition. It is commendable that Dignas has itself attempted to pare down its activities and staff size. On the other hand, several observed to the MT that its management structure is a largely traditional vertical model, despite its large staff and "movement-type" character.

Las Dignas' program shows a marked predilection for creating new women's organizations by sector (municipal councillors and mayors; psychologists, etc.). The utility of this approach is limited, and, may even prove counterproductive in the long run, in our view (ref. *recommendation 3*).

3.7 Other Partner Organizations

We have not assessed the five other POs in the program. We would nonetheless like to briefly refer to the activities they are carrying out with Diakonia support, and their relevance for the program.

Equipo Maíz is a popular education organization, and the overriding objective of its collaboration with Diakonia is to strengthen popular education by offering workshops and publishing material in a very accessible language and format. The proposed activities seem very relevant to the building of local democracy. The question is to what degree these activities are related to the local participation processes. Both ARPAS and Equipo Maíz have resources that could be put to use by POs that are actively involved in local participation activities (ref. *recommendation 2*).

FUMA works principally with health issues among the poorest of the population, encouraging popular participation. The overriding objective of this component of the program is to develop a model for de-centralized health care with local participation in order to satisfy elementary needs in the municipalities. This objective is very interesting, not least in light of the increasing consensus in

the country around de-centralization of services such as drinking water. Also in this case, there seems to be space for better coordination with local participatory processes supported by the program.

Fundacampo is a foundation whose purpose is to offer organizational support to the Salvadoran peasant movement. Diakonia supports leadership training, particularly with a view to lobbying for social change. If more emphasis is put on economic democratization in the local communities, as proposed by the MT, Fundacampo could be a good vehicle.

FUSAI has a unique history, in that it is a continuation of the wartime work in El Salvador by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Its relationship to Sweden dates to the CIREFCA process. According to FUSAI, its collaboration with Diakonia is partly a consequence of Sida's wish to find an NGO channel to support a FUSAI housing project. Considerable amounts of money (10,5 mill. SEK) were provided by Diakonia for this purpose between 1992 and 1996, whereas the major share of Diakonia's support to FUSAI over the last two years has enabled the construction of a center for training popular leaders. In 1998, FUSAI was by far the largest recipient of Diakonia support in El Salvador (5,2 mill. SEK). The MT questions whether this huge support to construction can be justified within the context of the democracy program.

FUSAI is also noteworthy because it generates considerable funds by building houses and thus has a for-profit part of the organization that contributes to operating expenses. Future Diakonia support could be applied to leadership training, some of which is done in conjunction with FUNDE. FUSAI is also a member of the Network for Local Development. Apart from leadership training, FUSAI supports efforts to strengthen local democracy and autonomy, with small- and micro-enterprises and credit schemes. For this reason, FUSAI would also be an interesting partner in a future program that gives increased priority to the subject of economic democratization.

SJDPA (*Servicio Jesuita para el Desarrollo*) assists refugees and displaced persons returning to their original communities with education, mental and physical health, and economic development. The overriding objective of Diakonia's support is to achieve the active participation of the returnees in the development of their communities. It is not very clear to the MT what relationship there is between SJDPA's work and that of the program in general.

The Regional Open Fund (RÖF in Swedish) is a source of more flexible, ad hoc support, but in many cases is used as a way to initiate support to organizations which later become long-term POs. In 1998, as much as 25% of the RÖF, totalling almost 2,2 million SEK went to El Salvador. Almost half of this went to organizations that already receive ordinary support from Diakonia (particularly SACDEL and ARPAS), whereas the other half is distributed among new organizations and specific events. One new organization, the *Asociacion de Madres Demandantes de la Cuota Alimentaria*, which received a total of 320,000 SEK in 1998, is a direct offspring of one of the POs, Las Dignas. The bulk of the activities funded seem to be related to local and municipal democracy and development. Among the new organizations receiving support through RÖF (a total of 280,000 SEK) in 1998 is COMURES, the mayors' organization, which in 1999 receives ordinary support as a full PO.

4. The Adequacy of the Results

The T-o-R asks for an assessment of the adequacy of the results obtained in the program, in relation to Diakonia's own objectives, to the objectives of the Swedish Central America program, as well as to developments in El Salvador.

4.1 Adequacy in relation to objectives presented in the Diakonia application

In Diakonia's application for the present two-year program, the following overriding objective for the work on the Central American level was presented:

“Support and formulate democracy, organization and development, which leads to more equitable conditions of living and run counter to economic, political religious, cultural and social oppression.”¹⁴

This is an extremely broad objective, and also quite imprecise (see under 4.5.). Although the program is presented as a human rights and democracy program, this objective also contains “development” in its wider and basic meaning (“development which leads to more equitable conditions of living”). On the other hand, such development is also part of the socio-economic dimension of human rights (the so-called “second generation” of human rights). It is therefore perfectly legitimate to include it in such a program. The problem, however, is one of setting priorities. As we interpret the program, even in accordance with Diakonia's general policy set out in its 1998 policy document “Aid to support equal value for all people,” the whole point in the organization's approach is to consider its four categories of work – democracy, gender, human rights, and economic justice – as interrelated and mutually dependent.¹⁵ Since the Central America program has chosen to address human rights and democracy problems in particular, we interpret the “economic justice” aspect to be a secondary objective in itself. Gender, we assume, may be considered as fully integrated into both democracy and human rights considerations.

The application presents, in addition to its overall objective, what is called an “operative objective” for the El Salvador sub-program, as follows:

“Contribute to the development of internal and external work of civic society as well as municipal organizations, and support and encourage them to collaborate in new ways to support democratization in El Salvador”.

This is certainly a much more limited objective, which we may summarize in the concept “local democratization,” understood as an interplay between civil society and municipal governments. We assume that this is the Diakonia objective against which the El Salvador program shall be assessed.

In the Inception Report (Appendix IV) we tried to break the El Salvador local democracy program down into six main categories, based on a grouping of the expected results and the indicators of those results as presented in the application. In order to make a more specific assessment of the adequacy of the results, we shall discuss them in relation to each of these five categories.

¹⁴ This and the following quotation are translated from the original Swedish by the MT.

¹⁵ Diakonia, “Cooperación para la promoción de la igualdad entre las personas,” (Stockholm, 1998).

4.1.1 Adequacy in relation to the strengthening of civil society

The first dimension of expected results was phrased in the Inception Report as “strengthening of civil society, and hence of popular participation in local decision-making.” Among the six POs we have considered in this monitoring exercise, PROCAP, FUNDAUNGO, SACDEL and FUNDE are considered to work with relevant matters, but even ARPAS and Las Dignas do so in supporting roles.

There can be no doubt that the work carried out by these first four organizations mentioned has had a deep and positive impact on the strengthening of civil society and popular participation in the municipalities where they have been working. The co-functioning of the elected councils and the Local Development Committees (the latter under different names depending on the organization) seems to be a most valuable and appropriate way to optimize party-political and direct popular participation in the formulation and prioritization of development projects in the municipality. It seems that two of these organizations have found their particular niche in the practical work with municipalities: PROCAP has a long record of working with the war-ridden and poor peasant municipalities of Chalatenango and Morazán, whereas SACDEL has developed some very interesting mechanisms of working with larger municipalities, including the capital.

There appears to be little quantitative data on the work. PROCAP provided statistics suggesting an impressive number of participants and of small communities (*caseríos* and *cantones*) involved in PROCAP efforts. FUNDAUNGO also tracks the number of participants in its training exercises, in some cases broken down according to sex, party affiliation, and profession. But in all municipalities visited by the team, covering the work of all four of these organizations, the range and depth of civic participation in local decision-making is impressive, certainly by European standards (including Swedish, we believe). The problem will be to maintain this high degree of participation, as the innovative character of it decreases, and the problems of implementing what has actually been decided in a participatory way will probably increase, due to insufficient access to funds.

In addition to the practical implementation of participatory methods, some of these organizations also work on a more theoretical level, with the development of methods of participation. The MT is specially impressed by SACDEL’s work in this context. FUNDE recently prepared a policy for citizen participation that was approved by the San Salvador city council. FUNDE will likely be involved in tracking the experience with this innovative program in the country’s biggest city. FUNDAUNGO has been foremost in developing curriculum and materials for popular education on municipal issues. Both FUNDE and FUNDAUNGO conduct quality academic research in the field.

As pointed out elsewhere, ARPAS and its affiliates have an enormous potential in educating Salvadorans about local democratic processes and municipal issues. *It will be an important task for Diakonia to improve these linkages in the coming period.*

4.1.2 Adequacy in relation to the strengthening of local government

The second dimension to assess is what we have phrased as “strengthened local government, including improved access to economic resources and increased local/municipal autonomy.”

PROCAP, FUNDAUNGO, FUNDE and SACDEL are supposed to be the four most relevant organizations regarding this dimension.

Actually, we are speaking about three different issues:

- (a) the strengthening and professionalization of local government;
- (b) the improvement of municipal finances;
- (c) increased municipal autonomy through de-centralization of responsibilities.

Regarding the first, the training of municipal council members and officials has been an integrated part of the work carried out by all these organizations, along with the promotion of citizen participation. We do not have any instrument by which to make any quantitative assessment of how much has been achieved. But it is quite obvious that popular expectations in this period of pacification and democratization were particularly high at the municipal level, and translated into increased demands on the fledgling governments. The point of departure of municipal government strength and professionalism was undoubtedly very weak, although we do not have specific data on that either. It is our definite impression that the improvement in municipalities supported by the Diakonia POs has been considerable, although there is still a lot of work to do.

Regarding the question of increasing municipal budgets, results are evident, although it is unclear how much it is related to the work of Diakonia's POs. The most important achievement was the approval in 1997 of the so-called "6%", i.e. that 6% of the state budget would be allocated to the municipalities. It seems that several of the Diakonia POs played a quite significant role in this process, along with the organization of mayors, COMURES (proposed for support by Diakonia in its next program).

It is obvious that the POs' assistance to the municipalities in elaborating projects and training municipal personnel in preparing such proposals has been decisive in many cases in securing the portion of the 6% subsidy that comes through FISDL. It also seems that a certain amount of lobbying has been necessary in many cases to obtain FISDL funding, either because FISDL is a highly inefficient bureaucracy, or even – as asserted by some mayors – that political discrimination is at work. In such cases, lobbying by the POs may have been decisive in prying loose contributions from FISDL.

The extremely regressive structure of the two direct municipal income sources, service fees (*tasas*) and assets tax (*impuesto sobre activos*)¹⁶, has in particular been addressed by SACDEL. Remarkable success in restructuring the tax burden and potentially increasing the municipality's income has been achieved in a couple of places (not least in the case of the capital, San Salvador, where the potential increase of total income would amount to 66%). Assistance with the improvement of registry and cadastre systems has also produced increased income in some cases, and the potential here is considerable.

Lastly, there is the issue of de-centralizing areas of responsibility from the state to the municipal level, and in that way increasing municipal autonomy, which, in the context of democratic municipal management, could be a very important contribution to a general democratization of society. This is certainly a question of lobbying on the national political level, since that is where the decision to de-centralize must be taken. Some of Diakonia's POs, along with the Network, have been among the most active actors in the struggle for de-centralization of water provision (which is

¹⁶ The fact that El Salvador is the only country in Latin America where municipalities miss the opportunity to collect property tax, makes a reform of this system a logical demand to make. This issue may not have been sufficiently addressed by the POs of this program.

supported by the in-coming President)¹⁷, certain health services (so far unsuccessful), aspects of basic education (communities have won a veto right regarding teachers).

It is noteworthy that the Government Plan of President-elect Francisco Flores goes quite far in proposing de-centralization of state responsibilities, and, in general, the strengthening of the municipalities. There seems to be a clear relationship between the relative success of municipal democracy, to which the Diakonia program has contributed considerably, and the emerging national consensus about de-centralization.¹⁸

One consideration could also be made against the democratic nature of such de-centralization: if only responsibilities, and not economic or technical resources are de-centralized, it could actually be very counter-productive, in terms of effective provision of services as well as strengthening of public trust in municipal government and local democracy.

But in general, it is quite remarkable to see how local and municipal democracy has emerged as a generally accepted and inevitable fact in so short a time after the signing of the peace agreements in El Salvador. Today, even conservative and heavily bureaucratic state institutions like FISDL have made “participatory planning” a requirement for transferring project resources to the municipalities, although this may still be more of a formality than a reality. In this sense, we are witnessing nothing less than a historic process. The Diakonia program, through its partner organizations, has been a part of it, or actually among the pioneers in it.

4.1.3 Adequacy in terms of strengthening the democratic culture

The third dimension of local democracy addressed by the Diakonia program in El Salvador, as we have broken it down in the Inception Report, is the strengthening of democratic culture, in the sense of greater pluralism and attitudes favoring peaceful conflict resolution.

The impact on this dimension is, of course, extremely difficult to measure, particularly in the absence of any quantitative indicators. But the general impression is that the activities carried out by the POs have had a significant bearing on collaboration across party lines. One of the main positive effects, and in some cases even a purpose, of the formation of local development committees has been to establish a pluralistic counterweight to the one-party municipal councils. That has undoubtedly been successful. In many of the smaller communities in particular, even in areas with an extremely high degree of polarization during the war, party politics seems most irrelevant. In one case, a mayor expressed to the MT that he had been invited to stand for election by several political parties. When he decided to represent ARENA, it was because he believed that it would be easier to obtain support for the municipality if he represented the ruling party. In such situations, but also where the level of polarization is higher, it has evidently been important to promote the non-party (or all-party) and all-sector involvement of the Local Development Committees.

¹⁷ In the proposed General Water Law, promoted by the outgoing Calderón administration, de-centralization of water services is foreseen. The national water and sewage administration (ANDA) will, according to the proposal, administer it through concessions to private companies, municipalities, and NGOs (El Diario de Hoy, 9.04.99). The question is how much of this will go to private companies and how much to municipalities and NGOs.

¹⁸ Ref. interview of MT with the head of President-elect Francisco Flores’ transition team, Lic. Maria Eugenia de Avila.

Conflict resolution has been an explicit topic for several POs, particularly in the sense of finding common ground on priorities within communities that to a certain extent are competing for the same scarce resources. Also here, an important contribution to democratic culture has been made. This was in fact the very *raison d'être* of one of the POs, PROCAP, when it was launched.

The MT was in the country during the end of the presidential election campaign, and immediately afterward. In general, this campaign was very peaceful, without any serious undemocratic incidents. That is of course very positive, and a significant step forward. The more negative aspect, from the perspective of democratic culture, is the high number of abstentions: more than 60%. The new president was elected with the support of only 18% of the voters. Among the factors mentioned is that people did not find any of the candidates particularly attractive, that they are tired of party politics, and that they find national politics far less relevant to their lives than local politics. The last aspect could be interpreted as positive from a local democratic perspective, although it may also be said to be negative for democracy as a whole if interest in national elections decreases to the extent it did in this case in El Salvador. But it seems more appropriate to make the following interpretation: there is presently a general political fatigue in the country, in the wake of an overly politicized recent history (civic agitation, civil war, peace process). This leaves a general political vacuum, which is partly compensated by peoples' increased interest in local politics. As their confidence in democratic structures and processes grow locally, one may hope that this will translate into a growing interest in national politics, and a demand for increasing transparency and democracy, even on the national political level.

Among the organizations assessed by the MT, the work of ARPAS should also be mentioned as highly relevant and effective as far as the strengthening of a democratic culture is concerned. ARPAS itself calls it "democratization of the word", i.e. democratization of mass communication structures. The struggle carried out by ARPAS to achieve the legality of the community broadcasters is quite impressive. The merciless opposition to the community broadcasters by commercial and conservative radio stations actually reveals their importance in creating a more democratic culture in the country.

To sum up, there is no doubt that the program has contributed to the strengthening of a democratic culture locally. The problem is that a similar process is not taking place on the national level.

4.1.4 Adequacy in terms of strengthened local influence on national decision-making

This issue was to a large extent discussed under 4.1.2. above, as far as the interests of the municipalities are concerned. The conclusion is clear: the Diakonia program has been both adequate and highly effective.

Maybe the most quantitatively impressive results, but also the strongest potential conflicts, lie in the efforts to substitute the extremely regressive municipal tax structures with progressive, or at least equitable ones. This is where activities under this program have really challenged the economic power of the country, and counter attacks came quickly and effectively (so far particularly in the case of municipal tax in San Salvador). A really interesting showdown may come when a tax reform for Santa Tecla is presented, because the town is host to several large financial institutions, among them, *Banco Cuscatlán*, one of the country's wealthiest and most powerful banks. The President-elect has expressed support for increased municipal revenues through taxation.

There are also some POs lobbying on other issues, which we have not assessed in this mission. Both FUNDE and Las Dignas have lobbied effectively within their areas of expertise (see 3.3 and 3.6).

When weighing the civic, party, and municipal channels against each other, it seems that the first and the last are most relevant at this point. The direct lobbying work carried out by the POs and their umbrella, “the Network,” seems to have been important. The same is the case with the association of mayors, COMURES. The influence through political parties seems much less relevant, although the mayors of the two principal parties, ARENA and FMLN, may have had some success in promoting viewpoints in favor of strengthening local government through their respective party channels¹⁹. At the moment of presenting proposals to the Legislative Assembly, it seems that the lobby work done by organizations such as COMURES and the POs (through the “Network” or not) may have been quite significant.

A really interesting question is whether the role of the political parties will change as a consequence of these innovative experiments with local democracy. Where, traditionally in El Salvador, parties have been extremely top-down and clientelistic campaign machines, the direct exposure to voters at the municipal level might give party strategists good reasons to listen much more carefully to mayors and grassroots activists. The catastrophic drop in voter turnout in this year’s presidential elections should be a warning in this respect. It is the MT’s impression that there is a very serious conflict of trust between political parties and voters in the country. Party politics is seen as particularly irrelevant at the local level. The hope is that this could tempt the parties to listen more to municipal and local demands, which would strengthen local influence on national decision-making, and perhaps even strengthen the role of the parties.

4.1.5 Strengthened access to local mass media

The work of ARPAS has, as already pointed out, been decisive in creating the legal basis for community radios, beyond doubt the most powerful alternative information channel to poor, particularly rural, communities in the country. It remains to be seen how effective these broadcasters are in offering local communities media access. This aspect was not assessed explicitly by the MT, but a lack of coordination with those organizations promoting participatory democracy has been pointed out. The potential of the radios in this context is huge, however.

4.1.6 Strengthened role of women and youth in the economic and political processes

All six groups examined say they aim to ensure the full participation of men and women in all program activities. All of the Local Development Committees with which the MT met included a number of women, many of whom were the most outspoken participants. These efforts address in part the community’s basic needs (water, schools, electricity), and in a society where the division of labor follows fairly traditional patterns, women will naturally gravitate to these activities. In light of the increased participation of citizens in general in economic and social processes, it can be said that the role of women has also been strengthened. Las Dignas’ work targeting women exclusively has no doubt empowered the limited number of women who participate, in some cases providing them concrete skills with which to earn their living. Two POs, FUNDAUNGO and PROCAP, have chosen to focus some energies on youth. PROCAP has been working with large groups of youth in recreational activities and leadership training and is considering expanding this aspect of its work.

¹⁹ Ms. de Avila claims this has been so in ARENA’s case.

FUNDAUNGO ran a very successful educational campaign to inform youth about what a municipality does and draw them into community activities.

4.2 Adequacy in relation to Swedish development cooperation objectives

In December 1996 Sida presented its regional strategy for Central America. The general objectives of this strategy are:

- peace and consolidation
- deepened and widened democracy where human freedoms and rights are respected
- good social governance and a functioning state based on the rule of law (*rättsstat*)
- sustainable development aiming at reduced poverty and a more equitable distribution of the countries' resources
- equality between women and men
- respect and improved life conditions for the indigenous populations

These objectives are spelled out in five focal areas where Swedish support is supposed to be concentrated. Out of these, particularly two are relevant for the present program: strengthening of democracy at the central and local level, and modernization of the state (meaning national institutions on central as well as the local level, with de-centralization as one important aspect). Two other focal points should be mentioned: the promotion of human rights and the strengthening of the rule of law, and sustainable economic and social development aimed at the poorest.

There is no doubt that the Diakonia program in El Salvador is making a positive contribution to several of these objectives and focal points, and that the program has a focus which is fully compatible with official Swedish objectives for cooperation with the region.

When it comes to El Salvador specifically, three areas are given priority by Sida: strengthened democracy, human rights, and the modernization of the state.

When Diakonia has chosen to concentrate its program in El Salvador on local democracy, this is fully compatible with one of the three areas Sida has singled out for the country: democracy. It is also partly compatible with a second, the modernization of the state, as far as local institutions and de-centralization is concerned. When it comes to the third specific Sida priority for El Salvador, human rights, Diakonia has chosen not to work explicitly in that direction. As far as we understand from Diakonia, there has never been a decision *not* to work with human rights in El Salvador. It is simply that local democracy projects have been given priority.

That said, it is obvious that many of the projects have indirect impact on human rights. As set out in the Inception Report, the following human rights concerns are implicitly addressed by the Diakonia projects:

- strengthened respect for basic human rights principles in local communities
- freedom of expression (radio, open community meetings (*cabildos abiertos*))
- improved socio-economic conditions
- equality between men and women

But there are obvious other and crucial human rights concerns in today's El Salvador which are not addressed by the Diakonia program. Sida officials have expressed in conversations with the MT that Diakonia is in its full right to choose the focus it has done in El Salvador. Provided the democracy

program is successful in what it aims to do, which we believe it is, it is therefore also fulfilling official Swedish expectations. We will come back to the balance between democracy and human rights priorities under the next point.

There is another aspect of Sida's regional strategy which is worth considering, however, namely the decision to channel as much as 40% of Swedish assistance through Swedish NGOs. The strategy emphasizes that cooperation between Swedish and local organizations has implied the strengthening of the role of the latter, and not least the development of their competence, built on the exchange of experiences.

We assume that one desired aspect of this "exchange of experiences" would be the transfer of Swedish experiences in civic and popular organizations to – in this case – El Salvador. This assumption is strengthened by the strategic and political role Sweden seems to expect to play in the region through its development cooperation, as far as we interpret the strategy document. It is furthermore said that Swedish competence and experience should be made available where it is relevant. One of the areas pointed out in this context is municipal government.

The MT calls into question whether Diakonia has fulfilled its role as conveyor of Swedish development competence and experiences in this respect, particularly as this program is financed 100% by Sida. There seems to be very little evidence, if any, of Diakonia transferring any particular competence to its POs or to the municipalities where these are working. In this sense, it is questionable whether what seems to be a crucial concern for the regional Swedish strategy in Central America, and a main argument in favor of using the NGO channel, has been addressed in the present program. (We will come back to this under section 6.6.)

Several of the POs have expressed a strong interest in establishing stronger relations with *Sweden as a country* through this program. The Swedish and Nordic model are looked upon as highly interesting and relevant in the formation of a local democratic model, and a democracy model in general, in El Salvador. This wish should be followed up, especially regarding the historical development of Swedish democratic expressions. One of the problems seem to be that there is practically no coordination between Diakonia and Sida about their respective regional human rights and democracy programs in the region (ref. *recommendation 4*).

It is not within our mandate to give advice to Sida about its human rights and democracy program in El Salvador. A systematic identification of how national institutional development on both local and countrywide levels could support each other would be of interest, e.g. by the use of the special consultant fund Sida has established with the IDB for this purpose. Even the role of political parties in a democratic process deserves attention, not least the interplay between their role in national and local politics.

4.3 Adequacy in relation to developments in El Salvador

It is indeed a very difficult task to assess the adequacy of the results of Diakonia's program "in relation to the developments in El Salvador," as it is phrased in the T-o-R. First of all, there is of course no general agreement on what "developments in El Salvador" are. Second, it is impossible to identify exactly the significance of Diakonia's contribution given that many other donors also support the activities of Diakonia's POs. Third, we are speaking about a two-year program in a field where deep changes may take a generation or more.

When we speak about support to democracy in El Salvador today, it is a quite obvious choice for an NGO to focus on the local level. This is presently by far the most dynamic area for the develop-

ment of democracy in the country. That seems to be where the population pays most attention. It is also where it is possible to make a difference. We believe that the major democratic problems in El Salvador have as much to do with indifference and apathy, as with the lack of democratic processes and institutions. The very low level of voter turnout in the last presidential election is a clear illustration of this. In this situation, it seems to be highly adequate, and obviously a good and strategically correct choice, for foreign and national NGOs, like Diakonia and its POs, to concentrate on building democratic processes and institutions at the local and municipal level. There seems to be an increasing trust in these actors by municipal authorities from all political parties, including the government party ARENA which initially, and perhaps still at the national level, had been quite reticent to accept the role played by NGOs. Many of the projects supported by Diakonia in municipalities around the country have been nothing less than “schools in democracy” for a population that hardly has known real democracy. The most important is that these processes have demonstrated the intimate relationship between democratic processes, social reconciliation, and socio-economic improvements, as well as the interplay between civil society and formal institutions. The hope is that these local experiences in practical democracy eventually may have an impact on people’s attraction to and involvement in democracy, even on the national level.

What, then, is the scholarly conventional wisdom of relations between local and national democracy? A review of recent literature on this concludes there is “conviction that democratic government at the local level is a necessary condition for democracy generally”.²⁰ The causal relationship is believed to take four principal forms: (i) that democratic local government provides a pertinent democratic education; (ii) that local government restrain the excesses of national government and the anti-democratic tendencies of centralized power (particularly in transitions from authoritarianism); (iii) that local democracy provides a better quality of participation than does national government; and finally (iv) that the legitimacy of government centrally is strengthened when it legislates for municipal reform.²¹

All these elements seem to be highly relevant for the situation in El Salvador. The contribution of such a program to general democratic consolidation in the country may therefore be expected to be very high.

One question is how important the support to local democracy is perceived to be in El Salvador today. Opinion polls, and also the questionnaire used by PROCAP to establish development priorities, show very clearly that people’s two main concerns are employment and security. A local democracy program addresses neither of these directly. As one member of the local development committee in a poor rural municipality in Morazán expressed it, “there is too much democracy nowadays,” referring to what he – and undoubtedly people in general – sees as too much leniency toward criminals. This is often expressed as “too much human rights,” for criminals. But the same person, an ARENA voter, also expressed a strong support for the experiences in his municipality with citizen participation in decisions of crucial importance for the population, something he said had never occurred before in his long life.

The strategic question for Diakonia and its POs now is whether, and to what degree, they should continue to concentrate on the same kind of work in the next program period, or whether they should now start turning the focus elsewhere. The questions behind this are (i) whether the local democratic transition is sufficiently consolidated to survive on its own now, and (ii) whether complementary activities could make what has been achieved more sustainable. There seems to be agree-

²⁰ B.C.Smith 1998:86

²¹ *ibid.*

ment among the Salvadoran NGOs that this process is fragile, and that it would be too early to leave the responsibility to national government institutions (which would also use many of the same local NGOs as implementers). *The MT believes that there is still a considerable need for Swedish NGO support for the same purposes, even after the processes have become part of the national agenda. The recommendation is that it becomes more targeted (e.g. follow-up of plans, tax policy advice and other special competence functions), that it offers back-up support where official processes do not work, that national lobbying is reinforced, and that support functions such as local broadcasting and gender, be better integrated into the mainstream local democracy projects.*

At the same time, if the Diakonia program has the ambition to continue playing a pioneer role in the democratic transition and consolidation in El Salvador, it should start identifying new pioneer functions (ref. recommendation 5).

Before we leave the subject of local democracy, it seems that this program has focused on *direct democracy* as a supplement to the *representative local democracy*. There are some obvious weaknesses, or one could rather say missing links, in the representative local democracy in El Salvador which this program has failed to address. We will emphasize four:

- (i) the electoral monopoly of political parties, and the closed or blocked voting system whereby voter preferences for candidates may not be expressed on the ballot. Under this system, there is no role for civic committees to take actively part in the representative democracy.
- (ii) the lack of proportional representation in the municipal council, something which is unique for El Salvador,
- (iii) the “strong mayor” system (very similar to the “Presidential” system on national level, both very similar to the US system), which (along with point (ii) is weakening even more real and pluralistic debate in the representative municipal body,
- (iv) the role of political parties in new local democracies and how this may modify their democratic role even on national level.

All these are issues that require national political action and as such must be part of the national lobbying efforts. *The MT would recommend that more emphasis is given to the strengthening of local representative democracy in the national lobby work of the POs (ref. recommendation 5).*

The second question regarding issues for the future program, is whether the exclusion of human rights from the program can be justified, without forgetting what has been said elsewhere about the intimate relation between the promotion of democracy and human rights (see O'Neill Appendix IV and V). One of the arguments offered by Diakonia is that Sida has prioritized human rights in its El Salvador program. But even if that is the case, it could be argued that just as the POs' work is proving that expanding democratic space can be done extremely effectively at the local, community level, human rights monitoring, education, and protection can also be done well at the local level.

O'Neill has argued strongly for the inclusion of some of the issues affecting the daily lives, brought up by the MT in the Inception Report:

- Compliance by the National Civilian Police (PNC)
- the performance of justices of peace (*jueces de paz*)
- access to legal counselling

The MT is of the opinion that additional support along these lines would strengthen and sustain the results achieved in the field of democracy, not least when it comes to people's confidence in the program. Human rights protection in El Salvador has experienced a serious setback with recent

developments in the Ombudsman's office (*Procurador de los Derechos Humanos*.) If improvement is not seen in the short- to medium-term, attention should be given to making up for the gap in protection in El Salvador. The diminishing capacity in this office as well as the weakness of the NGO community has left holes in rights coverage, particularly relating to the still fragile administration of justice and police violations. Both these gaps relate directly to the perception among many Salvadorans that common crime is rising and that criminals' rights are favored over the rights of the victim. This has translated into a largely unwarranted backlash against the new criminal codes (a backlash encouraged in part by the very officials who should be protecting the rule of law). Concerns such as these could be addressed through public education and consciousness-raising around rule of law issues. *The MT recommends that an institution such as FESPAD be asked to identify potential local human rights activities to be included in the next program (ref. recommendation 5).*

In addition to human rights, *the next Diakonia program should also more systematically address what we term economic democratization. The search of FUNDE and others for alternative development models is one example of this, as is SACDEL's tax reform work. FUNDACAMPO-supported work with peasant cooperatives has not been assessed here, but would probably be of relevance. In addition, it should be considered whether the Local Development Committees, established through the participatory planning processes, could be involved in small-scale economic community activities, e.g. through a micro credit program. It is not a task for Diakonia to provide credit, but rather the modality. Among the Diakonia POs, it would seem that FUSAI is gaining interesting experience in this field (ref. recommendation 5).*

4.4 The adequacy of the results in relation to a consolidated democratic transition

We have concluded that Diakonia and its Salvadoran POs have been active partners in a historic process of local democratic transition in El Salvador. A successful *democratic trickle-down* of values and processes has taken place in the country, against the backdrop of centuries of military-oligarchic dominant structures and violence. Not least in the countryside, in small rural communities where this structure was rooted in the agricultural export economy, the transition has been remarkable. This suggests the question: what happened to the traditional power brokers? Has the traditional *patrón-client* relationship simply disappeared through civil war and peace agreements, or is it still present, though less visible? Or is it that the profound economic transition in the country and worldwide, with traditional agricultural export losing strategic importance, has opened the door for the political transition we are observing? (Ref. our reflections on a research design in Section 5.)

The main challenge now is how this *democratic trickle-down* can be expanded to the economic and human rights sphere. A further question is whether the penetration of these values at the local level may be gradually spreading to national politics, so that a *democratic trickle-up* effect may be brought about. The consolidation of the transition is not sustainable if limited to local political participation.

The real democratic value of the transition may also be discussed with reference to terms used by John A. Booth²² in his analysis of elections in Central America.

Range of political participation refers to whether the participation is limited to one or a few isolated events, or whether it is a continuous process, allowing people to be involved in a broader range of relevant activities. The idea with participatory planning processes, which lie at the root of at least some of the projects in this program, is precisely that people in local communities take part in the

²² John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson, 1989.

entire process, from analysis of the problem and solutions, via the setting of priorities to the implementation. The more comprehensive people's involvement in this process, the broader the range of their political participation.

Breadth of political participation is an expression of which fraction of the citizenry takes part. In our case, this will be different depending on whether we speak about open meetings (*cabildos abiertos*), Local Development Committees, participation in training etc. Judging on the basis of the figures provided by PROCAP, it is far from a dominant part of the population which takes part, but the figures are still impressive compared to comparable figures from Nordic countries, for example.

Depth of political participation is an expression of its quality, the extent to which it has real potential for influence, and the autonomy of participation (i.e. which real options are open to the citizens). Our impression is that those who take part in these processes have real influence on the planning and the setting of priorities. The search for consensus that seems to dominate may of course conceal underlying contradictions. Another problem is the limited resources available. But this is the classic political problem, *politics* often being defined as the struggle about and the distribution of scarce resources.

The next aspect is whether the process *occurred in an environment conducive to the free exercise of full participatory rights*. Examples mentioned are the free and equal opportunity to receive information, to speak on political issues, to vote (freedom from intimidation), absence of unfair advantages for particular minorities, mechanisms to redress grievances, losers' respect for winners right to rule and losers' right to continued participation. In order to say something qualified about this, one would have to follow the process closely. It is probable that traditional loyalties and power structures to a certain extent do exist in the rural communities, and that those who are being selected as leaders do not necessarily represent the entire hamlet or *canton*. But apparently, people taking part express that the level of freedom is very high.

The last of Booth's factors is *whether the process contributes toward a political culture of support for participation and democracy*. As stated throughout this discussion, this definitely seems to be the case.

In sum, our impression is that we are speaking about a significant degree of democratic participation in the processes promoted by this program. The success of this program, however, seems to be more the consequence of a good selection of POs (at least most of those assessed by the MT) and the excellent work carried out by these, than by Diakonia's own follow-up performance.

5. Other topics raised in the Terms-of-Reference

5.1 Selection of Partner Organizations and Projects

According to the staff, POs seek out Diakonia, which does no publicity or make any attempt to approach new partners. Several years ago when Diakonia decided to re-think its Central America program, POs and others were invited to give input on new directions and from this process the democracy and human rights focus emerged. For this reason, current funding priorities were well known leading to a self-selecting process. The MT was told that in El Salvador, most of the applications rejected fell outside the program focus, while in other countries such as Guatemala, many more applications were received and therefore tighter selection criteria may have been employed. No Salvadoran groups submitted proposals in the area of human rights, and consequently, no human rights projects were funded. Diakonia says its target group is people, not NGOs. It seeks POs with a democratic conviction and sign onto the Swedish notion of a popular movement (*“folk-rörelse”*).

All counterparts are first funded through the RÖF, which Diakonia staff see as a way to get to know a group better and test out its capacity to follow through on project commitments. Groups are typically funded for a specific event or smaller project and if that goes well, they then submit a “global” funding proposal which, if successful, is funded for one year with the understanding that it will be funded for a second year. During the RÖF period, which staff said could last two to three years, Diakonia starts “observing” the NGO, its transparency, how accounting systems work, their filing of reports, administrative capacity, etc. Diakonia seeks to identify institutional weaknesses which must be corrected before the NGO can become a PO. The MT was not apprised of any cases where corrective measures had been sought or made before PO status was achieved. Note also that some groups move from RÖF to PO status much more quickly, within a year.

The Regional Representative, Peter Ottosson, said the shift in Diakonia’s regional funding, from humanitarian relief to democracy and human rights was made by the last team. During the 1980s humanitarian aid was granted to the victims of the war, refugees, and displaced persons. Human rights work was more of an emergency nature, removing the vulnerable from harm’s way (*“sacando gente”*). He cited COMADRES²³ and aid through churches, particularly the Salvadoran Diaconía, which ceased to exist in the early 1990s. In his view, the Swedish Diakonia enjoyed respect among Salvadoran organizations because it had accompanied the Salvadoran people during the war. Ottosson candidly acknowledged that few questions were asked during that period.

Obviously, Diakonia has come a long way from the days described above, but perhaps not far enough. That is why we propose a more proactive role in the selection of partners and projects (*recommendation 5*). This approach would also no doubt reveal areas of overlapping and complementary work among their partners, current as well as new ones. For example, were the staff to develop a base of knowledge on human rights work and rights compliance in the country (a subject dealt with elsewhere), existing holes in the program would be brought to light as well as new ways in which human rights protection and education could complement and deepen the work with democracy at the local level.

²³ COMADRES, an organization of the mothers of political prisoners and the disappeared, was active during the 1980s.

5.2 Diakonia's Definition of a Partner Organization

One Diakonia staffer said a PO was an organization with which Diakonia had “mutual relations” that went beyond a pledge for funding. He said they had discussed project content with the group and confirmed that it shared Diakonia's criteria. “They must accept the criteria and pledge to implement it.” Diakonia's 1999 application to Sida for funding lists twelve criteria used to evaluate an organization and its workstyle:

- Holistic view of society and people
- Administrative capacity or the willingness to develop it
- Functioning internal democracy and a conscious gender policy
- Transparency and insight
- Willingness to cooperate
- Opportunities for the primary target group to influence the group's work
- Proactive reconciliation work
- Analytical and strategic capacity
- Work plan
- Willingness and ability to develop methods of work
- Participatory approach
- Does not make donations

A thorough examination of each partner in light of these criteria falls outside the scope of this mission. Yet in the view of the MT, all of these are appropriate criteria to consider in examining a potential partner and in monitoring its performance. In talking with the staff as well as POs, we gained the impression that the criteria are fluidly applied, and in some cases, selectively. Given that the selection of projects is largely passive – i.e., Diakonia funds what comes its way in democracy and local development work – an assessment of how well Diakonia meets its own partner criteria would only be meaningful if, for example, an applicant doing good work in the municipalities had been rejected because it had no “conscious gender policy.” We also question the extent to which Diakonia itself can answer whether its partners meet these standards, given the infrequency of field visits and substantive contact with NGO staff, a subject to which we will return later (ref. *recommendation* 7). The findings of such a process may suggest an issue of future concern: Just how interventionist does Diakonia want to be as a donor? To what extent does Diakonia want to actively foment professionalization and compliance in these areas? With greater knowledge of the PO, come greater chances to have an impact but also greater chances that the donor will step outside his appropriate role and become an actor in the life of the NGO.

Partner organizations were found to have only the most general notion of why they had been chosen to receive funding. Several said they shared with Diakonia a commitment to democratic values. One mentioned he felt more comfortable with Diakonia funding than with Sida funding because Diakonia was a fellow NGO. In general, Diakonia staff was considered friendly, flexible, and easy to approach. To the extent that the abovementioned criteria are applied, our sense is that partners are not aware that they are being examined in this light.

PO Influence on Diakonia decision-making: We were informed that in the period when Diakonia was rethinking its funding priorities, key counterparts and other strategic interlocutors were invited in to provide input. Some of the POs mentioned this favorably and were clearly pleased to have been consulted. From this period grew the Dialogue Group (*Grupo de Diálogo*), which

still meets intermittently to discuss a certain topic. The MT was told that part of the original thinking was to bring together Salvadorans who do not necessarily sit at the same table to help Diakonia define its role in the new period, but also to promote some dialogue among Salvadorans. Since current participants are all closely associated with Diakonia and in constant contact with one another, the Group's original rationale is perhaps not now relevant. *Diakonia would do well to consider new ways of soliciting substantive feedback and input to its work from POs and other appropriate interlocutors in El Salvador (ref. recommendation 7).*

Last year Diakonia published what it describes as a major policy statement for the organization worldwide: *Diakonia's policy: Aid to support equal value for all people*. In this statement, Diakonia names the Swedish public, media, and decision-making bodies among its secondary target group and describes its work in educating and conscious-raising on third world conditions and issues in Sweden.²⁴ In this work, Diakonia could make better use of its POs in the region. ARPAS and its affiliates, in particular, might make an important contribution.

5.3 Target Groups

The 1998 policy statement²⁵ describes the primary target group as persons in the South who are poor, oppressed and exposed to violence of different forms. The secondary target group is counterparts in the south and donors and churches in the north, plus elected officials and decision-makers in the north.

The 1999 application to Sida for the regional program lists as primary target groups:

1. socially and economically marginalized persons, including refugees
2. human rights victims
3. indigenous and ethnic minorities

Secondary target groups:

1. NGOs
2. Popular movements
3. Elected officials
4. Decision-makers

In light of the current sub-program and Diakonia's current priorities regionally, the question is whether elected officials and decision-makers deserve to be at the bottom of the secondary list. Would it not be more accurate to state directly that they are a primary target? Diakonia and its POs have quite rightfully identified lobbying and political work at the national level as major priority, and that should be stated explicitly.

It is the impression of the MT that target groups (ie, the primary ones) do not participate in designing and implementing the POs' activities. Each of the POs seems to have a standard approach and methodology to its work in the municipalities, differing in some ways from each other. Following this methodology, participants of course put the meat on the skeleton, brainstorming about

²⁴ Published in four languages, the Spanish version is entitled, "Política de Diakonia, cooperación para la promoción de la igualdad entre las personas." See p. 32

²⁵ "Diakonia's policy," p. 29. The relevant portion reads: "The primary target group consists of people in the South who are poor, oppressed and subject to different forms of violence [...] The secondary target group consists of [South:] partner organizations, [North:] financial contributors, church denominations, voters and decision-makers."

their communities' needs and problems and prioritizing projects and solutions found. Once projects have been defined, there are often ways in which participants can play a more active role in securing funding and acting in liaison with donors, or even more directly by donating manual labor. At this point, participation does not appear to have any resonance above the project level, but it certainly could be expanded to impact Diakonia's policies in general. One could perhaps envision Diakonia staff establishing contacts with some local people in the communities where their POs operate, visiting them from time to time to get feedback on the work. This could be part of a more constant monitoring process. They could solicit views on both the POs' work, national priorities, and what Diakonia ought to be doing.

5.4 Sustainability of the sub-program

Whether Diakonia is able to sustain the sub-program depends on one obvious factor – continued Sida funding – and secondly – on the strength of the regional office, an issue that will be dealt with in subsequent sections.

For the PO part of the sustainability of the sub-program, questions such as the following should be posed: are these groups seeking to diversify funding and generate own funds; can they manage themselves internally (avoid schisms, infighting, constant staff turnover); administer grants responsibly over the long term (not get into financial difficulty, overextend themselves, repeatedly go over budget, provide proper accounting); do they achieve recognizable results and are they recognized in the community as making a positive contribution; can they point to concrete progress, e.g., a greater number of municipalities with a local development committee and a local development plan, or for example, in ARPAS' case, legalization for all the affiliates?

Is there sustainability? Several of the groups mentioned they were exploring schemes to generate funds (FUNDE, SACDEL, and ARPAS). Some already sell consulting services (FUNDE and SACDEL). With one exception, the POs examined seem to have adequate funding and an adequate number of funders. PROCAP has been too reliant on three large Nordic donors (Diakonia, PRODECA, and NORAD), all of which indicated an intention to reduce their funding in roughly the same period. The influx of Nordic funds had allowed PROCAP to grow beyond what the management structure could bear and adjustments will be necessary in the next period if this PO is to remain sustainable. Donors and other observers feel Las Dignas has also grown too large and trying to do too many things, a problem of which the women are aware. Steps have been taken which should increase the sustainability of Las Dignas over the long haul.

Dignas is in the privileged position of having a large group of donors (28) and not overly dependent on any one of them. ARPAS gives the impression of meeting well the changing reality in its area of work. As the radio stations get stronger, they may be able to support ARPAS themselves; advertising sales should also increase. FUNDAUNGO mentioned the importance of making better use of in-kind donations. Given Salvadoran realities and the nature of the work, foreign funding will be necessary in the short to medium term. In this next period the goal should be to minimize risks by diversifying donors and sound financial planning and management. Secondly, to actively explore ways to generate income, a process that is just beginning. In the long run, sustainability hinges on whether El Salvador develops a philanthropic base, something which is also in its incipient phases.

Worth mentioning in this context are the other funders and actors working in the municipalities, some in participatory planning processes, and in some cases in conjunction with members of the Network on Local Development. USAID through its contractor, the Research Triangle Institute

(RTI), awarded contracts to several Network members to do the same work in municipalities they were doing with Diakonia funding. RTI focuses itself at this point on providing technical assistance to civil servants in the municipalities. ISDEM and COMURES are also working with communities on preparing local development plans, in some cases in collaboration with UNICEF or UNDP. Despite the number of organizations in the field, the demand far surpasses available resources and expertise, either in terms of funding or labor power. With 262 municipalities in the country, the majority are still sorely in need of professional assistance. And given that mayors and councils are only elected for a three-year term, every new municipal government may raise a new set of demands.

Another aspect of sustainability has to do with how an NGO chooses to manage itself. Has a real organization been built, or does the NGO survive almost exclusively on the energies of one strong individual or a tiny group? Long a challenge in Central American organizations, it has been raised in the course of this study in connection with Las Dignas and PROCAP. Asked about sustainability, our FUNDAUNGO interlocutors offered that the foundation has been attempting to institutionalize itself in each area of work. And the board of directors is now taking an active role in directing the organization rather than direction being provided by one executive director. Given that Diakonia names administrative capacity and a “functioning internal democracy” among its criteria for choosing a partner organization, its staff and its counterparts would do well to examine the work in this light, with an eye to its implications for sustainability over the long haul.

In the view of the MT, sustainability could be increased if objectives were re-defined. For example, Diakonia could name institutional strengthening a funding priority and make grants in this area. One could envision the provision of technical assistance by Diakonia in a variety of fields of relevance to an NGO, which would increase its sustainability. This may also include help in strategic planning processes, for example, helping Las Dignas reduce its agenda and focus on a few things it does well. The sustainability of the work and its desired impact (ie, greater professionalism in the municipalities and greater popular participation) would be increased by providing the groups with more high-level expertise. To our knowledge, the only expertise offered of late to the POs is a theologian-gender specialist scheduled to come to the region next September.

5.5 Cost Effectiveness of the projects and the program

Cost-effectiveness relates to two main aspects. One is project and program management, the other is project and program substance.

At the program level cost-effectiveness is closely linked to competence in program management, which is dealt with under 6.8. Management at the project level or competence of POs is not included in the scope of work of the MT.

As mentioned in the inception report this is an extremely difficult question to answer, and impossible to measure quantitatively. There is no help to be found in the objectives and no indicators are mentioned in the Diakonia documents. The assessment is therefore of a more general nature.

We may offer a couple of interesting examples of cost – effectiveness on the project level.

The first is based on PROCAP’s work with participatory local and municipal planning. In 1997 and 1998 alone, 81 local projects prepared with the assistance of PROCAP at a value of approximately 25 million *Colones* (23 million SEK; 2.8 million USD) have been implemented. Another 12 projects at a value of 2.6 million *Colones* have been approved for funding by the USAID. If this is compared with the total budget of PROCAP of 32 million SEK over the same two years, it is not a bad

achievement. It is obvious that numerous actors outside the control of PROCAP, and even more of the control of the Diakonia program, have been involved in these endeavours. It is not possible to establish an absolute relationship between PROCAP's support and the execution of the projects, but the link is quite clear. There is sufficient basis for considering this a quite impressive cost-effectiveness.

If we look back on the 1993 – 1998 period, projects at a total value of 133 million *Colones* have been prepared in Morazán and Chalatenango with PROCAP assistance, and the large majority of these have also been implemented. Compared to a total budget of somewhere between 50 and 100 *Colones* (we do not have the exact figure), this is not a bad quantitative and material output, something the people of these poor municipalities have seen as a practical result of participatory planning.

The second example is SACDEL's work with municipal taxes and fees. We limit ourselves to the case of the capital city, the municipality of San Salvador. If the proposals elaborated by SACDEL had been fully implemented, the additional income of the municipality would have been approximately 165 million *Colones*. Because of political resistance from the business sector, additional revenue will be approximately half that figure, but still a quite impressive figure and an increase of approximately one third of total revenue. 85 million in extra revenue is not bad, and the investment in this part of SACDEL's work is definitely negligible in comparison. If applied to other large urban municipalities around the country, the figure may be quite significant and make a serious difference in municipal finances and their capacity to finance local development.

Many of the projects are of a long-term nature, which makes it difficult or even counterproductive to claim rapid, measurable results.

At the program level selecting certain categories of projects or activities can improve cost-effectiveness:

- key activities: planning, proposals...
- pilot activities
- catalytic activities: lobby, advocacy...
- networking activities

Within the Diakonia program, examples of these kinds of activities can be found. However, cost-effectiveness aspects of the program have not been discussed in the Regional Office and does not enter the criteria for selecting PO (see 6.1 and 6.2).

Within the six NGOs forming the Local Development Network, Diakonia supports five. Several have more or less the same kind of activities, although mostly in different municipalities. POs could also be selected among or as close to the target group as possible. This approach could strengthen target group organizations and their infrastructure (ref. *recommendation 8*).

The head of one of the POs, when asked about the cost-effectiveness of the program, shared this reflection with the MT: "Cost-effectiveness is another side of 'added value,' whether it is profitable. If Diakonia were only a pass through, a recipient of money who just channels the money to the groups, then I would say get rid of it. You must go back to the qualitative aspects, not just the quantitative. To not just give money, but to accompany; not just act as a "fiscalizador", but to contribute. Sweden benefits, and El Salvador benefits."

The bottom-line question of cost-effectiveness is how much democracy the approximately 24 million SEK invested in El Salvador over these two years has produced. That is impossible to say.

We know that the situation for local democracy has changed dramatically over the last years. As late as 1994, a study concluded that citizen participation in local government was still extremely limited in El Salvador by comparison with the rest of Latin America.²⁶ And the prospect at that time did not seem very optimistic: “In the wake of the inconclusive outcome of the civil war, prospects for local government strengthening remain limited in the medium term”.²⁷ When we know how much better the situation is now as compared to these forecasts, and we also know that the Diakonia program has been a crucial source of support for the POs playing a lead role in local democracy strengthening in 30% of the country’s municipalities, a two-year investment of this magnitude seems to be highly cost-effective. This is particularly true if steps are taken in the next program to translate local democracy gains into a better national democratic consolidation.

5.6 Added value of Diakonia’s contribution

Diakonia emphasizes that its relationship to POs goes beyond a traditional donor-recipient relationship. It speaks of an “added value,” a contribution to its partners that is something more than a check in Swedish crowns. The MT posed specific questions to each of the seven POs with whom we spoke²⁸. Most were hard-pressed to come up with any additional kind of contribution. A couple of those interviewed mentioned the Dialogue Group, comprised of the directors of some POs and a few others who meet when invited for an exchange of views on a topic. The last such meeting dealt with the elections, and no future ones have been scheduled. Some participants said they found the discussions of little use and suspected their purpose was as much to educate Diakonia staff. In some countries, though not in El Salvador, Diakonia accountants have worked with POs to improve their accounting procedures. In reality, the MT found that the relationship bears little resemblance to anything other than a traditional donor-recipient relationship, while in some cases, it may be more of a relationship among peers who share values. One PO said his relationship was based on the fact that he shared with Diakonia “the Swedish perception”, though felt that there could and should be a lot more to it. Another said it was clear in meetings with Diakonia that they shared “values in democracy, gender, youth, human rights, and new forms of rights.”

While stating that he had more harmonious relations with Diakonia than he had with some other donors, one interlocutor said that his organization had yet to establish a relationship with “Sweden as a country.” He clearly found such a relationship very desirable and useful to the PO. Several POs interviewed mentioned their interest in learning about institutions, experiences, and relevant models in Sweden. Mentioned were: the Swedish experience with municipal autonomy and the division of authority and responsibility between the central and local governments; the human rights ombudsman; Swedish media; the role of the Central Bank; fiscal policy; and local tax structures, among others.

The Director of Diakonia, asked about the ‘added value’ concept, emphasized another aspect to which Diakonia is very eager to pay more attention: what he refers to as “the Swedish dimension” of the collaboration, i.e. lobby work done by Diakonia along with like-minded organizations on global North-South issues, with the Swedish government, the EU, the World Bank, etc.

²⁶ Murphy et al.:13

²⁷ Nickson, 1995:182 (Chapter 18 on El Salvador)

²⁸ In addition to the six POs assessed, we also interviewed FUSAI.

It is clear that Diakonia's partners would like a more substantive relationship with the organization and for it to serve as a conduit for the expertise and resources that Sweden has to offer. This could take many forms, among them: internships for Salvadorans in Sweden; professional exchanges; study trips; financing of appropriate exchanges and consultancies for experts from other countries in the south; facilitating linkages to the Latin America institute at the University of Stockholm and to the Swedish association of municipalities (important in particular for the Network on Local Development).

Also worth mentioning in connection with "added values" is Diakonia's institutional support. Diakonia refers to their grants as "global support," which goes beyond project-linked funding. Elsewhere this might be called "overhead," in that a portion of the grant may be used for operating expenses or even purchase of equipment. Most NGOs interviewed raised this as an extremely positive aspect of Diakonia funding. Two interviewed remarked that without this kind of commitment and flexibility on Diakonia's part, their organizations would not have existed. One remarked that it indicated an interest in the longevity of the NGO, provided stability, and the sense that 'we're in this together.' He observed that "when grants are project-linked, there is more insecurity."

5.7 Relation to Sida's action plans

Diakonia has been faithful to Sida's action plans in the appropriate areas, and Sida has expressed its approval of Diakonia's choice to focus primarily on democracy-related projects in El Salvador (ref., though, O'Neill's reflections on the relative similarity between these two areas in a context like El Salvador, in Appendices IV and V). In the view of the MT, the only area that suggests re-consideration is "gender" (see Appendix VIII for some reflections on Sida's gender policy).

In discussing Diakonia's attitudes toward gender, Dignas staff say that when they first were invited by the agency to provide input on funding and programmatic priorities they noted that "gender was very marginalized in their policy." Dignas raised these concerns and by 1997, felt they had been absorbed and a "change in attitude" was noted. And in fact, Diakonia has taken several steps to both educate its own staff and to raise the issue among its POs. While the MT is not privy to the content of these activities, we were told of "gender training" provided to the POs as a group in Diakonia offices, of instruction for the Swedish staff at the Teologiska Högskolan this summer, and of a Swedish expert on theology and gender who will visit the region in September. Diakonia also commissioned a study on the extent to which a "gender dimension" has been incorporated into the work of its POs.²⁹ Both the consultants who prepared the study and Dignas praise Diakonia for pushing the issue. Reinforcing the belief that there is no shared understanding or acceptance of what is implied by a "gender perspective," the study lays out with its conceptual framework: "Gender is understood as a social category that transcends biological differences between the sexes and concentrates on differences and inequalities in the roles of men and women for reasons related to the socio-economic context, historical and political conditions, cultural and religious patterns of different societies in which they interact. While sexual differences are biological and immutable, those of gender are diverse and transformable according to the specific development of each society."³⁰

²⁹ Patricia Lindo y Celia Aguilar, "La dimensión de género en las organizaciones contrapartes de Diakonia en Centroamérica, Sistematización," Nicaragua, enero 1998.

³⁰ Fabiolla Campillo and Maria Angelica Faune, "Género, mujer y desarrollo: marco para la acción del ICCA en América Latina y el Caribe," Instituto Interamericano de Cooperación para la Agricultura. Programa de Organización para el Desarrollo Rural, 1993, p. 11. MT's own translation.

Stated more directly, this notion of gender is based on the belief that the only differences between men and women with which we are born are sexual. All others are learned behavior. This understanding of a gender perspective has gained a certain following in Central America, particularly in the early years of the women's movement. Most notably it was put forward by the Costa Rican attorney Alda Facio in her 1992 work, *Cuando el género suena, cambio trae (When Gender Sounds, Change Follows)*. Despite its dissemination, this notion of gender remains controversial and by no means generally accepted (ref. *recommendation 3*).

5.8 Competence in Program Management

In the last several years Diakonia has gone through a process of narrowing and honing its thematic focus. From wartime when it sought simply to alleviate suffering, it now seeks to expand democratic space in El Salvador. And within that, it has chosen to focus on promoting broad popular participation at the local level while trying to influence national policies through lobbying and policy work among politicians, elected officials, civil servants, and other policy-makers and decision-makers. While this narrowing of the agenda is entirely appropriate and to be commended, it should also be recognized that this new approach demands new working methods and new expertise in order to respond adequately to this greater level of sophistication. In our view, neither Diakonia in Stockholm nor San Salvador has made the necessary changes, though in some areas, changes are in the works.

The staff in San Salvador includes five Swedish program officers, one of whom also serves as "Regional Representative"; and nine Salvadoran staff members: two program assistants, one accountant, one administrator, a receptionist; and four additional support persons. At a retreat in March, the staff drew up the first real job descriptions. In the absence of clear distribution and definition of responsibilities and authorities, difficulties have arisen. The Regional Representative in fact alluded to tensions among the staff caused in part by this lack of clarity. Recognizing the problem, the regional office is to be commended for taking steps to correct it (ref. *recommendation 9*).

Diakonia recently advertised for a new staffer in its Bolivia office. A newspaper announcement shared with the MT listed the following qualifications:

- Proven administrative experience and good computer skills (Word-Excel);
- Knowledge of the region;
- Experience working in an area of conflict and proven knowledge of human rights and humanitarian law;
- Experience in project work in the areas of human rights and democracy;
- Sound knowledge of the work of the "Free churches" in Sweden as well as abroad;
- written and oral facility in Swedish, Spanish, and English;
- University degree.

The current staff does not uniformly meet these qualifications. Only the regional coordinator and one program officer had worked previously in Central America. There is limited work experience and knowledge of issues related to human rights and democracy. Not all had an adequate command of Spanish, something that was noted by several POs. The Regional Representative, with long-term experience within Diakonia, had experience in project management, and one other staffer had more limited project experience. We should add that these are a very particular set of skills and experiences, and the recruitment pool in Sweden is undoubtedly limited.

Four of the new staffers for the regional office have longtime experience in Central America and several have significant project experience. Staff spoke highly of the instruction offered at the Theological College in Sweden in areas such as minorities and human rights, local democracy and popular participation, and gender. While providing staff opportunities for continuing education is commendable, it does not substitute for sound prior professional experience in Diakonia's chosen area of focus (ref. *recommendation 9*).

As far as we understand, the structure of the Regional Office is under review, both regarding the functions of the head of this unit (it is not realistic to think that a coordinator can have country responsibilities while providing professional, substantive direction to the work and the staff) and the follow-up capacity in each country. The MT has made some recommendations in this regard (ref. *recommendation 9*).

Diakonia staff members in San Salvador admit they have been overwhelmed of late because of the extra burden of work caused by Mitch and its aftermath and by staff shortages. While we understand that Diakonia launched into relief efforts at the urging of its POs and out of humanitarian concerns, more careful thought must be given in the future to how best to respond to such emergency situations and their impact on day-to-day work. It is clear to the MT, and clear as well to some counterparts, that the extra paperwork caused by Mitch (in particular arduous procedures required by the EU, new to both staff and POs), has hurt the organization's efficiency as well as its ability to adequately monitor project implementation and finalize grants for 1999. Two extra Mitch-related staff members have been promised, and are long overdue. While responding to a crisis like Mitch is admirable, if an organization is not solid and well functioning to start with the extra work can trigger a tailspin from which it can be hard to recover.

Most POs mentioned Diakonia's quick staff turnover as a problem. Staff members generally stay only two years; we were told that this could in part be explained by the Swedish custom of granting a maximum of two years' leave of absence from staff positions. Given that many staffers are new to the region and to the work, it is obvious that a considerable share of their stay is spent on learning the job and the country, leaving too little time for really performing well (ref. *recommendation 9*). Diakonia says it aims to act as a "bridge between sectors in Salvadoran society." Certainly desirable and often necessary, this would assume that Diakonia staff become actors of a sort themselves, much closer to being El Salvador "insiders." One PO observed that the staff "did not know the political map of El Salvador" and that there was currently no qualified feedback on the substance of the work. Another mentioned that Diakonia's interlocutors are largely its POs and other NGOs.

The MT observed that there is little donor coordination in El Salvador today. Raising the issue, one PO even observed that "There is no cooperation among the donors. They always ask the third world to cooperate and coordinate, but they don't do it among themselves." One donor mentioned attempts to reach out to Diakonia, but found no interest (ref. *recommendation 10*).

We would like to mention one recent experience that illustrates the lack of adequate procedures in dealing with the counterparts. PROCAP, a PO of long-standing, was informed in late 1998, after plans had already been made for 1999, that Diakonia intended to dramatically cut its financial support for the new funding cycle. As a result, serious staff cuts were made and activities substantially reduced. Diakonia's cut came simultaneously with the cuts of PROCAP's two other main donors, NORAD and Prodeca, which had communicated their intentions, as well as their programmatic and administrative concerns, well in advance.

In explaining its decision, Diakonia cited what it viewed as an undemocratic leadership style within the organization, as well as unsatisfactory financial reporting. Recognizing that the financial re-

porting was unsatisfactory, PROCAP says it has improved its procedures and personnel. PROCAP leadership does not, however, acknowledge a lack of internal democracy.

Several other POs as well as other interlocutors praised PROCAP's work, especially its commitment to work in the smallest and poorest municipalities in Chalatenango and Morazán, both departments hardest hit by the war. In light of this, Diakonia's decision does not seem fully justified. It should also be said that PROCAP has been overfunded by the three Nordic donors for a long time. For its part, PROCAP has continued in the precarious position of building up a large staff and budget based exclusively on three donors. Both PROCAP and the donors must take responsibility for this situation. Some have also observed that PROCAP's work has been too all-encompassing, and that there is a lack of exit strategy, leaving the sustainability of the activities in danger.

From PROCAP's point of view, the funding reduction came as a very late and unwelcome surprise, and without adequate justification and dialogue. PROCAP found itself in a very difficult situation, and unable to live up to its commitments to the municipalities and civic organizations. In conversations with the MT, Diakonia staff acknowledged that errors were made and pledged to initiate a dialogue with PROCAP about future relations.

5.9 Diakonia's Monitoring of the Program and Assessment of Result

Reporting requirements include midterm and final financial reports, a final narrative report, and a final report by an outside auditor. Applications and budgets for 1997–1998 submitted by the POs vary in detail and quality, as do reports from 1997.

Judging from Diakonia's 1997 Annual Report (the 1998 Annual Report has not been made available to the MT), Diakonia seems to have been making very little systematic monitoring and assessment of the results obtained by the various POs. One thing is the decision to leave aside the use of the indicators spelled out in the applications (and these indicators were even repeated in the revised application for 1998). But in general, the Annual Report contains no critical assessment of the POs, the projects or the Program as such in relation to objectives. Judging from the one Annual Report we have seen, and from the rather limited knowledge about the El Salvador POs and projects at the RO, the MT is very much in doubt about Diakonia's monitoring policies.³¹

Regarding financial reports and audits, the RO during this period developed new standard formats for applications, budgets and agreements. Reports and most recent PO documents have improved overall. There is, however, room for improvement. These reports could e.g. be clearer in terms of total PO activities and the contributions of other donors. Diakonia accountants held workshops in 1998 on the new budget and application formats as well as the terms-of-reference for outside audits. The external auditors are chosen by the POs, who seem to view the process as a final control at the end of the grant period instead of an advisor on accounting procedures who could be of use throughout the process. To this end, it makes sense to contract the auditor at the outset of the grant period and for Diakonia to hold workshops for PO auditors in each country.

During 1997 and 1998, Diakonia and the San Salvador office have developed and improved several standard documents and other tools useful for explaining its philosophies, project management, and regional program coordination. The use of the Logical Framework Approach has been

³¹ It must be said that circumstances were quite unfortunate in the sense that the coordinator of the El Salvador sub-program had left the office right before the initiation of the MT mission, without being replaced until after the termination of the mission. Knowledge about this sub-program at that point was very scarce at the RO. Actually, it seemed the Stockholm-based Central America coordinator had much better knowledge of it than the RO staff.

introduced to the counterparts, with mixed results. A review of documentation shows that its implementation is so far inconsistent and incipient. Some POs dismissed it as “what’s in style now,” while others welcomed it as a help in defining projects and charting impact. One interlocutor said while it meant that Diakonia was now less flexible in how it would accept proposals and reports, it had forced the staff to sit down and thoroughly discuss the program “because of the need to put it into the logical framework. It helped us to be more demanding,” while concluding that they could first really evaluate the framework’s utility once the cycle was over and they had evaluated the experience. FUNDAUNGO mentioned ongoing methodological work in conjunction with Diakonia which should help them better define appropriate indicators.

Diakonia’s monitoring capacity has also been limited by too infrequent field visits (ref. recommendation 12).

5.10 Organizational Learning and Evaluations

Diakonia has been experiencing a period of evaluation, growth, and change, some of it self-initiated and directed, while other efforts came from the outside. Among these external ones is the December 1998 study prepared by Ohrlings Coopers & Lybrand entitled “*Styrning och kontroll inom Diakonia*,” which was commissioned by Sida. In 1996 the POs conducted an evaluation of Diakonia’s work. In the view of the MT, the regional office has absorbed the observations and recommendations made in these studies and has taken steps at correction and improvement. The NGOs, for example, recommended greater integration of the Salvadoran staff in weekly meetings. As a result, the meetings are now conducted in Spanish instead of Swedish, with Salvadoran participation. Likewise it was suggested that a permanent training program be established for staff “concerning Diakonia’s strategic themes.” As mentioned above, such training does now occur, though primarily in Sweden in Swedish. One exception was a three-day seminar on human rights offered by the Inter-American Institute on Human Rights in San José, Costa Rica. Salvadorian staff members as well as Diakonia colleagues from the Bolivia office participated.

A Sida consultant who worked with the RO on indicators last fall recognized the lack of rigor in the use of indicators³², something that Diakonia continues to refine. In our view, there is a will to seriously consider and implement when appropriate the many suggestions that have come out of these missions.

In the wake of other evaluations and communication problems between Sida and Diakonia, we found the staff frustrated about the timing and organization of our mission. As a result, we experienced some communication and coordination problems at the outset of our work. These were addressed and satisfactorily settled, in our view, and subsequent collaboration was good.

³² Ref. Holmquist, op.cit.

6. Recommendations

In the following, we present the MT's recommendations, in each case with reference to the relevant sections of the Report.

1. Coordination and division-of-labor among the POs supporting municipal governments and local civic groups in participatory planning of local development should be revised, but these POs should by and large continue to be supported in the next program (sections 3.1. – 3.4.)
2. ARPAS, the association of community broadcasters, and the Diakonia POs involved in local political participation should actively coordinate work among them so that ongoing work in local democracy may find a mouthpiece in community broadcasting. Thinking of ARPAS' untapped potential in the field of popular education, Diakonia should encourage active collaboration between ARPAS and *Equipo Maíz* (ref. sections 3.5. and 3.7.).
3. Funding decisions in the gender area should be re-examined. While recognizing that Salvadoran society is such that basic consciousness-raising and corrective measures geared toward women are necessary, the MT shares the preference of Sida and Diakonia that steps to promote equality between men and women be reflected in all activities, what Sida has called a “mainstreaming” approach. A better integration of gender issues in the work with local participatory democracy may be better achieved in different ways than through *Las Dignas* (ref. section 3.6.). In the absence of a consensus on the content of a “gender analysis,” the MT suggests adopting the more straightforward formulation of the goal to promote equality between men and women (ref. section 6.7. and Appendix VIII).
4. Regarding relations between Diakonia's and Sida's respective D&HR programs in Central America/El Salvador, the MT recommends (i) that better coordination is established between the two, aiming at complementing each other; (ii) that Swedish historical and contemporary experiences in local democracy are actively exposed to interested Salvadoran institutions, by Sida or Diakonia, depending on the circumstances. Diakonia might need to hire special consultants for the purpose of fulfilling this recommendation (ref. section 4.2.).
5. The local democracy processes supported in this program are still fragile and in need of support also in the next Diakonia program. The recommendation is that it becomes more targeted and that support functions be better integrated into the mainstream local democracy projects. National lobbying should be reinforced, particularly with the aim of addressing the most obvious weaknesses in El Salvador's representative democracy at the local level. But new pioneer functions should be considered in the next program, such as local human rights activities and economic democratization (ref. section 4.3.).
6. The MT recommends that Sida (directly or through Diakonia) establish a contract with a local political research institution (like FLACSO, e.g.), to monitor the process of widening and deepening local democracy in El Salvador by applying a wider research design, and with the participation of political scientists and anthropologists. A Swedish/Nordic research institution should also become involved in this, and offer post-graduate students to do research on the subject (ref. section 5).

7. In the view of the MT, the program would benefit from further refinement of the process in which partners and projects are selected. Results of the program could be improved if Diakonia took a more proactive approach to identifying and seeking out new POs as well as new linkages with individuals and groups in a position to contribute to the substance of the work (ref. section 6.1.). Diakonia should also conduct a review of its partners with a critical reference to its own evaluation criteria of POs (ref. section 6.2.).
8. From a cost-effectiveness point of view, there seems to be a case for better coordination and division of labor between the Network POs. Another way of improving cost-effectiveness is to select POs among or as close to the target group as possible. This approach also strengthens target group organizations and their infrastructure. In the context of local democratization and strengthening of local government, it seems to be a good decision by Diakonia to include COMURES among its POs, and this may warrant a gradual reduction of support to the traditional municipal work carried out by the Network organizations (ref. section 6.5.).
9. Regarding future recruitment of appropriate staff for program management, Diakonia would do well to look for persons with substantive professional experience in local development, leadership training, participatory processes, municipal management, project management, conflict resolution, and human rights in a third world context. At any given time there should be a mix of these areas of expertise among permanent and ad hoc support staff, so that informed, qualified funding decisions can be made. In the future, the regional office and in particular, its coordinator, should play an active role in recruitment, which currently is handled almost exclusively in Stockholm. Furthermore, the MT recommends that the new job descriptions be re-examined in six months' time to see whether they are still valid in light of the new team and new period in the life of the office. As Diakonia secures more experienced staff members, they should be encouraged to make a longer time commitment. A policy of staggered rotations should also be implemented so that the entire staff does not change at once (ref. section 6.8.).
10. Such strengthening of the professional capacity of the staff is necessary even for the purpose of offering an "added value" in its relations with the POs and society at large, together with a more active attempt to reach out more to other sectors and actors. One such "added value" would be to contribute more to donor coordination. The MT recommends that the regional office raise this issue and establish the necessary contacts, particularly with other donors in its chosen field (ref. sections 6.6. and 6.8.).
11. While reviewing the structure of the Regional Office, Diakonia is considering hiring local consultants in each country, which the MT endorses. The MT recommends that Diakonia firmly embrace the notion of a Regional Representative, and make that position full time. While the details of the NGOs and projects are the responsibility of the country representative, the Regional Representative must command a basic knowledge of all POs in the region and their work (ref. section 6.8.).
12. Honing the indicators and closely monitoring compliance is a form of rigor that should prove useful to both Diakonia and its partners. There is a need for more substantive feedback and discussion around the reports and methodologies employed, which several POs said they would welcome. The MT strongly recommends more frequent field visits by the Diakonia staff, a call made by all counterparts interviewed. Only by knowing and understanding the substance of the work can Diakonia staff become qualified interlocutors for their partners (ref. section 6.9.).

7. Lessons learned

Six lessons of wider relevance may be drawn from this study:

- (i) Democratic transition and consolidation in countries with a recent dictatorial and violent past, and with weak national democratic structures, may often stand a better chance for success on the local than on the national level. Additionally, local democracies seem to be a necessary condition for the consolidation of national democracies in countries undergoing a transition process. Democratization as a bottom-up process, through people's direct participation in the planning of their own community development, may i.a. have a significant impact on the way the political parties are relating to voters and thereby provide them with an opportunity to eke out a more sustainable role in national democracies.
- (ii) The traditional distinction between human rights and democracy projects is often artificial and dysfunctional. Particularly on the local level, the two concerns should be approached in an integral manner, in order to take advantage of the synergy potential rather than building different donor structures for what in many cases are the same purposes.
- (iii) Local democracy building will in practice often be approached through projects dealing with the parallel strengthening of civil society and municipal government and administration. The latter area, which often requires good lobby capacity on national decision-making, implies increased municipal autonomy through the decentralization of responsibilities, and a parallel strengthening of municipal finances through state transfer and/or direct municipal taxation. In addition to direct democratic participation of the civil society and the technical and financial strengthening of municipal government, local democracy also depends on a strengthening of its *representative* dimension.
- (iv) Although government and NGO donors want to maintain independence and distance from each other, there seems to be a case for better Swedish donor coordination when Sida and a Swedish NGO are implementing each their D&HR programs in the same region (Central America) and country (El Salvador). There is reason to believe that such coordination would promote more complementary roles, and prevent overlapping actions, between two parallel programs financed by Swedish taxpayers.
- (v) To measure the impact of a democracy program, a set of conditions must be in place from the outset of the program. Baseline information must be elaborated, measurable and valid indicators must be agreed upon between donor and project executor, and monitoring must be undertaken in cooperation with research institutions combining theoretical, historical-cultural insight and sound empirical studies, e.g. in a joint effort by political scientists and anthropologists.
- (vi) The sustainability of such programs, and peoples' motivation for democratic participation, depend largely on the material outcome of the participatory planning processes that lie at the core of the projects. Whereas donors may consider *democracy* to be the very objective, perceiving community development projects only as means to reach that goal, the local population itself will normally perceive means and ends in the contrary direction. Community project implementation will therefore often be a *sine qua non* for the success of local democracy programs. The balancing act between donor dependency and clientelism, and the state's take-over of financial responsibilities, is one of the challenges in local democracy-building.

Appendix I

Terms of Reference

RELA 1998-09-28

Ulrika Hjertstrand

Diarienummer:

RELA-1998-3603

Terms of reference for the qualified monitoring mission of the diakonia programme for democracy and hr in central america, 1997-1998, the salvador case

1 Background

1.1 DIAKONIA's Cooperation in Central America

DIAKONIA is a Swedish non-governmental christian organisation cooperating with a large number of organisations all over the world. Sida has supported DIAKONIA's Central American Programme since the early eighties. The ongoing programme, which is covering the period 1 January 1997 to 31 December 1998, is organised in five sub-programmes (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Regional Sub-programme and Thematic Regional Sub-programme). Within this framework DIAKONIA supports projects carried out by nearly forty Central American partner organisations. (In most cases Swedish support is directed to only one of the partner organisation's project. The project is generally containing several activities though.)

Along the support to the defined 38 partners, the programme contains five programme items, which have no specific partner organisation determined, neither in the budget proposal nor in the agreement with Sida. These items have the character of flexible funds with specified objectives and do normally contain more than one project. Partner organisations are involved in activities funded by these programme items whenever DIAKONIA finds it relevant and at any time during the programme period. DIAKONIA also uses this mechanism for trying new areas of cooperation and new partners.

1.2 Swedish Governmental Support to the Programme

The total budget for the projects belonging to the DIAKONIA Central American Programme 1997-1998 amounts to approximately

MSEK 240. The partner organisations themselves and other donors are covering two thirds of this budget. Sida is supporting 100 % of DIAKONIA's financial contribution to the projects. The Swedish contribution amounts to nearly MSEK 80 or approximately 30% of the total budget for the projects.

1.3 Sida and DIAKONIA – History of Cooperation in Central America

During the eighties and early nineties, Sida considered DIAKONIA as an appropriate partner organisation for humanitarian support in those areas in Latin America, where armed conflicts and human rights' abuses occurred as common elements of the every day life. Since these days, DIAKONIA has had a favourable reputation in Latin America. It is well-known for its ability to establish contacts with serious, hard working and intellectual counter partners representing a broad range of political interests. DIAKONIA's has also been known for its competence to carry out politically complex analyses and for its sensitivity, by which it used these analyses in the humanitarian context. Sida has been following this work of DIAKONIA's from the embassies in the region very closely.

1.4 Post-conflict Epoch – New Focus

In the post-conflict epoch, into which the Central American countries have entered one after the other beginning with Nicaragua in 1990, DIAKONIA has changed its focus (from humanitarian oriented cooperation) towards peace-building by consolidation of the human rights and democracy processes. These processes are presently capturing the Central American states on local, departmental, national and regional levels involving parties from the state as well as from the civil society. As a result of this change of focus, DIAKONIA has defined new criteria for its election of partner organisations (related to the new objectives). During 1997, DIAKONIA has furthermore elaborated an overall policy defining the mission of the organisation in the view of the globalisation. The organisation is now presenting itself as a declared human rights and democracy promoter.

2 Purpose and scope of the monitoring mission

2.1 Why is the Programme to be Monitored and why Now?

Background:

- a. Sida is committed to carefully monitor the results of DIAKONIA's Central American Programme in accordance with decision Sida GD 21/97 dated 10 February 1997, in which Sida also decided to allow support for the period 1997-1998. 31 October 1998 DIAKONIA intends to present an application for governmental support to the Central American Programme for 1999. 30 April 1999 DIAKONIA will present another application covering the period 2000-2002. The results of the planned qualified monitoring mission will serve as in-puts to Sida's consideration of DIAKONIA's three-year-application.
- b. Sida is interested in whether DIAKONIA and its partner organisations have adopted the projects to the partially new environment, which the redefinition of the objectives has brought along. It is assumed that the focus change has resulted in a reassessment of the project objectives as well as of the actual stock of local counter partners. Some organisations might have terminated their cooperation with DIAKONIA whereas others have gone through a rather painful adjustment process. New counter partners with an outspoken democracy focus might also have joined the programme in recent years. The focus and professionalism of the partner organisations are, no doubt, decisive factors for the accomplishment of DIAKONIA's goals and in the end for the results of DIAKONIA's undertakings in its relation to Sida.

- c. Since 1997 DIAKONIA and Sidas Department for Latin America are engaged in an in-depth dialogue on defining new instruments for planning and reporting on programme results. The qualified monitoring mission is supposed to contribute to this process.

2.2 Scope

The qualified monitoring mission is supposed to be carried out as a case study of the El Salvador sub-programme. The following criteria were defined to guide the selection of an adequate entity for evaluation:

An entity was searched which

- is representative for the DIAKONIA's work in Central America in relation to the objectives and themes defined;
- is reasonably large and accordingly could provide a broad selection of results;
- has elements coloured by post-conflict processes and therefore is representative for the focus shift DIAKONIA has undertaken. Results related to post-conflict work for democracy and respect for human rights might also contribute to methodology development.

It was soon decided that a sub-programme ought to be the entity, which could provide the broadest range of objectives and themes within a limited political framework. The El Salvador sub-programme has the advantage of having its eleven partner organisations and their projects geographically concentrated. The objectives and themes have the essential features of the Central American Programme as a whole. The size of the sub-programme is considered to be manageable for a study of this length. The El Salvador sub-programme is also said to have redefined its focus shift *before* the programme period started. Accordingly, some post-conflict processes have most likely affected the results. The results occurring from the analysis of achievements can, of course, only provide facts related to the El Salvador-programme. However, Sida believes that the case study could be broad enough to provide a sufficient base for elaboration of analysis instruments useful for many democracy and HR programmes.

In addition to the projects belonging to the sub-programme, DIAKONIA has also tried to support three or four other projects carried out by counter partners in El Salvador during the period by using funds from the Regional Open Fund. By analysing the preconditions and results of these projects, features of the mechanisms for identification of new partner organisations could be exposed. This would add special dimension to the DIAKONIA El Salvador cooperation.

DELPROGRAM, SAMARBETSPARTER OCH VERKSAMHETS- OMRÅDEN	Svenskt stöd 1995/96	Svenskt stöd 1996 (6 mån)	Totala projekt- kostnader 1997	Svenskt stöd 1997 (svensk andel i % av totala kostnader)	Totala projekt- kostnader 1998	Svenskt stöd 1998 (svensk andel i % av totala kostnader)
EL SALVADOR	(TSEK)	(TSEK)	(TSEK)	(TSEK)	(TSEK)	(TSEK)
FUNDE Utredningscenter för sociala & ekon. frågor			3 997	650 (16 %)	4 379	650 (15 %)
ARPAS Förenar ideella radiostationer f dem utv			525	450 (86 %)	525	400 (76 %)
LAS DIGNAS Jämst-org m inflytande på makropol			8 956	300 (3 %)	8 860	400 (5 %)
FUMA Hälsoorganisat m inriktn på utbildn & dem	800	300	1 085	700 (65 %)	727	600 (83 %)
SJDPA Jesuitorganisat m integr av flyktingåtervänd	640		1 480	680 (46 %)	1 629	700 (43 %)
FUSAI Återv uppbyggn & utbildn f integr marg grup	1 500		2 082	1 700 (82 %)	5 726	5 200 (91 %)
EQUIPO MAIZ Folkbildning, jämsällhetsutbildning	400		1 859	450 (24 %)	1 986	450 (23 %)
PROCAP Lokal utveckl; kommuner & lokalbefolkn.	4 752		16 187	3 000 (19 %)	16 187	2 500 (15 %)
FUNDACAMPO Ledarskap i jordbruksrörelsen			590	370 (63 %)	611	380 (62 %)
FUNDAUNGO Utbildning & rådgiv dem; kommun, org			2 750	350 (13 %)	2 869	350 (12 %)
CELCADEL/SACDEL Kommunal utveckling			270	240 (89 %)	1 588	1 570 (99 %)
TOTALT			39 781	8 890 (22 %)	45 087	13 200 (29 %)

2.3 Purpose – Sida's Expectations of the Monitoring Mission

Step one:

Sida is interested in

- a *systematisation* of the results obtained from the activities, which have taken place during the period 1 January 1997 – 31 December 1998, within the framework of DIAKONIA's El Salvador Programme (i.e. sub-programme and relevant projects within the framework of the Regional Open Fund).

Step two:

Sida is furthermore interested in

- an *analysis* of the results as above. The analysis is supposed to provide
- instruments for assessment of results related to projects with the overall objective of supporting democracy, human rights and conflict management processes;
- instruments (methodological advice) for summarising gained results on project level and present them as results on programme level.

3 The assignment

3.1 Main Question to be Covered

Which are the results of the activities already carried out and supported by DIAKONIA in 1997-1998 the El Salvador Programme?

3.2 Relevance and Achievement of Objectives

- Which results have been achieved?* In relation to presented objectives? Are there other results which are not to be related to the objectives?
- How adequate are the results*
 - *in relation to the objectives* presented by DIAKONIA in the application (dated 17 October 1996) for the ongoing programme?
 - in relation to the objectives for the Swedish development cooperation as these objectives are being presented in the regional strategy for Central America (1997-2001) as well as in the Sida Directives (dated 25 September 1996) for the ongoing programme period?
 - in relation to the developments in El Salvador?
- How is the *selection process* affecting the results of the programme? Which criteria are being used for the selection of partner organisations? And which criteria are being used for the selection of projects? Is there a logic in the selection process?

- d. What is DIAKONIA's definition of a *partner organisation*? How is this kind of partnership considered/appreciated by the eleven partner organisations? Which advantages/disadvantages might this cooperation method have to a strict donor-recipient partnership? Furthermore, are the considerations of the partner organisations allowed to influence DIAKONIA's decision making? If so, how?
- e. Which are the *target groups*? And in what way do they *participate* in the design and implementation of the activities? Is their participation also essential for other levels of the sub-programme than the project level? If so, how?
- f. How could *sustainability* be defined in relation to this sub-programme? On the level of project, for target groups, for the partner organisations or for activities carried out by other societal organisations? Is there a sustainability? Could it be increased by redefining the objectives?
- g. What could be said about *cost-effectiveness* of the projects and the sub-programme as a whole?
- h. Which is the *added value of DIAKONIA's own contribution* to the projects? Which role does DIAKONIA play (except the financier's)? Is this contribution clearly defined?
- i. How is the message of *Sida's action plan's* (for gender, poverty alleviation and for democracy, human rights and conflict management) as well as *DIAKONIA's own policy* affecting the plans and results of the activities? (Although these documents might not have been used as such, the policies they are representing have been part of the Swedish cooperation policy since the programme started.)

3.3 Implementation and Methodology

- a. Which *competence* is required for managing the projects, the partner organisations as well as for coordinating the sub-programme at the regional office? Is the existing competence adequate, enough? Sustainable? What would be required for improving the competence?
- b. In which way is DIAKONIA *monitoring* the programme activities? Which are the formal requirements for this monitoring task? Could the task be improved and the results better, if these requirements were somewhat different? How?
- c. How does DIAKONIA *assess the results*? How far has DIAKONIA reached in their efforts to defining relevant indicators of results?
- d. How is the *organisational learning* guaranteed within the partner organisations and DIAKONIA? How might these processes be improved.
- e. How is DIAKONIA *dealing with evaluations*? Advantages and problems?

4 Methodology, evaluation team, time schedule

4.1 Organisation of the Assignment and Methods

The assignment will require approximately five weeks job for three full-time experts with different backgrounds. Approximately three and a half weeks are supposed to be spent in El Salvador (preferably after the local holidays in February. A composition of two professionals carrying out the mission during a somewhat longer period or four officers during a shorter period might be considered as alternatives.

Somewhat less than one week will be needed for preparations of the mission and at approximately one week will be required for report writing.

Formal and informal methods for data collections may be used complementary, although the focus shall be on formal methods.

4.2 Background Material

As background documents and base for analysis will at least the following document serve: DIAKONIA's application to Sida dated 17 October 1996, DIAKONIA's policy document (December 1997), Sida's memorandum regarding the DIAKONIA Central American Programme of 14 January 1997, the Swedish Regional Strategy for Central America (1997-2001), Sida's evaluation of DIAKONIA's South American Programme (1997), DIAKONIA's own evaluation of its cooperation in Central America (1996) as well as DIAKONIA's reporting submitted to Sida on development cooperation in San Salvador during the programme period.

4.3 Interviews

Interviews shall be held with all of DIAKONIA's partner organisations (in El Salvador), with project responsible personnel (if these differ from the partner organisation representatives) as well as with a selection of the target groups. Interviews shall also be held with the staff of DIAKONIA's regional office in San Salvador, DIAKONIA's regional secretary in Stockholm as well as representatives for Sida's cooperation with DIAKONIA.

All field visits shall preferably be attended by at least two professionals of the team.

4.4 Professional Requirements

The team shall consist of expertise with :

- Large experience in result oriented evaluation methods;
- Good knowledge of methodology (preferably evaluation methods and reporting mechanisms) related to development cooperation in the area of democracy and human rights.
- Good knowledge of political development in Central America;
- Experience in Swedish development cooperation;
- Experience in NGO related development cooperation;

Furthermore, shall all professionals also possess a very high level of read and spoken Spanish.

Merits:

- El Salvador experience.

5 Reporting

The report shall be written in Swedish or English and should not exceed 40 pages, excluding annexes. Format and outline of the report shall follow the guidelines in **Sida Evaluation Report – a Standardised Format** (see Annex 1). Three copies of the draft report shall be submitted to Sida no later than 20 March 1999. Within 2 weeks after receiving Sida's comments on the draft report, a final version in 3 copies and on diskette shall be submitted to Sida. Subject to decision by Sida, the report will be published and distributed as a publication within the Sida Evaluations series. The report shall be written in Word 6.0 for Windows (or in a compatible format) and should be presented in a way that enables publication without further editing.

The assignment includes the production of a Newsletter summary following the guidelines in **Sida Evaluations Newsletter ? Guidelines for Evaluation Managers and Consultants** (Annex 2) and also the completion of **Sida Evaluations Data Work Sheet** (Annex 3). The separate summary and a completed Data Work Sheet shall be submitted to Sida along with the (final) draft report.

Annexes 1, 2 and 3 are retrievable from ?Sida-mallar/Sida Evaluations.

The report shall also be presented to Sida in a seminar in Stockholm during March 1999.

Appendix II

Agenda of the monitoring team and persons met

1. Tina Lundh, Sida, Embassy of Sweden, Guatemala City, 20 January and 16 February, 1999
2. All POs and Diakonia RO Staff (Presentation of proposed methodology), 13 February
3. Peter Ottosson, Regional Representative for Central America, DIAKONIA, 23 February, 1 & 24 March
4. Oscar Antonio Perez, Executive Secretary, ARPAS, 24 February
5. Victor Antonio Orellana, Director, and Carlos Mauricio Rodriguez, Deputy Director, Program on Municipal Strengthening, FUNDAUNGO, 24 February
6. Alberto Enriquez Villacorta, Director for Regional and Local Development, FUNDE, 25 February & 12 April
7. Ernesto Barraza, Deputy Director, and Lorena Argueta, SACDEL, 25 February & 6 April
8. Guillermo Galvan, Executive Director, PROCAP, 26 February and 5 April
9. Elisabeth Hayek, Program Officer, UNDP, 26 February
10. Mercedes Umana, Executive Committee member; and Dilcia Marroquin, coordinator, Local Development, Las Dignas, 26 February
11. Office of the Mayor of San Salvador, Public presentation of the plan for citizen participation, 26 February
12. Enrique Sifontes and Rodolfo Perez, accountants, DIAKONIA, 1 March
13. Vilma Padilla, El Salvador Program Assistant, DIAKONIA, 1 March & 6 April
14. Emma Nilenfors and Dan Dahlberg, Representatives, DIAKONIA, 1 March
15. Carlos Roberto Pinto, Director; Jose Leonidas Rivera, Coordinator for Labor Policy and Investigation; and Margarita Alfaro, COMURES, 2 March
16. Helen Van Acker, gender specialist, UNDP, 2 March
17. Mauricio Aguilar, Executive Director, CODECOSTA, 2 March
18. Agents of the National Civilian Police, El Zamoran (Usulután) 3 March
19. Angel Arnaíz, parish priest, Nueva Esperanza Coop (Usulután) 3 March
20. Jose Ismael Romero, President, Nueva Esperanza Coop, 3 March
21. Rodrigo Salomon Montoya (FMLN) Mayor, Juquilsco (Usulután) 3 March
22. ARENA party activists, Juquilsco, 3 March
23. Mariano Brito Zepeda, parish priest, Nejapa (San Salvador), 4 March
24. Six City Council members, Nejapa, 4 March
25. ARENA party activists, Nejapa, 4 March
26. Samuel Antonio Lar, principal, Nejapa secondary school, 4 March
27. Hector Dada, Executive Director, FLACSO, 4 March
28. Florentin Melendez, National Director, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 4 March
29. Wolfgang Weinmann, (German) Bread for the World, 5 March

30. Bruno Moro, Resident Representative, UNDP, 5 March
31. Klaus Wolf, PRODECA, (telephone interview), 12 March
32. Leif Newman, International Coordinator, Ewa Widén, Central America Coordinator, Diakonia (telephone conference), 19 March
33. Marco Antonio Funes (PCN) Mayor, Olocuilta (La Paz); Julio Ramos Quinanilla, member City Council and of Local Development Committee; Silvia Arraniva, secretary, Local Development Committee, 23 March
34. Benjamin Anaya, SACDEL staff member, 23 March
35. Roberto Isael Perez and Luis Alfredo Campo, members of City Council and Local Development Committee, Juquilsco
36. Marta Rodriguez, Vice President, Local Development Committee (CODIJ), Juan Antonio Zavala, CODIJ president, Jiquilsco, 23 March
37. Ricardo Jose Guerra, ARENA businessman, Juquilsco, 23 March
38. Oscar Lopez, FUNDE staff member, 23 March
39. Armando Mancia Funes (PDC) Mayor, Puerto El Triunfo; Jose Emilio Flores, First City Council member; Julia de Flores, President, Local Development Committee; and other committee members, 23 March
40. Peter Ottoson, Head RO Diakonia, 24 March
41. Mauricio Silva, Executive Director, SACDEL, 24 March
42. Rodolfo Cardenal, Vice Rector, Universidad Centroamericana Jose Simeon Canas (UCA), 25 March
43. Morena Herrera, Executive Committee member, Las Dignas, 25 March
44. Adela Ortez del Cid (ARENA) Mayor, Cacaopera (Morazan) 26 March
45. Apolonario Hernandez (ARENA) Mayor, Corinto (Morazan) 26 March
46. Jorge, PROCAP staff member, 26 March
47. , member Local Development Committee, Corinto
48. Maria Eugenia B. de Avila, Coordinator Transition Team for President-elect Flores, 5 April
49. Luis Antonio Castillo Rivas, Director, FUSAI, 5 April
50. Deborah Kennedy-Iraheta, Coordinator, Program on Democratic Initiatives, USAID, 6 April
51. Benjamin Trabanino Llobell, President, FISDL, 6 April
52. Ewa Widen, Coordinator, Central America, DIAKONIA, and Peter Ottosson, 6 April
53. Francisco Diaz, Executive Director, and Rogelio Canales, Staff attorney, FESPAD, 6 April
54. Jose Gabriel Murillo (PDC), Mayor, Texistepeque (Santa Ana) 7 April
55. José Dario Hernández and Doris Díaz de Castro, members, Local Development Committee, Texistepeque, 7 April
56. Carlos Rugamos (ARENA) Mayor, El Porvenir (Santa Ana), 7 April
57. Members of the Local Development Committee (OLD), El Porvenir, 7 April
58. Raquel Ayala and Fidel Orellana, FUNDAUNGO staff members, 7 April
59. Mario Antonio Cerna, General Manager, Municipality of San Salvador, 8 April
60. Debriefing with DIAKONIA staff and Ewa Dalin, Sida (Embassy of Sweden, Guatemala City) 8 April

61. Debriefing with DIAKONIA Partner Organizations, 9 April
62. Bo Forsberg, Diakonia Secretary General, and Leif Newman, Diakonia International Coordinator, 15 April (Stockholm)
63. Elisabet Hellsten, Sara Martínez Bergström and Pernilla Trägårdh, Sida, 10 May (Stockholm)

Appendix III

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S-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden

Tel: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Fax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64

Telegram: sida stockholm. Postgiro: 1 56 34-9

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