

People-to-People



Linking Canadians & Salvadorans--SalvAide's Annual Newsletter

ELECTIONS IN EL SALVADOR 2009

It is certain that 2009 will be an unprecedented year for Salvadorans, as citizens will participate in two sets of elections--in January to elect Legislative Deputies, Mayors, and Municipal Councils and in March to elect their president and vice-president. As in the past, our partner organizations--CRIPDES and CORDES--and partner communities have requested SalvAide's assistance in five different ways:

- 1) to provide **educational support** to Salvadorans about their **democratic rights** to participate in these elections;
- 2) to provide **transportation** for poor, rural Salvadorans to **safely go to polling stations** on election day;
- 3) to **observe and provide witness** to the electoral process and to potential violations of the electoral code before and during the elections;
- 4) to provide a presence in order to **diminish political intimidation and violence** during the elections; and
- 5) to call for implementation of **election reforms**, including residential voting, to **guarantee a transparent process** and participation.

Civic Education Project

To respond to the first two requests, SalvAide has been working with our partner organization CRIPDES on a civic education project that will continue until after the March elections. By the end of March we hope to provide capacity building workshops in over 100 communities educating at least 50,000 Salvadorans about their democratic and citizenship rights. In addition, in each of these 100 communities a local elections observation team will be trained on how to scrutinize and monitor both the municipal and presidential elections. Finally SalvAide recognizes the intense challenges rural citizens face in simply accessing their local polling stations during this time. To this end, SalvAide is supporting 20,000 people to have access to polls by providing transportation during both the January and March elections.

Elections Observation Delegations

In response to the final three requests, SalvAide is coordinating and sending two independent elections observation delegations in January—11-22 and March—8-17. Observers will accompany community members to polling stations, observe at polling stations, as well as observe in communities before, during, and after the elections to help ensure that political intimidation and violence does not take place. In partnership with other International NGOs, observers will also participate in an international press conference which will comment on the legitimacy of the electoral process in El Salvador. In addition observers will support CRIPDES with the civic education project.

SalvAide is honoured to support Salvadorans, who are a people in search of social justice through this important moment in their history. These electoral processes will prove critical to Salvadoran democratic consolidation, as set forth as the objective of the 1992 Peace Accords.

Anyone interested in participating in the March Elections Delegation can find applications on the SalvAide website: www.SalvAide.ca

Special thanks to our gracious donors for the Civic Education project. Your support is making a clear and tangible difference!



NEW COLLABORATION WITH CIDA

Fostering New Skills and Having Voices Heard in Cuscatlán/Cabañas

SalvAide is delighted to announce that it will be collaborating with Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), CRIPDES and CORDES on a new and very innovative capacity building and governance project. This project will take place starting in February 2009 and will take place over the next three years. We will be working with three strategic groups—**Youth, Women, and Community Councils**. The first phase of the project will focus on developing new skills and capacities such as developing:

- awareness towards **key development challenges** affecting their own communities--HIV-AIDS, domestic violence, women's rights, environmental degradation, access to water etc.
- internal governance structures which will allow each group to **create strategic community plans** that include the greatest community needs
- **technical computer skills** (i.e. to learn how to produce relevant work documents and how to conduct research)

The next phase of this project in 2010 will incorporate the municipal governments of Tejutepeque, Tenancingo, Jutiapa, and Cinquera. During this time, the community at large led by the Youth, Women, and Community Councils will engage in the creation of a participatory integrated community plan and participatory budgeting for this plan. **This will be one of the first times that these community members will have the opportunity to: have their voices heard in this type of participatory setting, have their needs directly integrated into community plans and be a part of the process of earmarking community funds towards these needs!**

SalvAide is incredibly excited to be collaborating with CIDA on a new and an extremely important project over the next three years. *You can support this project by donating to SalvAide and earmarking funds towards one of the many trainings and workshops we will be providing.*

Cashew Trees for Prosperity—Creating Environmentally and Economically Sustainability

To promote **organic, sustainable agricultural practices** in rural El Salvador, SalvAide supports the organic cashew nut project.

This project provides resources for communities to plant cashew trees on small plots of land. In addition, we provide capacity building to local citizens so they can appropriately care for their trees. One single cashew tree can live for more than 25 years and provide an average yield of 20 Kg of raw nuts per tree, per year.

This project also supports a Cooperative to process the organic cashews. Certified organic since 1996, the Organic Cashew Agro-Industrial System processing plant is a cooperative and works at its production capacity of 43 metric tons per year. The Cooperative has 70 employees, (68 % women).

Through the generous support given to this project in 2008 and the need and success in El Salvador for this type of project, SalvAide will be working with CORDES to plant more trees in 2009—please assist us in this endeavor--Muchas gracias.



MICRO-CREDIT—ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE

This past year with support from the **Loretto Sisters, the London Twin, and the SalvAide-Algonquin program**, SalvAide has successfully expanded its Micro-credit program. These small-scale community-based loans have provided small amounts of money to the most vulnerable people (mainly poor women) in order to allow for the start-up of small-scale entrepreneurial initiatives. This year the SalvAide/Algonquin program, spearheaded by Lisa Shaw-Verhoek, has expanded the program to include the *war-injured, a group in great need and often forgotten by international groups and the Salvadoran government*. SalvAide uses a revolving loan system, which means that loans are recovered annually. This signifies that each year funds are recovered and re-distributed to more individuals in need—therefore, the system is sustainable.

To continue to expand this program, SalvAide needs your generous support. *Special thanks so Lisa Shaw-Verhoek, Sister Evanne, the Loretto Sisters, and the London Twin program for your consistent and gracious assistance.*

A Micro-credit Success—Marlene Antonie Garcia

Progreso-Cripdes Suchitoto, Interview conducted, translated and written by Amy Roza, SalvAide Volunteer
November 3 2008.

Marlene Antonia Garcia, 29 years old, lives in Laura Lopez with her three young sons and her husband. She moved to Laura Lopez 14 years ago as part of repopulation efforts after the war. The family raises crops such as corn and beans primarily for their own consumption and to sell when they have a surplus. Ms. Garcia also runs a small store from her home, selling packaged food items such as sodas, peanuts and chicken stock to neighbors.

Two years ago, Ms. Garcia began attending community meetings. She was a regular participant in the Asamblea de Mujeres, a regular town hall-style meeting of local women and was elected by her neighbors to serve on a steering committee. She first heard about the micro-credit opportunity in those meetings.

While she would not have been eligible for most traditional loans which require that applicants be landowners or have significant capital to guarantee the loan, Ms. Garcia easily met the requirements for this "community bank": she was meaningfully involved in ongoing community activities and communicated a commitment to paying back the loan on time.

Ms. Garcia used her first loan of \$50, the maximum allowed by the program, to expand her store. That year, she saw a small increase in her family income and was able to pay back the \$50 plus \$5 interest at year end. This year she received a second loan of \$50 to further expand her business.

Ms. Garcia is currently a member of her community's Credit Committee. As treasurer, she has participated in workshops developing her bookkeeping skills. She is proud to report that to date 100% of the loans in her village have been paid back in full, with all but one loan paid back on schedule. The funds raised from the interest on the loans have been used to expand the program. This year 19 loans have been granted in Laura Lopez and two additional applications are pending.

SalvAide gives special thanks to Amy Roza for her tremendous volunteer work.



DELEGATIONS 2008

ALGONQUIN COLLEGE/SALVAIDE DELEGATION

The Social Service Worker students at Algonquin College in Perth continue to work in solidarity with people in rural El Salvador. Three delegations of students have travelled to El Salvador with the support of SalvAide and this opportunity has been included as a part of the curriculum. In the spirit of solidarity, this Algonquin Delegation, spearheaded by Professor Lisa Shaw-Verhoek, has successfully cultivated meaningful cross-cultural learning. In the past three years, this delegation has created a lasting impact in El Salvador by sponsoring high school scholarships, giving guitars, and making financial contributions to many community organizations, such as the ARTE senior group, a youth bakery, the war-injured, among others. SalvAide looks forward to continuing to explore new and innovative ways to work with the Social Service Worker students and Salvadorans. *Special thanks to Lisa and the Social Service Worker students for their tireless work and congratulations on your success.*

CATHOLIC SCHOOL TEACHER DELEGATION

In July a group of teachers from different schools in the Ottawa Catholic School Board travelled to El Salvador to learn about sustainable community development and the challenges that Salvadorans continue to face related to access to water, environmental degradation, mining exploration among many others. Upon their return, these teachers have been working with SalvAide to explore different ways to support the communities they visited. For example, we are in the process of creating a new twinning with Holy Trinity High School in Ottawa and the primary school in San Jose de Los Flores in El Salvador. Another group of teachers is set to travel El Salvador in 2009. *Special thanks to Paul McGuire and the teachers of the delegation for their tremendous efforts.*

NURSES DELEGATION

Nurses from Southern Ontario traveled to El Salvador for the first time in 2008. This group met with our partner organizations and carried out health clinics in the La Libertad and Suchitoto region. As seen by the photo, the clinics were incredibly popular which demonstrates the need for increased local access to medical services. The nurses are set to travel to El Salvador again in April, 2009 of this year and will continue with the health clinics and will also be providing popular education on preventative health issues. *Special thanks to Marion Wilms and the nurses for their patience, persistence and tremendous efforts.*



UPDATES FROM 2008:

SALVAIDE SAYS GOODBYE TO TWO LONG-TIME MEMBERS

In 2008, SalvAide said goodbye to two important member of the team. Jorge Peña, former Executive Director, decided to move on from SalvAide to finish his Masters education and pursue other endeavors. SalvAide wishes to acknowledge and thank Jorge for his tremendous and tireless efforts over the past six years. In addition, Sue Brewer, former Administrative Assistant of 8 years, retired in November of this year. SalvAide also wishes to thank Sue for her all of her fine work and her dedication.

UPDATES ON THE ARRESTS OF CRIPDES LEADERS

As noted last year, on July 2nd 2007, 4 leaders from CRIPDES were arrested on their way to a peaceful demonstration of the privatization of the water system which was to be attended by President Saca. The detainees were released but still faced charges of terrorism. In April of this year, the charges were completely dropped, based on the Attorney General's office neglect to present official accusations and sufficient evidence. *SalvAide wishes to acknowledge Juan Carranza for his most generous donation in aid in their defense.* In addition Juan led a delegation of lawyers to El Salvador in September of 2007 to assess the situation.

SALVAIDE'S ANNUAL DINNER AND AUCTION

On October 30th 2008 SalvAide held its 11th Annual Dinner and Auction at the Ukrainian Hall at 1000 Byron Ave. Once again the event was graced by the groovy musical styles of Colores Andinos. This year's event was an indisputable success raising over \$16,000 and was attended by over 160 people in Ottawa and surrounding area. We would like to give special thanks to Steffi Ortiz and Joan Knight, co-organizers, the Coordinating Committee, the many volunteers, with special thanks to Lenka Stone and Tatiana Stephens for their improvisational skills. SalvAide would also like to acknowledge the generosity of all of the local businesses who continue to support our event. Muchas Gracias



SalvAide Staff, Board of Directors, our many volunteers, as well as, our partners and communities in El Salvador wish you, our loyal supporters and friends,
Happy Holidays with Good Health and Happiness in the
New Year 2009

Salvaide is a Registered Charitable Organization. Registration No. 11913 3627 RR0001.

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