

MESOAMERICAN EXCHANGE OF INDIGENOUS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

"IMPACT AND STRATEGIES AGAINST COVID - 19 AND UNDERLYING CRISES"



APRIL 7 AND 8, 2021



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PREAMBLE

The “Mesoamerican Exchange of Indigenous and Community Organizations; Impact and Strategies Facing COVID-19 and Underlying Crises ”, was proposed as a space for reflection and socialization of the experiences that organizations have followed to face the COVID-19 Pandemic and other related crises. Prior to the exchange was distributed the base document "The Coca-Cola people pass; then we pass too": Oral Histories about the Covid 19 Pandemic and Resilience of Indigenous Organizations of Guatemala, resulting from the talks carried out with participating organizations.

Sister Paulina Par, Maya K'iche 'indigenous leader from the Junachep Canton, Baquix district, Totonicapán municipality, Guatemala; he began the exchange by invoking the nahuatl No'j. In the Mayan calendar, No'j is a sign of force, law, authority, it is the day of wisdom. "We have lost respect for everything; the mother earth that provides us with life, is groaning. Let us become aware, with this pandemic, of what we have caused to nature. We need each other, we do not depend on the government, we have what we take care of. "

The speaker invited to the Exchange was Dr. Charles R. Hale, taking into account his experience in Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala, who argued that, despite the fact that expectations, struggles and efforts emerged at the end of the 20th century to transform the structural conditions of oppression and historical marginalization of the indigenous and black peoples of Central America, these have not changed and rather have worsened. He found a new level of solidarity and anti-racist awareness, unprecedented in previous decades, and concluded with a provocative proposal to conduct the rest of the meeting:

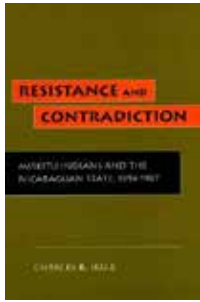
"The hope is that entire societies endorse and learn from these visions of the indigenous struggle, from these struggles, which form pools of experiences, ideas and horizons of alternatives that can guide everyone, it implies using existing tools, but categorically rejecting the temptation to go back to normal, which was not at all desirable. (We also have to) take advantage of information technologies, and others that are part of the dominant society but that we can take advantage of, appropriate and revert, each time to (formulate) alternative horizons and radically others ”.

This exchange was carried out within the framework of the project RECOGNIZING OUR PRACTICES AND KNOWLEDGE FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES, INTERESTS AND WAYS OF LEARNING implemented by the CCARC consulting team with support from the Build Program of the Ford Foundation.

The exchange took place virtually on April 7 and 8, 2021.



EXCERPTS FROM THE EXHIBITION



**PERSPECTIVES FROM THE RACIALIZED MARGINS;
TERRITORIAL AND ANTI-RACIST STRUGGLES OF INDIGENOUS
AND AFRO-DESCENDANT PEOPLES IN MESOAMERICA**



Dr Charles R. Hale

“Many thanks to the indigenous organizations of Mesoamerica participating in this exchange; thanks to the Build Program and CCARC for this invitation. Thanks to friends, colleagues and long-time colleagues. Special thanks to Silvel Elias for facilitating the process and to Paulina Par for her inspiring words.”

“I firmly believe that indigenous thought and leadership provide guidelines not only for their own struggles and liberation, but for the entire societies in which they are inserted and that yes, it is a big change, not so much in the content of those visions; (but because I consider) that there is continuity, a greater recognition of that learning and contribution of the struggles, as Paulina said well to (face the) deep, increasingly urgent problems that every society faces.”

According to the base document: “Those from Coca-Cola pass; then we pass through too”, Dr. Hale proposed an analytical framework, which he called: “Threats and Cracks”, which he divided into four themes: Pandemic, International Cooperation, Pact of the Corrupt and Horizons of Struggle.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has been used by the government and the groups in power in Guatemala to accentuate the exclusionary, racist and repressive nature of the Guatemalan State. There has been an abuse of the legal figure of “states of siege” to repress popular mobilization, especially in indigenous communities and territories”.

“However, there is a growing indigenous and community resilience in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and the policies of the State. Indigenous communities see their resources looted, due to state and government policies. In response to the crisis and pandemic, the organization and internal community work have been reinforced through local protection actions, isolation of communities, rescuing traditional medicine, food security, community economy and markets, and restoring bartering practices”.

“I noticed... a great hope for the change of administration in the United States; obviously I share it to a certain extent ... Nonetheless, with the exception of a minority group on the left of the Democratic Party, there is little vision to deepen on what are the necessary actions to face the crisis in Central American societies. I see that they offer more humanism; more humanistic actions. (However) there is little capacity and political will to change policies in the region in the profound way that is required. A serious problem is that, in the eyes of cooperation, with some exceptions such as the Ford Foundation, there is a notable decrease in prioritizing Central America.”



"The autonomy and sustainability of the territories of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples is more essential than ever. There is not going to be help from cooperation that can offer solutions; there may be tactical openings, but I would not have much hope for what the International Cooperation could do for Central America, even if there is a new administration in Washington. "

"The system that supports basic and universal rights is crumbling. Significantly, there are no longer multicultural rights. Not even at the level of discourse the issue is maintained ... There is a new framework that goes beyond that framework of identity rights and rather raises different struggles, but also shared ones that may mean a certain convergence of political views, affirms identity and goes further. A key element is that it is no longer worth being non-racist, they have to be anti-racist positions, with commitments and actions that would be the basis for this possible convergence (and alliances). Active and cross-sectional anti-racism, as the document says, which takes into account gender inequality, sexuality and other axes of inequality. "

"Encounters like this one, promote and empower new leaderships. Not only young leaders but leaders with new thoughts that surpass the existing thought, that propose new outlets, new provocative ideas; ideas that rethink our collective projects in a radically open way, imagining different futures."



**MARCEDONIO CORTAVE AND
TERESITA CHINCHILLA,
ASSOCIATION OF FOREST
COMMUNITIES OF PETÉN (ACOFOP)**



The health emergency aggravated the deep crisis in food security in El Petén. The confinement measures put the organization's plans at risk, but the forestry products work plan was not paralyzed, nor was the prevention and control of forest fires stopped, nor were the organizational processes in the communities stopped.

ACOFOP's lobbying and advocacy work at the national and international level forced the Guatemalan government to publish a statement in which it supported the model of forest concessions. It was also possible to prevent for a year the work permit of the North American archaeologist and Mayanist Richard D. Hansen, from the University of Utah, USA, who, in the context of the crisis, tried again to negotiate the approval of his project of tourist archeology in the El Mirador region.

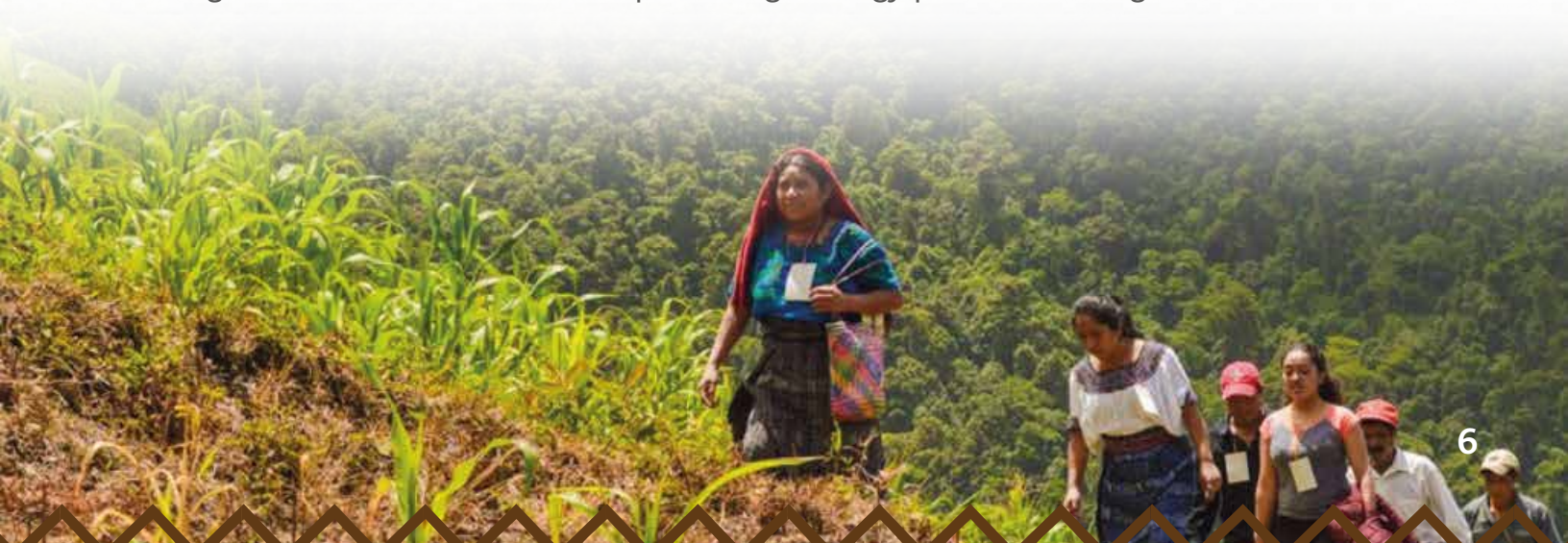
Regarding sustainability, immediate international support was highlighted to guarantee food and medicine packages during the strongest period of the Pandemic. ACOFOP raised USD 250,000 to assist community members and families, which were invested in sanitary equipment and food. The organization did not stop managing resources and maintained transparency and accountability.



YOVANI ALVARADO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE COMMUNITY FORESTRY ASSOCIATION OF GUATEMALA UTZ 'CHE'

In the framework of the pandemic, the fight has had several fronts because hostilities from the state and power groups have worsened:

- ▶ The organization implemented several communication campaigns, in the Mayan languages: Achi, Q'eqchi, K'iche', Poqomam and Q'anjob'al.
- ▶ Laws and regulations modifications were monitored. It was identified that in the context of COVID 19, the regulation of forestry incentives of the PROBOSQUE government program had been modified and the rights of the communities were affected. For this, a process of dialogue was carried out at the level of the grassroots organizations, identifying these elements. Later, it articulated with other sister organizations to enter into a process of dialogue with INAB and retake the rights that correspond to the communities.
- ▶ Regarding the School Nutrition Law, opportunities were identified for the grassroots organizations to provide food. In this way, it was possible to ensure healthy food in the schools and to reactivate the local economy through the market created through this program.
- ▶ In the defense of the right to water, the initiative of Law 5161 "Water Law" was introduced to the review process in Congress, which aims to favor the extractive industry, monocultures, corporate interests. Then a process of training and dialogue with the organizations began.
- ▶ Virtual education for young people has been supported to train them as trainers.
- ▶ Work has been strengthened with family gardens, agricultural enterprises and the establishment of seeds and grain banks.
- ▶ In general terms, there are efforts to promote agroecology, protection and regeneration of forests.





RODEMIRO LANTÁN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE COORDINATOR OF ASSOCIATIONS AND COMMUNITIES FOR THE INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CH'ORTI 'PEOPLE (COMUNDICH)



The crisis and the pandemic have been faced based on the scarcity situation we live in. Taking in consideration the absence of public policies and policies tainted mainly with a very strong racism against the communities. As a response to the pandemic, it led to a reassessment of identity, the condition of a people and to search in this identity, the strength of indigenous peoples and communities, to find their own mechanisms to survive.

The State apparatus as a servant of society is absent from the communities, but its policies of restricting rights are present, as well as declarations of exception and calamity, which limited the communities in their search to provide themselves with food. COVID-19 was an opportunity to generate livelihoods and food security. COMUNDICH has focused for a whole year on productivity, on recovering their ancestral lands, maintaining the recovered territorial spaces and making them produce; in producing basic grains, for the diet of corn, beans and vegetables, taking families to the countryside, to provide them with a space for recreation, control of their territories, produce, ensure their livelihood and food. Supporting food production also seeks to improve families' diets, involve men and women in the preparation of food and the use of various food and medicinal plants. There are many lessons and will on the part of the communities to appropriate their status as authority of indigenous communities. There is also the determination to put into practice the capacities and means the communities have.



LUIS ALEJANDRO ELÍAS, COMMUNAL LANDS COMMITTEE (MTC)



The pandemic greatly affected indigenous communities, affected physical and mental health and limited the continuation of some organizational actions of the MTC. The government prevented registry-type investigations from being carried out, since it closed the General Archive of Central America (AGCA) and the General Property Registry.

There are no serious and consistent strategies by the current government to face the pandemic. Communities were stigmatized and their mobility was limited, as well as indigenous and peasant production.



For strategic litigation activities, skills and leadership are required, strengthening governance and supporting processes of good living, increasing political pressure and communication. However, with the pandemic, that experienced severe limitations. However, from the organization and the communities' perspective, strengths were developed:

- Internal evaluation of the strategies and search for alternatives to adapt the way of working to act in new conditions in each member organization of the MTC.
- Strengthening the internal organizational structure as well as community and inter-community interaction.
- Obtaining four favorable rulings from the Constitutional Court for the Ixil and Ch'orti 'peoples.
- Participation and contribution of young university students and community authorities in a participatory mapping of Ch'orti' indigenous territory.
- Establishment of landmarks, through participatory mapping processes in indigenous territory on the southern coast and highlighting companies that are invading communal lands.
- Strengthening of the governance school of the Communal Lands Board, to face pressure on the 80 thousand hectares, restored, and to invigorate local governance systems to make effective the right of restitution and governance of the territory.
- Strengthening of a network or council around MTC that includes people from organizations, academia and communities. The objective is for the council to contribute to day-to-day reflections on the dynamics of the cases, as well as to evaluate and address community governance with the required breadth.

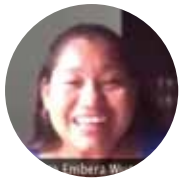


GUADALUPE LEYVA, MEXICAN NETWORK OF FOREST PEASANT ORGANIZATIONS (MOCAF)



The actions of the MOCAF Network were aimed at training members of the organizations, people were supported with the use of virtual platforms and different ways of communicating at a distance so as not to lose contact and to continue training in different topics.

Agriculture for self-consumption, workshops on family gardens were strengthened, the participation of women was promoted, the increased workload was made visible, especially to women who now carry out additional activities such as nurses, teachers, providers of their nuclear family and extensive and even to people who cannot go out providing even financial support. The link between the organizations was important.



CERNA APOCHITO, COMARCA EMBERÁ- WOUNAAN



The Comarca Emberá-Wounaan lacks a health center, medical personnel and medical-sanitary supplies. The General Congress directed a cordon sanitaire, which prevented travel from our region to the city and from the city to our region. Likewise, it summoned six botanical doctors from the region, who know about traditional medicines, and a health committee was formed in 41 communities, in charge of organizing care and attention; food aid and hygiene kits were provided to the communities. These interventions contributed to preventing contagion and healing those affected.

He recommends that international organizations support the provision of medicines in the region, as these arrive insufficiently. The use of traditional medicine continues to be strengthened in the communities.



AMALIA HERNÁNDEZ, FEDERATION OF AGROFORESTRY PRODUCERS OF HONDURAS (FEPROAH)



There have been no infections, a cordon sanitaire was established, to close entrances and exits on roads, highways and passages to the communities. Committees were formed to monitor for 24 hours. For this, the personnel in charge of control and surveillance were supported with masks and vests. At the beginning, no one entered or left, but later families who were far away were allowed to enter. It was registered and quarantine was applied, to avoid contagion. People from the city or from the food delivery trucks were not allowed in. Cars and people were fumigated.

Food support was coordinated with international entities. They have rediscovered and used community agriculture to deal with the crisis. In Yoro, Atlántida, Olancho, Comayagua and Santa Bárbara they received food, through a project aimed at supporting people in confinement. However, the people are already tired, they are against the lockdown and they have already removed the entry and exit controls.



HERACLIO HERRERA, COMARCA GUNA YALA

There was a restriction on maritime and air mobilization, tourist activity, which constitutes 80% of the region's income was paralyzed. Poachers and loggers entered our territories. The Ministry of Health and the National Border Service (police) were the ones who arrested or fined them. In some cases there was a governance conflict because the population did not agree with the restrictions.

A humanitarian corridor was created between Guna Yala and Panama City; the communities created their committees to face the Pandemic. There was a lot of solidarity with food between communities. Guna Yala congresses were held every month to monitor the pandemic and crisis.



JOSÉ COLEMAN, "EGDOLINA THOMAS" FOUNDATION / YATAMA



Previously, COVID-19, as well as hurricanes Eta and Iota, especially affected the indigenous communities of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast. There is very little information on preventive measures. Grassroots organizations and NGOs had an information strategy in their mother tongues, to inform about the pandemic through radio campaigns. Consequently, self-quarantine and physical distancing measures were implemented and the use of botanical medicine was promoted to face the pandemic; some doctors accepted that traditional medicine could be used. The actual impact caused by the pandemic on indigenous peoples is unknown. The state does not promote prevention, but massive activities.

There is a food crisis in many communities because community members cannot access their own plots due to the presence of invading settlers on indigenous lands. Faced with the food crisis, the communities have turned to the traditional Pana-Pana (reciprocal collaboration) practice to plant and harvest their crops.

At the "Egdolina Thomas" Foundation, we documented 23 violations of collective rights, including killing of Miskito leaders. The organization makes reports and send them to the IACHR on the situation of indigenous peoples, due to land occupation, health crisis, natural disasters and lack of State action. The Nicaraguan state, respect rights only in discourses and theory, which are not translated into concrete actions in practice. There are laws, governments of titled territories, but every day the dispossession is suffered by the policies of the state.



ISABEL PASOS, MESOAMERICAN ALLIANCE OF PEOPLES AND FORESTS (AMPB)



The pandemic showed that prevention policies were for cities only. The AMPB initiated dialogues with the organizations. There was solidarity in the communities to have food. The use of traditional medicine and living pharmacies in the communities also helped a lot. During the impact of the pandemic and its dynamics, the main managers were women, who have been in health, education and food; as well as in the attention to other priorities such as water supply.

Another aspect of women´s contribution, was their role in communication on community radios in their mother tongues. The virtual communication was intense. There was organizational restructuring, and an attempt was made to strengthen the most vulnerable communities. With donors, it was managed that the funds could be redirected to respond to the needs that arose from the pandemic. The use of traditional medicine was strengthened.

Isabel pointed out two challenges to face: First, to work for the economic reactivation, the care of natural assets and the territory of the peoples and their rights. Second, to face the uncertainty about the sustainable support of international cooperation; it would be catastrophic if the resources of International cooperation are not channeled to the communities. The correct way to channel international cooperation is through the organizations and efficient management of communities and women.



MANUEL MARTÍ, PRISMA FOUNDATION

Prisma published a report on the impact of COVID-19 on indigenous communities in the region. The abandonment of the State, discussed here, was further evidenced by the little coordination and specific attention to indigenous peoples in their mother tongue, the restriction of mobility, the closure of internal and international borders (which also closes tourism), the continuation of threats , the assassinations of leaders, the violations of territorial rights and the division of the bases. However, the communities responded by strengthening their organization. This organization and resilience were essential to address the crisis, ensure food security, use the resources of traditional medicine, produce food, rediscover solidarity and barter systems, with a vision from the territories based on rights and aspirations linked to the worldview. and respect for life and Nature. Among the challenges, the following stand out:

- The State does not play its role to protect the rights of society,
- The vulnerability of indigenous territories has deepened, with poverty, exclusion, and incursion by outsiders.
- Regarding economic reactivation, the challenge is to build resilience, or the crisis will deepen due to extractivist development model.
- It is necessary to articulate rapid responses with longer-term responses in the framework of rights and structural changes.
- Alliances must be established from society to confront the corrupt pact.
- Likewise, it is necessary to establish alliances between local communities, indigenous people and other actors to present a different horizon, rethink a pact of coexistence, how the different sectors contribute around more hopeful horizons.





REFLECTING TOGETHER

ABOUT THE PANDEMIC

Let donors see that their cooperation and support goes where the work is really needed and gets the job done. It is also necessary to analyze whom to help, since there are NGOs that help groups that do not need it and it is not known what they use that help for. We should encourage that community members regain their faith in the plants that we have in our houses and forests because they have helped many people, without them the rate of morbidity and mortality would be much higher (Paulina Par).

We ask for more precision and presence, since we do not have help from the government but from associations (Amalia Hernández).

We ask national and international organizations to provide us, with free vaccination . Let's make a block as countries to ensure that the vaccines reaches us (Nelly Suyapa Figueroa).

We are mixing ancestral/traditional medicine with western medicine (José Coleman).

We need to organize ourselves from our communities to face various challenges. What the government thinks is not the same as what you experience. Ancestral experiences have many times helped to get out of these problems (Guadalupe Leyva).

We are talking about the pandemic in the past tense. However, the pandemic continues (Edwin Matamoros).

The communities took their own measures to protect themselves. For them, their governance mechanisms and strengths as a community, in communication and coordination were very important (Yovani Alvarado). There are common threads that unite us as peoples that demonstrate our capacity to survive and resilience (Rodemiro Lantán).

ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

We have to be able to lobby and advocate to establish clear procedures and mechanisms so that large funds, currently provided to governments, are channeled directly to indigenous peoples, for example: IFAD resources. It is necessary to strengthen alliances, address the gaps and strengthen their own systems so that these processes can become tools in the fight for territories together with the international instruments issued in favor of indigenous peoples (Rodemiro Lantán).

The issue of donors must be addressed in a dialogue between ourselves. Otherwise, how do we coincide to raise our voices, so that they can make a change to their work policies? The Ford Foundation is very open. I am referring to new or unknown donors who are in other regions. Many (large and small) lack a vision about the amounts to address new situations such as the pandemic and post-pandemic (Teresita Chinchilla).



ON THE PACT OF CORRUPTS, DONORS AND COOPERANTS, RELATIONSHIP STATE - COMMUNITY

In politics, if someone from the indigenous communities runs as a candidate, they don't take it into account. They mock, they do not recognize the capacities that we have as indigenous people (Paulina Par).

Governments cannot and will not address these crises, which have served to further widen the gap between corporate interests and those of the communities (Yovani Alvarado).

Full respect for our rights and effective participation has not been implemented by the State. That means that, until today, all the indigenous peoples of the world are suffering violation of their fundamental rights, our lands, our ways of living and our traditional medicines (José Coleman).

There is a tendency for national governments to divide the indigenous people. One way is through political operators and some indigenous leaders who lend themselves to it and have been participants in some pacts and to some extent present themselves as legitimate authorities, but in practice they are not. Another way to divide is from the government structures and from other actors, such as the mining industry, the extractive industry and mono culture plantations, which really are the true interests that the Government represents (Yovani Alvarado).

We see a State that has not been founded by indigenous peoples, turned into a slave-holding instrument that does not represent the interests of the great majority, because Guatemala is mostly indigenous. The democracy that is talked about so much, has led us to replicate the same practices of the system (Rodemiro Lantán).

The anti-racism that must come out of non-indigenous organizations raises new ways of understanding each other, and being able to establish bridges between indigenous organizations, local communities and philanthropy as well as synergies with other groups that are not necessarily indigenous. What happens to the indigenous people belongs to everyone. It is necessary to reflect on how to build those bridges (Edwin Matamoros).

There are elements of external pressure that seek to monopolize and create pressure on the territories. There are external forces causing ungovernability and violence. There is isolation of the communities, which caused a lack of income; there is also suffering due to the loss of community leaders (Teresita Chinchilla).

The first conclusion is that the state is absent. People and communities have done their best to get ahead and survive. The other conclusion is the need to reconceptualize the Nation State, its structure and role in society. We are far from having true states and much less statesmen. That is something permanent. There is a dismantling of the gray matter and intelligence of our societies, the generation and debate of academic and reflective communities are left behind. There is a model of democratic representation that has been distorted. This way of democratic representation has its limits due to the existence of parallel and de facto powers that control the state. There is real risk of returning to dictatorial governments again (Silvel Elías).

Where are the indigenous communities and peoples in the decision-making scenarios? We have been talking about political and economic elites, this deserves another discussion. However, we must be clear about how some leaderships collapse and how others rise up, generating authoritarianism (Ileana Gómez).

Another aspect in common is the crisis of the States; national governments do not provide an answer to the social protection demanded by indigenous peoples. We see that in their policies and ways of dealing with crises. It seems that (the States) give gifts, but they do not recognize our rights. There are other great phenomena such as migration and drug trafficking that disrupt the states. These problems only will worsen (Rodemiro Lantán).



THE HORIZONS OF STRUGGLE / PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES

The horizon of emerging struggles must be based on internally revolutionizing the people's own thinking. It is necessary to rebuild that great fabric, not from a base "to be built", I think we have already built enough; what we have not achieved is to sustain the great efforts that have been made (Rodemiro Lantán).

As indigenous peoples, all the efforts made were focused on strategies based on culture, for example, we all try to coordinate according to practices, based on our worldview and spirituality (Heraclio Herrera).

We support to include the concept of local communities, since indigenous identity is not the only attribute to be communities. There are others characteristics, such as sharing elements of their common history, self-assignment to the community, managing a territory in a certain time, having an effective form of self-governance, with rights and obligations in the community, regarding the territory that are important to build the sense of community. In other words, you do not necessarily have to be indigenous or Afro-descendant (by birth) to contribute to establishing these communities (Guadalupe Leyva).

It is necessary to promote solidarity between organizations and communities, and the struggle for territories. Faced with isolation, it is necessary to develop greater community cunning to deal with the fight to protect itself and continue with its resilience to tackle violence (Teresita Chinchilla).

The AMPB and PRISMA, which are second-level articulating centers and regional think tanks, could become repositories for reflections and experiences produced by the territories. AMPB and PRISMA, should function as spaces for systematization and centralization, to return narratives and experiences to local organizations. This return can be in the form of "toolboxes", with the elements that have been presented here. For example, explain how the role of women has worked well; the role of community wisdom, etc. The challenge is how to make the collection of information on lessons learned more systematic, to return those lessons in a didactic and operational way to community actors (Galio Gurdián).

We must have an agenda as a region and in each country, to strengthen livelihoods and have policy instruments. For example: forest incentives that allow increasing strengths to have greater food and economic sovereignty as a community. Regarding information and communication technology -ICT-, the challenge is to have virtual training platforms, in such a way that greater benefits are obtained as well as greater communication and access to political training, lobbying and advocacy (Yovani Alvarado).

We must strengthen the organizations, since it depends on this to make visible the real needs in the regions, of the colleagues. If there are no strong organizations, there is no voice that arises to demand the rights of all equally (Guadalupe Leyva).



WOMEN AND YOUTH

We speak of new regeneration in Nature as well as in the human species. It is necessary that there be young people in this type of activities (Amalia Hernández).

It is important to open leadership to the new generations, who do not believe in the solutions for which we are fighting. The youth have questions about premises that we accept as true. They would have to learn more from you, but I would think that those questioning thoughts are coming out and that they would come out stronger in those spaces where indigenous peoples are stronger and demanding greater autonomy (Charles R. Hale).

The formation of our own critical cadres is a common need in our organizations and in our communities (Silvel Elías).

It is necessary to review and adjust the institutional strategic plans, incorporating the changes, in order to adjust the plans and strategies to the new issues and approaches. It is necessary to take advantage of that moment to involve young people, especially in these moments of pandemic and post-pandemic because they will have to assume (Teresita Chinchilla).

The coincidences are evident, as well as the strategies to carry them out. It is necessary not to ignore this reality of violence and discrimination against women when strategies are defined. It is not from marginality, from where indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples obtain their knowledge, knowledge, cultures and traditions, but from their own identity and history. That is the first step of the exchanges (Margarita Antonio).

CONCLUSIONS

The exchange contributed to generating an unprecedented state of cohesion and convictions of common destiny, pooling the diverse experiences and lessons learned from Mesoamerican indigenous and community organizations during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The exchange produced a sense of "relief" and satisfaction, for noting that, despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the underlying crises, Mesoamerican indigenous and community organizations grew in their ability to communicate, organize and resist, resorting to their own histories, cultures, languages and traditional knowledge about Mother Nature, herbal medicine, management of its resources and sustainable production, protecting the bearers of this knowledge and the new generations.

There is an urgent need to reinforce the formation of new inclusive leaderships with equal representation of youth and women, which revitalize traditional leadership.

It is necessary to give continuity, systematization and link to exchange modalities similar to this one. It is also necessary to establish centers for reflection and production of knowledge that systematize good practices and lessons learned, returning them to indigenous, Afro-descendant and traditional organizations.

There is a clear awareness of presenting to the philanthropic community, the need to reformulate its cooperation models, in order to channel its resources directly to the peoples and communities that need it and **15** with effective management capacity.



MESOAMERICAN MEMORY



Organizaciones participantes





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