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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Program Design

MS started its program in Guatemala in 1997 supporting initiatives focused on production and organizational strengthening. Later, the program fell under the overall strategy for Central America 2008-2012, prioritizing the themes of “Building Local Democracy” (BLD) and “Trade Justice” (TJ) with the general objective to contribute to the reduction of poverty, focusing at the municipal level. In the region, the strategy was implemented in 24 municipalities. In Guatemala, the work was carried out in 7 municipalities of the departments of Huehuetenango and Sololá.

The five year strategy and the issues prioritized for MS’ work in Guatemala were framed under a global focus that conceives democracy as a means to eradicate poverty, and building local democracy as a vehicle to hold municipal governments accountable and strengthen local leadership. In the region, land rights were visualized within the trade justice program, addressing the challenges of accessing markets for small farmers (linking with fair trade markets in Europe and US) as well as the political aspects related to it, drawing on past experiences from the coffee sector as a model for learning. Promotion of tourism at the local level was also contemplated as a part of the trade justice program.

The local municipal level focus was also outlined as a means to achieve greater citizen participation in the context of decentralization processes in the region, and aimed to have a greater impact in the framework of limited resources and feasible impacts.

The strategy proposed to procure the articulation of these two programs included the strengthening of local capacities to articulate advocacy efforts between the local, national and regional levels. This was done by facilitating alliances between organizations that accompany processes of strengthening of local democracy with initiatives with common objectives at the national and regional level. Women, youth, indigenous groups and small farmers were the main actors and center of this strategy, which aimed to strengthen their capacity and skills, both individually and as a group.

Gender was also defined as a key issue in the program, particularly to encourage women’s participation in both decision making and the benefits derived from the access to markets to commercialize their products.

The Guatemala program adjusted its budget to what was available for the regional strategy. Each country program in Central America would assign 50 percent of its resources to Building Local Democracy, 30 percent to Trade Justice and 20 percent to support activities related to migration and other innovative actions.

In 2009 six partnership agreements were signed with the following organizations: Mamá Maquín, Pop Noj, ADAM, CUC, Vivamos Mejor, Vivamos Mejor-Vaya Maya, and Ceiba, which finished in 2010 after several years of MS support. These partnership agreements end this year, except in the case of Vivamos Mejor, which is already a
partner of AAG in a Development Area the municipalities of Nahualá and Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán in the department of Sololá.

In 2010, the MS office in Nicaragua approved and administered 3 additional grants for the following organizations: Iik luna (also beneficiaries of the Vivamos Mejor project); CONGCOOP (monitoring and advocacy impact of the free trade agreement with the United States), and ADAM (emergency funds after tropical storm Agatha), which were administered and managed directly from the regional office.

The program currently has three pending requests for human resource support (PC-4).

B. Focus of relationship with CPs

The MS focus in the relationships with its partners in Guatemala was not limited to funding aspects, but to make substantive contributions directed to strengthen the individual and organizational leadership capacities, through strategies directed to sharing and deepening knowledge, analysis and learning; promoting alliances, and providing accompaniement in advocacy initiatives.

MS’s partners repeteadly stressed the importance of the respectful while at the same time flexible relationships with MS. Its substantive contributions to advance the issues of local organizations were relevant to the organizations’strengthening as was the openness to dialoguea and incorporate suggestions coming from the partners when relevant.

Another relevant aspect was the flexibility of MS to adapt to changing and emergency situations. In a country and a region most vulnerable to “natural disasters” and political changing dynamics, this is a key element.

An important aspect also mentioned was the fact that MS kept its partners informed on the merger process with AAG and that the advisory council also contributed in this process.

The space of analysis, articulation of efforts and coordination between the organizations working on the two thematic areas was very important; it allowed for meetings between organizations that work with BLD and TJ, to develop analysis of the situation and coordinate specific actions, as well as to open their spectrum of opportunities and analysis regarding the linkages between those to spheres of work.. The fact that guests from other organizations also participated enriched these processes according to partners.

The thematic groups deserve special attention for the value placed on them and because they have provided a space for training and to coordinate efforts. Although people mentioned a few hang-ups in coordinating the groups and in following up from the part of one organization, they repeatedly mentioned positive aspects. ‘We have strengthened our processes; initially the thematic group was a space for discussion and even though there were actions it was mostly discussion; but we were able to keep the thematic group going with analysis and concrete actions, with life experiences that generate actions that contribute to proposals; of course this takes time, but we have seen that it is a good space that has been created. And this year the work reflects proposals that the
women brought forth last year and now they are becoming reality in the form of fairs, workshops, and markets – alongside trainings for them. Now we need that even more partners take part defining whether it is in the territory or in other fashion considering resources.¹

C. Achievements:

Building local democracy

All documents consulted and interviews conducted point to the fact that in all cases the organizations achieved important results and increased and strengthened the participation of population groups at the local level. Results were also visible regarding the design and introduction of proposals at the municipal level, to incorporate issues of women’s and youth rights, as well as new initiatives on tourism and access to markets in municipal development plans.

Nonetheless, aspects of social audit and transparency and accountability of local governments continue to be a challenge. This is due to structural factors linked to the fact that the Guatemalan state is very weak State, that the distribution of resources continues to be one of the most inequal in the world, and to the lack of political will and corruption among others.

Because of its recent history, the Guatemalan organizations have difficulties to coordinate and establish alliances and the processes of trust building take considerable time. The MS program made a substantial contribution to facilitate the communication and coordination between key organizations and thus contributed to democratize and open the spaces of dialogue and participation among them.

The organizations report an increase (both in number and quality) of the participation of women and young people in organizational processes and in building their own agendas, although it was observed that there is a lack of analysis to assess the different impacts of participation on women and youth. The empowerment of young people via training processes has shown a great potential for the development of local leadership.

On the other hand, there is a need to strengthen the link between the local processes and achievements with initiatives at the national level. It is also important to stress that the local organizations need to continue strengthening their analysis and capacities.

Trade Justice/Land rights

The thematic reflection conducted in 2010 and this evaluation show that the capacity of the organizations has been strengthened, primarily through their legalization and training on strategic topics like: management, marketing and negotiation, fair trade, gender and youth, communications and others.

¹ Workshop with Partners in Panajachel, Sololá. April 2011
In the case of Guatemala, the MS partners have improved their access to markets and their understanding of the market system, as has increased the participation of women and young people (especially in 3 municipalities of Guatemala) in these initiatives. Two organizations have been strengthened to improve their work in the tourism sector (Santiago, San Marcos, San Juan La Laguna), and there is a network of organizations working on the consolidation of community based tourism. Research has been conducted to open a museum in Santiago Atitlán; there are two organizations trained in best agriculture practices in Santa Catarina that are already linking to international circuits. A marketing database has been created with information about 40 organizations of small producers and there is a commercial relationship with El Salvador.

The thematic group of trade justice has been trained on economic solidarity and created a network of women’s handicraft organizations.

D. Capacity development

The successes that stand out most for organizations regarding their strengthening and capacity development are as follows:

- Vivamos Mejor: supported technically the elaboration of 15 municipal development plans.
- ADAM: contributed to the creation of the organization’s strategy and the opening of commercial channels. A training manual was compiled by the organizations using consensus.
- Pop No’j has strengthened its presence on the ground and its work with young people. The organizations strengthened their monitoring capacity with recommendations from MS.
- Mamá Maquina started a process to promote economic initiatives for women, with advice from Adam, and developed a training curricula for their training school for women and youth with the support of MS.

All organizations have strengthened their administrative and planning systems and procedures.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report contains the main findings of the evaluation conducted between April 6-18, 2011. The main objective was to extract learnings of MS’ work in Guatemala as outlined by its strategy.

The content of this report has been guided by the format provided by MS for its global evaluation and adapted to the context of the Guatemala program.

1.1 The Program

MS started its program in Guatemala in 1997, supporting initiatives focused on production and organizational strengthening. Later the program fell under the overall
strategy for Central America 2008-2012, prioritizing the topics of “Building Local Democracy” (BLD) and “Trade Justice” (TJ) with the general objective to **contribute to the reduction of poverty**, with a focus on the municipal level. In the region, the strategy focused on a total of 24 municipalities. In Guatemala, the work was centered in 7 municipalities: Nentón, San Pedro Necta and Colotenango in Huehuetenango, and Santiago Atitlán, San Juan La Laguna, San Marcos la Laguna and Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán in Sololá.

In line with these thematic areas six partnership agreements were signed in 2009 with six partner organizations: Mamá Maquín, Pop No’j, ADAM, CUC, Vivamos Mejor and Vivamos Mejor-Vaya Maya, and Ceiba (whose funding finished in 2010 after several years of MS support). These partnership agreements end this year, except in the case of Vivamos Mejor, which is a Development Area (AD) of ActionAid Guatemala in the municipalities of Nahualá and Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán, in the department of Sololá.

In 2010, the MS office in Nicaragua approved and administered 3 additional grants to the following organizations: Iik luna (also beneficiaries of the Vivamos Mejor project); CONGOOP (monitoring and advocacy impact of the free trade agreement with the United States), and ADAM (emergency funds after tropical storm Agatha).

**Thematic groups:**

The thematic groups were created as coordinating bodies for analysis and coordination, as well as to facilitate the organizational strengthening of the groups involved. These groups have analyzed the political context, exchanged experiences, attended training sessions on relevant topics, participated in internships, participated in commercial fairs, and organized panels of reflection and discussion among other activities.

In Guatemala two groups were formed: One on Local Democracy, administered by Pop No’j and one on Trade Justice, administered by ADAM. These organizations have administered the groups on a voluntary basis and funds are provided by MS to support specific meetings and activities. Plans are decided on by consensus among members.

The following chart details the thematic areas of support of the MS program in Guatemala, the emphasis of the work of the organizations, the current grant period, the geographical focus and the objectives of the projects funded by MS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>THEMES</th>
<th>GRANT PERIOD</th>
<th>GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS</th>
<th>PROJECT OBJECTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mamá Maquín</td>
<td>Local Democracy</td>
<td>2009-2011</td>
<td>Nentón, Huehuetenango</td>
<td>Contribute to the political protagonism of women, and the democratization of local government practices in the municipality of Nentón, by means of institutional strengthening and advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop No’j</td>
<td>Local Democracy</td>
<td>2009-2011</td>
<td>Colotenango and San Pedro Necta, Huehuetenango</td>
<td>Training and participation of Maya Mam youth in political forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADAM</td>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>2009-2011</td>
<td>Santa Catarina</td>
<td>Contribution to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAME OF ORGANIZATION</td>
<td>THEMES</td>
<td>GRANT PERIOD</td>
<td>GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS</td>
<td>PROJECT OBJECTIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUC – Comité de Unidad Campesina</td>
<td>Local Democracy</td>
<td>2009-2011</td>
<td>San Pedro Necta</td>
<td>Institutional strengthening and training of leaders (male and female) and youth for the democratization of local power spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivamos Mejor</td>
<td>50% BLD 50% TJ</td>
<td>2009-2011</td>
<td>Santiago Atitlán, San Juan La Laguna, San Marcos La Laguna, Sololá</td>
<td>By 2011, 6 community based groups with women and youth represented will increase their income, improving the self-management of community tourism circuits, and directly influence the municipal policies and plans related to equitable economic, political and social development of the municipality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivamos Mejor/Vaya Maya</td>
<td>Local Democracy/ Intercultural Education</td>
<td>2009-2011</td>
<td>28 communities in 8 municipalities of Sololá</td>
<td>Indigenous populations are important actors in democratic developments of communities in the department of Sololá.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally the program currently has three pending requests for human resource support (PC-4). Although they are not part of this evaluation, they are described below:

- Organizations El Refugio, Mujeres positivas and CODEFEM have requested an advisor on institutional strengthening and management of funds; the job description was approved by Denmark, still pending advertising the position, conducting interviews and selecting a person. Denmark is waiting for the person in charge of the Guatemala program to start working on this.
- A person to support on communications, with experience in community radio for Pop Noj; the profile has been approved by MS in Nicaragua and is also pending until a new staff person in Guatemala is named and working.
- CUC has requested a person to support their training processes; no job description or profile has been submitted nor has additional paperwork been filed.

1.2 Evaluation
In September 2008 the General Assembly of MS decided to affiliate itself with ActionAid International, and as a result in June 2010 the program of MS in Guatemala joined the ActionAid program in Guatemala. This evaluation takes place simultaneously to the revision of the AAG strategy, which is being carried out to feed the new strategy starting in 2012.

The main objective of this evaluation was focused on extracting lessons learned from the implementation of the MS strategy, with the following specific objectives:

(i) Provide strategic learning elements that inform the programmatic development of AAI/IGT and the AA program in Guatemala.

(ii) Provide a basis for the assessment of future MS/AADK programs

(iii) Inform the global evaluation of AADK activities programmed for the last quarter of 2011, and

(iv) Serve as documentation for DANIDA

The evaluation was planned to be developed in 12 days, which included time to prepare and process bibliographic information. The scope of the evaluation and methodology used were framed by the Terms of Reference that MS developed for its global evaluation (Annex 1), and by adapting the context of the framework of the “Inception Note” (Annex 2) prepared by MS to carry out evaluations in different countries. Iván Salinas (part time advisor to MS and part time advisor of ActionAid) and Helle Lovsto Severinsen of MS Denmark (who was present in a few interviews and at the workshop with partners and provided the relevant documentation for the consultancy) served as support staff for this evaluation. Lucrecia Ardón also served as a support person to carry out this evaluation as outlined in the contract signed by the consultant. The MS staff involved provided very useful inputs for recommendations, which are included in this report.

The evaluation included bibliographic analysis, visits and interviews with AAG staff, MS partners and national level analysts, as well as a workshop with current partners. Due to time restraints, it was not possible to conduct site visits to observe the work of organizations nor to develop specific case studies, although specific examples are provided throughout this document.

The consultant carried out the logistical arrangements for transportation, interviews and designed and facilitated the workshop with representatives of the partner organizations. AAG provided the list of partners. CEIBA was also included in this list; although the financial support received from MS ended in 2010, it was considered important to include them in the evaluation due to the relevance of their work and long standing relationship with the organization.

We were unable to conduct an interview with a representative of DANIDA in Guatemala as we were informed that the personnel in charge were unavailable during the dates the evaluation took place.
A matrix (Annex 4) based on MS´s format was used to compile interview data. A total of 20 bilateral interviews were conducted, which included two with the Director of AAG, AAG program and administrative staff, partner organizations and analysts relevant to the national context, as well as the former representative of MS in Guatemala. A list of people interviewed is attached (Annex 5).

As mentioned above, a workshop was designed and conducted with partner organizations in Panajachel, Sololá. This provided important input for the evaluation (Annex 6 – based on the MS format). Organizations that participated were eager to share and reflect together on items learned from the relationship and support of MS. Prior to the workshop, organizations were provided a copy of MS´s form to share their reflections (Annex 7); however, only two organizations completed the form.

These forms served as a guide to elicit and compile information. They were translated into Spanish, analyzed and adapted to the needs of the context of the evaluation.

2. STRATEGY AND PROGRAM DESIGN

2.1 Programmatic strategy in Guatemala

The five year strategy and strategic issues selected for MS´ work in Guatemala were framed under the global focus of MS, in which democracy is conceived as a means to eradicate poverty; and especially building local democracy as a vehicle to hold municipal governments accountable and as a way to strengthen local leadership. The issues prioritized in the region have a link to land rights within the trade justice program, which addresses the issues of access to markets (linking with fair trade markets in Europe and US) as well as the political aspect drawing on past experiences from the coffee sector as a model for learning. Promoting local tourism was also contemplated as a part of this strategy.

The local municipal level focus was outlined as a way to have greater citizen participation in the context of decentralization. This was also chosen to ¨moderate¨ the objective of MS considering resources and feasible and possible impacts.

The strategy proposed to procure the articulation of these two work areas, included the strengthening of local capacities and the articulation of efforts among national and regional level advocacy. This was done by strengthening alliances with organizations that accompany processes of building of local democracy and linking them with national level initiatives. Women, youth, indigenous groups and small farmers were the main actors and center of this strategy, which aimed to strengthen the capacity and skills of the chosen actors, both individually and as a group.

Gender was also defined as a key issue in the program in order to encourage women´s participation in both decision making and access to markets.

The Guatemala program adjusted its budget to what was available for the regional strategy. Each country program in Central America would assign 50 percent of its
resources to Building Local Democracy, 30 percent to Trade Justice and 20 percent to support activities related to migration and other innovative actions.

It is important to note that the strategy of MS rested on its accumulated experience in the region, that allowed it to build relationships with a wide range of actors on different levels, and to develop an in-depth analysis of the context. The objective of the first phase (2008-9) was to reinforce and consolidate the activities of BLD that had already started that would be ‘models’ for the second phase. The second phase (2010-2012) proposed to include new municipalities where the models of the first phase would be replicated. This process did not advance more in the case of Guatemala so far due to the merger process with AAG which took place in 2010 but is still being consolidated.

2.1.1. Relevance of strategic objectives and themes in relation to the national context.

The strategic objectives put forth by MS and their thematic focuses are considered in general terms relevant to the national context. Without a doubt, all of the people and organizations interviewed agreed with the need to build democracy by strengthening participation on the local level (linking with the national level), using a rights based approach that includes land as a factor for social dynamization where natural resources are the center of the problematic at present. Trade justice is more debated as an issue, mostly as it pertains to the possibility of competing in international markets taking into consideration the dilemmas involved in developing capacities to compete with big market dealers, even inside Guatemala. More emphasis was placed regarding the support to develop capacities for sustainable production to achieve food sovereignty. This could also be because the majority of the organizations have relative experiences in this theme, although at the same time they have more experience in struggling to exercise their rights on the subject of food security and sovereignty. Despite this, the importance of acquiring experience in commercialization has been most relevant to different organizations supported by MS.

Some expressed concerns in relation to the work on democracy building with the MS focus are related with the perceived assumption that local governments have the interest in establishing dialogue mechanisms with civil society organizations and that they have the resources to respond to their demands. One local partner commented to this effect: “if expectations are high and the local government does not have the capacity or interest in dialogue, this provokes greater frustration in the population”. Given the polarized political situation in various territories, and the growing parallel powers settled in the State at all levels, this concern is highly reasonable and points to the partners’ interest to build democratic processes that primarily address the organizational and cultural practices of the population.

More recently and linked to CBLD, the concept of governability is being discussed by the former MS partners. Mostly, the organizations guided their understanding of democracy (by MS’s conception) as a process for which communities and people participate in the decisions that affect their lives and look to ensure that local governments are transparent and held accountable and that people are able to speak for

2 Interview with Pop No’j.
themselves. But this is the case if the authorities represented their constituencies’ interests and are accountable to them, thus it was expressed that there is a need to further the collective understanding of concepts like democracy and governability in the actual context of Guatemala.

“We think that governability has its roots on the local level; if social and economic needs are satisfied on the local level - then there is governability and things work. This is complementary in this case with commercialization chains or with trade justice”.

Equally, emphasis was placed on the need to work more articulating strategies around the two themes. There are several reasons why this has been limited: the full agendas of the organizations, the different experiences in each area, different interests and priorities of the communities and their organizations, the lack of experience in making the link to the economic and political problematic, among others.

“We when speak of BLD and CTJ, we have to analyze both themes interrelating them; we cannot talk about politics and economics separately, but we must also think in the people’s ORGANIZATION, to avoid making the mistakes that have already been made”.

2.1.2. Coherence between country programs and activities supported.

The activities carried out in the framework of the issues prioritized by the program responded to the defined objectives, and they were not limited to technical and political activities, but also implied coordination efforts among different actors. The area that appeared to be the weakest and thus in which not many related activities were developed by the organizations was related to linking local and national efforts on advocacy. The activities prioritized in relation to the two prioritized themes were classified under the following categories:

a) Building Local Democracy:
- Creation of advocacy proposals for development at the municipal level
- Design of Political training proposals
- Accountability strategies
- Opening of lobbying processes,
- Processes of social audit
- Political advocacy actions with diverse sectors
- Analysis of the use of women’s time so that there are no extra tasks
- Debates and reflection around local democracy processes

b) Trade Justice
- Analysis of the technical aspects involved in accessing markets
- Analysis of the political implications in the access to markets and commercialization, including policies and norms
- Income generation activities for local groups
- Linking products to markets- Analysis on the limitations in attaining access to international markets, both due to the complex nature and

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3 Interview with Mamá Maquín.
requirements of these markets, and also because of the need to cover immediate needs.

The sharing of experiences between partners was essential in opening their vision of in regards to government responsibilities of being held accountable to the population, particularly in the realm of opportunities for economic initiatives and access to markets, a subject which most partners knew little about.

Another element that stands out is the contribution of MS with creating “sisterhood” relations between municipalities, like in the case of Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán with Santa Tecla in El Salvador. This relationship has helped organizations from both municipalities to learn more about municipal management, work with young people, support to women, etc.

Also, work has been done with other countries to design and share materials like a local democracy manual. This has also contributed to strengthen the feeling of ownership of the organizations regarding their coordination processes.

Also noted was the importance of the participation of MS partners in its regional advisory council, as well as in the thematic groups conformed at the national level to work together on the two prioritized themes. In the first case, the space functioned as a regional dialogue space and in the second as a space to share analysis that guided the strategies and nurtured joint actions.

2.1.3. Global coherence between strategy and the program portfolio in Guatemala, in relation to the context, including opportunities to link local program activities with advocacy activities on the national level (or international level)

This topic was addressed not only by organizations and MS partners but by political analysts interviewed. They consistently spoke of the importance of focusing on the issue of democracy as well as on markets, emphasizing, income-generation activities – with different emphasis. Equally, they agreed about the importance to prioritize women and youth as the population with more potential for transformation and with fewer opportunities to access resources and decision making opportunities.

In regards to linking local actions to national level advocacy processes, the efforts were limited in relation to the existing potential; more longer-term efforts and resources are required, but there are opportunities that can be taken advantage of, and it is in our opinion a strategic work area for the future. For example, there is big potential to link local production initiatives with national and regional level advocacy processes around free trade agreements and national policies (such as was done in the case of Ceiba).

Also important was the linkage of local organizations in regional spaces for advocacy and development plans, and the establishment of relations with government entities at the national level in the area of communitarian tourism, where interests of different sectors coincided despite the fact that there are big differences in terms of resources, influence for decision making and experience.
2.1.4. The point to which a gender analysis has been applied throughout the strategies and program activities.

The Immediate Objective 3 focused on ensuring that the needs and interests of women are included specifically in the organizations´ strategies and activities and in the process of holding local governments accountable.

With the exception of Mamá Maquín, that works with women´s groups as well as with mixed (male and female) youth groups, all partner organizations work with mixed groups and state that in all of their processes the theme of gender relations is increasingly present both in informal spaces and in formal educational spaces, which is indicated by the curriculum content (Instituto Maya-Mam) designed in one municipality, and made also evident by the quantitative indicators of participation.

In some cases emphasis is placed on the need to further their ¨own¨ gender perspective as an organization, drawing on the conceptual and philological concepts of duality and complementarity as put forth in the Mayan cosmovision. This is important as well as the need to systematically analyze the different impacts of the actions and participation of men and women. However, these perspectives did not appear to be something permanently analyzed or explicit in the work of the organizations, allegedly because of lack of tools to incorporate them in their analysis. The problematic of violence against women and insecurity, on the other hand, more clearly demonstrated the differences in power between men and women and its different impacts as illustrated by some partners´ reports. It has motivated that the groups start to think more of strategies with a gender perspective when working with mixed groups.

On the other hand, in general the results derived from the work show a significant increase in women leaders participation in organizational, educational and local advocacy processes, although there is not an analytical tool that could allow to measure the impact of this participation in the lives and time of women.

The organizations agree that the difficulties that women´s participation undertake go from the domestic sphere to public insecurity. They recognize that many leaders are resistant to the participation of women, although they also identify important advances as women have opened more spaces for participation. Migration has also played a part in this dynamic, because many women have become ¨heads of household¨ increasing their workloads (not necessarily their rights and liberties as they for instance continue to be watched from a far by their husbands through people from their own community) and transforming their roles.

2.2 Focus on the relationship with CPs

In the evaluation that took place in 2007, the consultants noted the partners´ high level of familiarity with the global strategy of MS. This was also noted throughout this evaluation.
During the workshop with partner organizations, people mentioned how they appreciated the respectful, “horizontal” relationship with MS and the quality of its accompaniment to partner organizations. They also appreciated the clarity and simplicity of the MS reporting requirements. The flexibility of MS to support emerging initiatives in an emergency and changing context in accordance with the priorities and ways of working in indigenous communities was also noted, while at the same time maintaining a strategic focus, particularly in emergency situations.

Some aspects that stood out consistently were:

- The support from MS is open to suggestions and analysis from partner organizations to visualize processes; it does not have to rigidly follow projects.
- The objectives and results have not strayed; rather there is flexibility to make changes according to the context.
- The partners learned from each other on different themes and other municipalities that were not solely the focus of their organization’s Project. This favoured alliances and joint analysis.
- The support of MS favoured the increase in income for families and communities, while at the same time furthering the advocacy initiatives for policy changes and programs.
- MS kept the organizations informed on the merger process with AAG; the regional advisory council also contributed in this process.
- The space that was promoted between the thematic areas was very important; there were meetings with organizations that work with BLD and TJ and analysis of their current situation; there have also been guests from other organizations.
- MS facilitated a first meeting with ActionAid partners and kept them informed on the merging process.
- The support to strengthen capacities and learn new things
- Exchanges with other Central American organizations.

2.2.1 Relevance of the selected organizations in relation to the themes

The partner organizations of MS present an interesting mix of organizations with local, regional and national level impacts. The fact that there are a limited number of partner organizations facilitates the sharing of experiences among them.

In the case of Ceiba for example, they shared experiences of productive agriculture processes that were later turned into advocacy efforts regarding free trade agreements and rural development policies. Pop No’j had already worked with young people from the Maya cosmovision perspective, but was strengthened by the project supported by MS in Huehuetenango as it allowed them to make new alliances on the ground. Vivamos Mejor had organizational experience and its work with community based ecotourism was of interest to the other partner organizations and at the same time they have strengthened their work in local advocacy. ADAM is the organization with the most experience in production, income generation and opening markets, and they have enriched the other organizations by sharing their experiences, particularly women with the exposition of their products.
In general terms it can be concluded that a combination of related experiences in the two thematic program areas, as well as the history of work and professionalism of the partner organizations has been fruitful in widening the vision of all the partners as to their potential to generate new opportunities of coordination at the local level, yet deepening the national vision, and has also been key in advancing the MS strategy.

2.2.2 Capacity building

In addition to the training processes directly supported by MS to strengthen institutional capacities and leadership abilities, the organizations also took advantage of their diverse experiences. For example, partner organizations learned from the experience of Ceiba in monitoring municipal budgets. They strengthened their analytical skills with the thematic groups while gaining a regional perspective.

Organizations working in Huehuetenango stated that they have put into practice what they learned about local democracy and with strengthened institutional capacity they have been able to conduct referendums on mining for example, at the community level. Also, the organizations strengthened their capacities and abilities through the relationships with other organizations, opening their access to “technical instruments” (creating operational plans and others).

Due to the time limitations of this evaluation, it is not possible to place a more concrete value on the capacity gained under the MS program, but the organizations pointed out the importance of specific support provided to build internal capacities, both at the individual and organizational level, and we were able to find considerable documentation that refer to concrete advances in the managerial, planning and accountability levels, apart from specific learnings on trade and advocacy.

3 ACHIEVEMENTS

The evaluation conducted in 2007 recommended to develop a baseline and quantifiable indicators, and the alleged starting points for partners were examined. In the new strategy, the objectives were defined in the light of the previous ones that had demonstrated results and positive outcomes. The achievements included here reflect the findings in the framework of that evaluation and those documented in the assessment that took place in November 2010.

For the period considered for this evaluation, the development objective strategy was defined as follows:

**In 2012, 24 municipalities in Central America have contributed to the reduction of poverty and increased democratic practices in the local governments.**

The assessment of 2010 states that: “The general progress of the objectives has been satisfactory, considering that the democratic transition process in Guatemala is the most recent in Central America. Both organizations and State structures are not prepared to implement processes that promote citizen participation and empowerment of civil society, especially for women. Despite that, the advances in diverse areas like political
empowerment of women, education and training on generating political agendas, demands, proposals; as well as negotiation and advocacy in women’s and youth organizations on the local level have been quantitatively and qualitatively improved”.

3.1 Building local democracy

Two immediate objectives were set forth:

OI 1:

By 2012, in 24 municipalities in Central America municipal governments take up demands put forth by the rural population at legally defined citizen participation forums, and are transparent and accountable.

It is evident from the documents consulted and interviews conducted that in all cases organizations have achieved important advances in increasing and strengthening the participation of groups of the population in processes of proposal building and citizenship participation. However, aspects of social audit and accountability continue to be a challenge due to structural factors as a weak State, linked to limited resources, lack of political will and political clientelism, among others.

It was also evident that there were advances on women’s participation and participation of young people in organizational processes and in building their own agendas and advocacy initiatives at the local level, but deeper analysis is needed to differentiate the impacts of this participation. The empowerment of young people via the training processes has demonstrated great potential as a way to develop local leadership.

Among the most important achievements are:

- In 4 municipalities of Sololá there is greater capacity of analysis and now have the tools to conduct a social audit. This is the product of the learning spaces supported by MS.
- There has been participation in the building of municipal agendas, primarily by women, youth and local producers,
- Alternative development proposals to open pit mining in Huehuetenango have been generated and presented
- Participation in local development counsels and the inclusion of women and youth agendas in municipal plans, including funding for a few initiatives.
- A community tourism network and community based ecotoursim organizations has been strengthened in the area of Sololá.
- 19 municipalities of Lake Atitlán were able to advocate for the educational curriculum to include information on how to care for the environment.

OI2:

By 2012, in 24 municipalities in Central America, men, women and rural youth are represented by their organizations, in alliance with social organizations from other municipalities, as well as at the national level, in policy advocacy activities via-a-vis municipal and national government entities.
- In 7 municipalities women and youth have been trained, municipal offices addressing youth issues have been set with representation at the departmental level; local organizations are capable of generating and administering proposals, alliances and coordinated initiatives.
- In Nentón women have a curriculum packet for their training school.
- In Colotenango and San Pedro Necta 64 youth participate in a training program and create a youth agenda; created maps of at-risk youth, promote a young leadership camp and have conducted an assessment of educational opportunities.
- In Colotenango, with the support of Ceiba, the local organization ASDITOJ has been strengthened and joint efforts with other local organizations take place.
- The CUC’s campesino base has been strengthened in 12 municipalities in Huehuetenango.
- In Santiago, San Marcos, and San Juan la Laguna the laws and rights of youth and women are known and they put forth their agendas and participate in development counsels (like in Colotenango and Nentón).
- 70 leaders have been trained in defense of the territory and mining referendums have taken place in Colotenango.
- Advocacy efforts on the subject of mining and community referendums have been carried out before the OAS.
- Women of communities around the lake of Atitlán organize and have their own agendas
- Assistance for tropical storm Agatha was provided.
- In Nentón women producers participate in a commercial fair and have contact with the Women’s Secretariat of the Presidency-Seprem;
- A Women’s network was established with 10 local organizations.
- Iik Luna builds houses for women with the support of FOGUAVI.

As mentioned above, although there is a level of linkages and coordination, there is also a need to strengthen the link between processes and advances on the local level with the national level. It is also important to strengthen local organizations to access national spaces encouraging exchange and coordination initiatives among those two levels.

### 3.1.1 Degree of achievement of objectives of Counterpart organizations

MS partner organizations stated that it is important to consider that in some cases the support from MS was complemented by support from other donors. For this reason, it is difficult to measure the impact of an intervention in an isolated manner. However, the partners stated that their objectives were taken on by MS in the implementation of its strategy and the flexible nature of the relationship was a key factor that allowed them to move forward on their objectives.

The following is an synthetic assessment made by the organizations in relation to the important achievements derived from the support of MS in past years:
**Ceiba**
- More integrated communities
- Communities know better their rights as Indigenous Peoples;
- Contribution to the resurge of community organization (very disarticulated after the armed conflict)
- The figure of Indigenous mayors has been reinstalled.
- Larger participation in referendums on mining.

**Pop no´j**
- Making visible youth as a segment of the population with particular characteristics and needs.;
- There are young people participating in cocodes and comudes (structures of local governance in the context of descentralization), including the Pop No´j team.
- Youth agendas in municipalities; the municipal corporation approved the youth agenda in Colotenango.
- Greater and better knowledge of the reality of youth by local organizations, Pop No´j and others.
- Promotion of the organization of youth from their Mayan identify.

**ADAM**
- In San Pedro Necta the municipal corporation approved the municipal agenda
- The specific needs and characteristics of youth have been made visible
- ADAM did not have a strategic plan and one was developed including actions within an economic solidarity focus
- Impacts in the process of becoming incorporated in the local assembly.
- An increased number of beneficiaries and initiatives in non agricultural activities – textiles, and market opportunities for organizations; the democratization in boards of directors of organizations; organization and socialization of sellers and vendors.
- Creation of a data base of suppliers and products.
- There is now an office on risk management which addresses also issues of food security; joint actions are being taken with other organizations via the municipal women´s office and with SESSAN (the government´s office for food security).
CUC

- Strengthening of CUC in San Pedro Necta
- Gender: the organization mandates that meeting attendance be guaranteed by percentages 50% women and 50% men, although this does not always happen, there has been progress,
- A regional conference of youth will take place at the end of a national conference. Youth led demands have been put forth and they are linking them to the youth of Vía Campesina,
- Greater women´s participation and strengthening of skills and capacities
- Established alliances on the departmental and municipal level with the departmental assembly of Huehuetenango and linking what is done in San Pedro Necta and Cuyotenango.
- MS´ contribution strengthened the work of CUC in general; for example, the Rural Development proposal and advocacy work they are doing at the national level is linked with the work of Waqib Qij and other organizations at the regional level. MS supported the work of CUC in San Pedro Necta and this work on the municipal level has been tied in to the overall work of CUC at the national level.
- Efforts were coordinated with the municipal women´s office and women participate in national level activities.
VIVAMOS MEJOR.

- VM received direct funding from MS for the Vayamaya project and children leaders with Intercultural Bilingual Centers; this has strengthened the work with young “infant” leaders.
- Women participate in the local system of development councils- the COMUDES and CODEDES- in some municipalities.
- Advances have been made in the economic solidarity sphere generating more fair prices. Follow up has been given to advocate for production in development plans. Women have obtained direct funding for farming projects from FONAPAZ and also for a housing project for members of the association.
- Monitored and evaluated local government and public institutions related to the cleaning of Lake Atitlán. There are a variety of projects for women, youth, etc.
- The work focuses also now on a trade group and in economic solidarity, and the contribution and coordination with ADAM has been enriching.
- The legalization of a group of young tour guides, with a focus on local democracy.
- 3 municipalities have received support from the municipal women’s office.
- In 23 municipalities, the organization is supporting the development of women and youth centered agendas – they take place at varying levels of development.
- We have made alliances with the International Alliance of community based tourism and the network meets monthly. Both young people and women participate and are included in these spaces.
- The young tourism network influenced the creation of the network on environmental impacts in which the Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Tourism participate. It has been complicated for them to participate due to varying visions, but it is still a well appreciated experience.
- A working relationship with INGUAT (the tourism national chamber) has been established and support has been provided for the tourism and citizen participation work. As a result of this the organization has built tourism plans.
3.2 Trade Justice

The immediate objective for this area of work was defined as follows:

OI 1. "By 2012, women and youth associated in legally established economic organizations in 13 municipalities in Central America have the capacity for agriculture production and/or provision of community tourism services, in accordance with the standards of quality required by fair/alternative trade networks.”

OI 2. By 2012, national representatives of small producers exert influence upon national policies and plans that promote the marketing of agricultural products and community tourism services, with emphasis on women and rural youth.
The thematic reflection conducted in 2010 and this evaluation show that the capacity of the organizations has been strengthened, primarily through their legalization and training on strategic topics like: management, marketing and negotiation, fair trade, gender and youth, communications and others.

In the case of Guatemala, organizations have improved their access to markets and their understanding of the market system as well as the participation of women and young people (especially in 3 municipalities of Guatemala) in these initiatives. Among the major achievements, the following were mentioned:

- Two organizations have been strengthened to improve their work in the tourism sector (Santiago, San Marcos, San Juan La Laguna), and there is a network of organizations working on the consolidation of community based tourism initiatives.
- Research has been conducted to open a museum in Santiago; there are two organizations trained in best agriculture practices in Santa Catarina linked to international circuits.
- A marketing database has been created with information about 40 organizations of small producers and there is a commercial relationship with El Salvador.
- The thematic group of trade justice has been trained on economic solidarity and created a network of women’s handicrafts organizations.
- The Boards of directors of the organizations have been strengthened with procedures manuals, administration, participation and advocacy for women. Promoters have been trained to participate in actions to take care of the lake Atitlán and there are women working in consortium with the women’s office in Santiago.
- Twenty young people have been accredited as tourist guides in Santiago, San Marcos and San Juan.
- Another important achievement is that the producers have showed their products in 4 national and international fairs. They have a plan and catalogues to sell (60 women inserted in the market).
- More than 50 women in communities surrounding the lake take part in income generating projects.

Beyond the specific two areas of work, the thematic groups merit special attention for the value placed on them and because they provide a space for training and coordination of efforts. Although people mentioned a few hang-ups in coordinating the groups and in their follow up, repeatedly they mentioned positive aspects. “We have strengthened our processes; initially the thematic group was a space for discussion and even though there were actions it was mostly discussion; but we were able to keep the thematic group going with analysis and concrete actions, with life experiences that generate actions, that contribute to proposals; of course this takes time, but we have seen that it is an important space that has been created. And the work this year reflects proposals that the women brought forth last year, and now they are becoming a reality in the form of fairs, workshops, and markets – alongside training processes. Now we need that
even more partners take part in these exchanges, defining whether it is in the territory or in other fashion, considering recourses available.\textsuperscript{4}

3.2.1 Degree of success in achieving immediate objectives of the CPs

The achievements prioritized by the partner organizations are listed in this section, although some are also mentioned in the above section. These are the product of a group exercise that the participating organizations defined with the purpose to elicit common learnings and findings related to their immediate objectives:

- 7 organizations in 4 municipalities have increased their access to markets.
- Community tourism networks and economic solidarity have been strengthened.
- Organizations are more organized and coordinate better with other organizations and entities.
- There is more interest and capacity to implement advocacy processes at the local and departmental levels.
- Local leaders have strengthened their capacity to create, negotiate and administer proposals and projects.
- A good level of dialogue with authorities has been established to negotiate proposals to support productive-commercial projects.
- Local organizations increased their capacity to administer projects and funds from the State and other entities.
- Organizations have been trained to participate in Cocodes, Comudes, Codedes, and local committees on economic improvement, tourism and environment.
- Participation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Agexpront in a few initiatives.
- Women in San Juan and Santiago form a departmental economic solidarity network.
- Women from these communities start a cattle project.
- Women and young people participate in the Codede’s tourism and environmental committee in municipalities of Lake Atitlán.
- Started working with Inguat – National Institute on Tourism.
- Participation in Comude of Santa Catarina.
- Promoted panel discussions about the rural development law (\textit{ley de desarrollo rural}).
- Alliances are formed as a result of the disaster brought forth by tropical storm Agatha.

At the end of last year it was estimated that 90\% of the objectives and results for the period were completed. Although the current dynamic points to good results, we estimate that on the topic of advocacy in national policies and trade agreements a favorable context does not exist in Guatemala and this has impacted the results. Even though social organizations promote working on the topic. It is believed that the debate this year will be centered on the elections and that the electoral process will be the main priority of the government and political parties.

The direct support and strengthening of the local organizations has been a factor in the success of the processes. On the other hand, the climatic and environmental

\textsuperscript{4} Workshop with Partners in Panajachel, Sololá. April 2011
vulnerability is a decisive factor as to whether they continue or not advancing their achievements. The organizations are highly vulnerable and are not prepared or trained to confront natural disasters.

There is strengthened capacity to advocate for policies relating to trade beneficial for small producers, although on a lesser level advocacy in trade agreements, specially the AdA with the European Union.

In Guatemala, three MS partner organizations achieved representation on the local and district level to influence municipal development. Also, organizations promoted activities to share experiences on marketing and tourism. Almost all the CPs strengthened their knowledge of commercial policies and some public activities were coordinated with civil society networks from the European Union and South America.

Even though some people maintain that the economic crisis presents opportunities to focus more on national and international markets, experience tells us that exporting to US or European markets have a very high cost for organizations. The benefits of exporting are relatively small, mainly due to strict quality control requirements and in places where there is only a small amount of land to cultivate it is used for subsistence farming. For this reason at present the focus is on efforts to guarantee an increase in the income for families in local and regional markets. The struggle to attain food sovereignty requires also a long complicated fight to keep using native seeds.

3.3. **Commitment of Partner organizations to achieve objectives**

The MS partner organizations have shown a high level of commitment both to MS´ global strategy and in linking it to its mission and specific objectives. Some organizations found in MS a strategy that in general terms met their own and was flexible to adapt them to the context.

3.4 **Contribution of Program activities to changes at the political level**

Linking local level efforts with policies and national level processes is still a weak aspect in the work supported by MS. It is notorious that organizations and groups have had significant advances in opening spaces to participate in decentralized structures on the municipal level and in some cases on the departmental level – in COMUDES and COCODES – mainly for women and youth. Nonetheless, the linking of policy advocacy efforts to the national level is still weak, although in aspects of information and awareness raising there have been advances. In the field of access to markets and community based tourism there have also been advances in establishing agreements that also have served to nurture the groups with information. But these have not translated into changes in policy especially pertaining to market regulations, and it is unlikely that significant changes will be made in the context of the prevailing model and the political situation.

3.5 **Concrete results for rights holders (women, men, youth)**
The increase in participation of women and youth in decision making spaces at the local level and in productive initiatives to better their incomes can be noted. As mentioned above, no analysis has been done to differentiate the impact of interventions by specific population groups, on aspects dealing with workload, transformation of the roles of men and women, concrete benefits for young people and others.

It is evident that the projects supported by MS have also had an important impact in bettering the lives of community groups via productive processes and marketing chains, mostly on the local level and particularly for women. Unfortunately, in this evaluation and due to time constraints it was not possible to include a quantitative indicator to numerically show this impact.

### 3.6 Long term sustainability of the results

Some MS partner organizations have a high level of sustainability due to their long history and work on the ground (eg. Vivamos Mejor and Ceiba), while others are organizations with few years of experience that also work on complex and innovative topics that need to continue to be strengthened. This strengthening still requires support from external agents for its sustainability. The idea has thus been to move slowly from the stronger organizations to smaller organisations connected the the bigger ones in order to build their capacity as well in a collaborative fashion. This is the case with the two above mentioned strong organisations.

The social and political context in Guatemala is marked by a complicated regional and world context that favours the market and the global dynamics at the center of its relations. This makes groups that do not have enough resources negotiate in a permanent weak position. From there the organizational strengthening and the consolidation of local capacities of these groups is a deciding factor to generate strategies and processes that allow them to increase their income and that of the communities, and to contribute to build alternatibles which are feasible and self-sustainable for the population. In this sense, and although we found a diverse of opinions on this topic, it is important to explore more in depth the cost-benefit of opening international markets and that of encouraging local markets with more horizontal rules in the game.

Another element that adds to the complexity of the context is the environmental vulnerability. The levels of vulnerability is high in the areas where most of the organizations work and this problematic needs immediate and sustained attention.

In synthesis, the long term sustainability of the achieved results to date depends firstly on those mentioned factors and on the organizing strength of communities and that of the organizations that support them, as well as in their capacity to generate multiple alliances to achieve their objectives and strengthen their capacity to administer risks. In this sense, the thematic groups can continue playing a strategic role as has been the case in the past.

### 3.7 Preliminary evaluation of how programs could influence the national strategy of ActionAid
The projects and organizations supported by MS can contribute with important experiences on the local level to feed AAG strategy, favouring its linkage to national level advocacy processes. In this sense, it is important to make an effort to integrate the accumulated achievements of MS and its partners with the organizational experience in development of AAG.

The merger of AAG and MS programs in Guatemala is recent and still in course. After about only a year since the merger, definite conclusions cannot yet be made. Nonetheless, there are a few areas and processes that merit focusing attention to in the next period. The following observations are made based on the analysis of key documents and from interviews with MS and AAG staff:

- With a small, highly committed technical team, AAG develops interventions on a wide spectrum of topics in diverse geographical areas. This includes training processes, organizational strengthening, research, awareness raising and campaigns. The target groups, primarily peasant organizations - campesinos, rural communities, women and youth fall under the guidelines of the AAI strategy and its option for the poor. One can affirm that the programmatic platform of AAG is highly pertinent to the core problems of development in Guatemala. Incorporating MS programs requires expanding the work and presents a risk of becoming too dispersed. This should be the main concern in the current merger process.

- As expected, the merger signified a great change for AAG. Nonetheless, it did not truly consider all the consequences the merger would have on its organic process and the restructuring measures taken to absorb new challenges. This is to say that the merger meant more than simply more work for existing staff. For this reason, the organization needs to identify institutional ways to redistribute work and overall functioning tasks. To this respect it is important to look at the possibilities that the People for Change Program of AADk (Programa Gente para el Cambio) have to offer for technical personnel (advisors and people who can ¨inspire¨ the work) while the merger process becomes better consolidated.

- Along those lines, there was general consensus among those interviewed about the contribution of the MS program official as part of the AAG staff in terms of the support provided by the former official in daily tasks, in stimulating debate over approaches, visions, concepts, information, etc.

MS’s contributions to the programmatic platform of AAG have been diverse. Those that stand out are indigenous rights, trade justice and risk management. Currently in Guatemala conflicts related to natural resources have escalated and worsened over time. One such case is the Polochic Valley conflict which is referenced below.

**Indigenous rights**

- The situation of indigenous peoples has a tangential presence in the AAG program, primarily focused on the campesino movement and rural women.
None the less, Guatemala is a country where the so-called “ethnic minorities” are the majority of the population making up more than 60% of the population. Focusing on poverty, the indigenous people represents one of the groups of the population most excluded from public services and the benefits of development. These people live in places where the State and market do not reach them entirely. What the national agenda is putting forth is constructing a multicultural State as an expression of an inclusive State – a structural change that signifies fully incorporating indigenous peoples respecting their cultural and ancestral rights, collective values, languages, spirituality, their own justice codes (laws), use of their territories and most of all their own organizations. In fact, indigenous organizations should not be confused with social actors or members of civil society because the institutional nature of these connotations are more limited than that of a nation that would attempt to rescue their historical continuity to the cultural legacy of the indigenous peoples. Such is the case of Indigenous Municipalities and other entities accepted as territorial authorities that exist parallel to the official (State) local governments.

- Along the same lines, indigenous issues are central to the problems of development in Guatemala and go beyond the attempts to assimilate a reductionist focus linked to the campesino movement (a class focus) or the problems facing rural women (a gender focus) or youth without opportunities (a generation focus). AAG has the challenge of integrating the input generated by MS into their programmatic platform.

*Trade justice*

- Trade justice emerged as a thematic program area of MS out of the need to complement advocacy strategies with efforts of solidarity ventures to access markets on more favorable terms. The focus has evolved from an emphasis on improving aspects of productivity to a more complementary approach in the sphere of sharing and identifying mechanisms to access diverse markets, building commercialization channels and trying to reduce the number of intermediaries. ADAM is an organization of particular relevance for its national contacts and with El Salvador in this sense. Later, it added to its work community based tourism with a focus on women and youth as a service in its global strategy for local economic development. There is also a political dimension to their work whose objective is to influence public policy, plans and programs relating to marketing of agriculture goods and community based tourism. Vivamos Mejor and Iik Luna are partners in this area.

AAG’s approach focuses on strengthening the campesino economy by strengthening organization in defense of land rights and to confront the aggressive large estate (*latifundio*) expansion. The most relevant and pertinent aspects of the daily work are advocating for public policy, carrying out campaigns that influence public opinion, researching property and the flow of capital given the structural situation of the country in relation to its high population density, a lack of access to land, a concentration of farm lands and no regulation on behalf of the State. In addition, they work on the right to food and
sustainable agriculture with a productive focus and an ample training program on agro-ecology.

• The two focuses or approaches complement each other well. The differences between the two are noted when emphasized. AAG has more of a focus which promotes the support of the struggle of the campesino movement with advocacy actions directed at the State while making less emphasis on the production side more directed toward food security. While MS’s experience concentrates on production, exchanging and services in a market based local economic development strategy, which looks to create an economic income that allows for local investment and savings, while placing less emphasis on advocacy activities. The integration of these two approaches would make for a very strong strategy if the human, technical and financial resources are made available.

The political context

• The current political context is marked by the elections of this year, meaning that there may be significant changes in government policy, legislative power and turnover in mayors’ offices. This situation affects the possibilities to carry out advocacy actions directed toward public officials, who are involved in their campaigning. However, looking at the situation in a positive light, this is an ideal time to conduct social audits of the electoral platforms of political parties and candidates and demand accountability of elected officials (mayors, members of Congress). In the Guatemalan political tradition, governments are not re-elected and for this reason one can predict the next government will be more right-wing than the present administration. This would imply a worsening of the current development model and consequently social conflict.

• Along those lines the current administration has recently made public the National Planning System (Sistema Nacional de Planificación - SNP), which consists of 287 (out of 333) municipal development plans, 17 (out of 22) departmental plans and four regional plans. These plans are available to the public at large. The plans were created with a participatory vision and in line with the development counsel system. This system pretends to link sectors (Ministry level) public policy to territorial (municipal, departmental) plans with funding for them from the General Budget Law of the Republic. This is to say that projects not included in a development plan will not be funded with the aim to reduce the possibility of discretionary use of public funds. It has been suggested that AAG place more attention on these elements and use these instruments for their advocacy, accountability, and social audit actions.

The conflict in the Polochic Valley as an example of key struggles and conflictivity

• AAG has had a relevant and important role in the Polochic Valley conflict, where in all its crudeness the contradictions of the expansion of the agro-industrial model can be seen. In this case the planting of African palm for palm oil and biodiesel production. In fact, this conflict does not receive the media coverage it deserves which entails violent evictions of campesinos from their
lands, the collusion of Guatemalan and Nicaraguan capital (Grupo Pellas) in buying property, generating grave social (campesino poverty associated with loss of lands), environmental (mono-crop farming associated with losing biodiversity), and territorial (absence of local development) impacts. The State presence is only felt via repressive actions and a total lack of institutions to regulate the legal grounds of land and entities that protect the campesino economy.

- This situation is characterized by the concentration of property and alliances of international capital which reveal the need to take advantage of the importance of being apart of a federation of national organizations, particularly the close relationship between AAG and AADk in Nicaragua and Denmark. This coordination could benefit work in the areas of research, transfer of knowledge, advocacy and public opinion campaigns, joint actions and fine-tuning the focus of interventions.

**Risk Management**

- Risk management has been a theme that has experienced great change during the merger process. Going from a focus on emergency assistance (a reactive response) to working on vulnerabilities from a preventative approach linked to food security and in some cases the territorial planning with a focus on river beds. The cooperation with organizations like Vivamos Mejor, ADAM and Mamá Maquín has been especially useful. Specific instruments for public policy have been formulated in a participatory way in some municipalities. They publically demand local officials to use such instruments so they are included in the municipal development plans.

- In reference to the activation of the National Planning System (mentioned above), risk management is a topic included in each municipal and departmental development plan with a specific methodology of how to identify threats. With this institutional framework it is easier today to work on these issues like AAG does. This is to say, linking disaster prevention to food security and planning for the river beds.

In conclusion, there appears to be two convergent development strategies, each with its own focus and priorities, thus the expectation of merging and complementing each other should offer a strong programmatic platform in a complex merger process that merits special support. The AAG program tends to visualize a merger process with a preferably national focus (advocacy directed primarily towards the State and other decision-making actors), oriented towards the right to public services with a sector vision (rural development), using organizing (campesino) and social movements as a model. On the other hand, in MS we have a model with a focus on local (territorial) development with advocacy strategies directed primarily towards municipal governments, using community organizing and producers to try to gain spaces (markets) in a vision of increasing and diversifying production and marketing. In both programs (MS and AAG being looked at in its previous fashion) there is a strong gender and youth component throughout the work and there are elements of mutual support of both strategies themes (BLD and TJ) within both programs but with different emphasis in focus.
The dilemma for AAG of how to build a compact and cohesive program without running the risk of becoming too disperse has to be looked out. The link with former MS partners can strengthen and complement their strategies while at the same time contribute to strengthen the communities organization and indigenous movements. In other words, widening AAG geographical scope can be an opportunity to focus more in organizational strengthening for movement-building (indigenous, women, youth, peasant).

We also believe there are important learnings about the work style and administrative requirements of MS that could be helpful in this phase for AAG, as long as they are in line with the global standards and requirements of the institution. Particularly important has been the flexibility to allow planning and reporting in a fashion that allows partners to provide global information to different INGOs supporting them, saving precious time and effort that can be devoted to their organizational, political and social work.

3.8 Other successes

- The thematic groups are highly valued and build opportunities to articulate efforts and strengthen technical capacity and political analysis.

- The type and quality of accompaniment and MS support provided to the organizations are important achievements, considering the context of vulnerability in which the organizations operate in in Guatemala. There are highly positive opinions regarding the entire process. It was requested to transmit the organizations’ appreciation for the MS representative in recent years, Rogelia Soto, as to the rest of the MS staff. The considerably small amount of financial support has been compensated by the close attention from the programme officer. The dialogue has been respectful of partner’s wishes yet challenging them and thus bringing forth viable solutions for all parties.

- The fact that the organizations show a willingness to coordinate and mutually strengthen each other is an important output of MS’ work as fragmentation is one of the biggest problems for civil society organizations in Guatemala.

3.9 Capacity Building

3.9.1 The degree to which capacity building has been incorporated in the program strategies and activities and its effectiveness

The successes that stand out most for organizations regarding their strengthening and capacity building are as follows:

- Vivamos Mejor: partners technically contributed to the creation of 15 municipal development plans.
- ADAM: partners contributed to the creation of the organization’s strategy and the opening of commercial channels. A training manual was compiled by the organizations using consensus.
- Pop No’j has strengthened its on-the-ground presence and its work with young people. The organizations strengthened their capacity to monitor with recommendations from MS.
- Mamá Maquín started a process to promote economic initiatives for women, with advice from ADAM.

All organizations have strengthened their administrative and planning systems and procedures.

3.9.2 Value and effectiveness of programmatic focus used by MS

Partner organizations valued the openness of MS to adapt to the context and to the needs of the groups, as mentioned above. An important element has been the capacity to adapt priorities to the crisis that have presented themselves (mostly environmental).

The focus of the program allowed for alliances between organizations and to start working in an articulated manner the two thematic areas with a more integral vision. Some organizations were concerned about advancing their work on economic alternatives, but this space allowed them to learn, share and make proposals, as well as to figure out ways to coordinate.

3.10 Major Impacts

Although the report includes, throughout all sections, important results identified both by this consultant and by MS staff and partners, we describe as follows what were considered, in the framework of this evaluation, to be the most important impacts of the work developed by MS during the past years in Guatemala:

- The partners deepened their analysis of the context and the problems, challenges and opportunities in a more integrated way, linking the local, national and international dynamics on the issues prioritized within Local Democracy and Trade Justice. They visualize the importance of working on these issues with a complementary strategy which looks for self-sustainability, recognizing that the international cooperation is an external actor that facilitates and catalyzes their efforts, but that does not replace the functions of the State nor their self-capacity to decide on their development issues.

- The building of alliances and coordination processes among the different local organizations and with other organizations in other areas and communities, breaking the cycle of mistrust and competence among organizations and participating actively in the exchange of experiences and learning. This has contributed to implement new practices that strengthen the democratization of different advocacy and political spaces and of the organizations as well.

- The strengthening of local leaders (mainly women and young leaders), which has resulted in concrete advances through advocacy initiatives with local and departmental authorities for the opening of spaces for citizens’ participation; for instance, in the creation of women’s municipal offices and for young leaders and in the approval of budgetary allocations for the implementation of specific
projects that have benefitted both groups of population. These projects have included economic benefits with support for productive initiatives and/or commercialization of products and services, as well as other strategic projects including literacy for women and support to train new young leaders.

- The level of dialogue with local governments and institutions of the State has had an important impact in the change of paradigms and pre-conceived ideas of groups of population in relation to the exercise of their own power and the role of the State. This has contributed to build citizenship and therefore contributes to build local/national democracy. Particularly, the revelation of the capacities of indigenous people, women and youth to demand their rights and the strengthening of local governments for being obliged to respond to the demands of society has been quite important. This, despite the fact that we still live in a society marked with post-conflict dynamics which merge with a context of ungovernability, violence, discrimination and almost total absence of the State at the local level.

- The processes of production and access to markets have had a high level of impact, not only to generate better income for the families who guarantee at some level the food sovereignty for their families, but for women producers, because these processes have given them the recognition of the value of their contributions from the part of their families and communities, and has increased access to education for girls and boys among other benefits. This recognition contributes to increase the self-esteem and self-valoration of women, and to recognize and make evident the double role women play (productive and reproductive), which starts to point to the patriarchal structures that promote inequity and inequality in the communities.

- The processes of youth training have contributed to strengthen the organizations and social movements at the local level, and also to renovate leadership and political thinking and positioning among them and their organizations. They have also contributed to promote changes in the patriarchal culture by strengthening the participation of women in the social and political processes, and by going out from their communities and widen their perspectives and knowledge. Women have taken advantage as well of other training opportunities, facilitated by MS, that promoted their self-esteem and self-consciousness of their value and contributions, which also derives in the questioning of their established roles and in the demand to meet the need to establish fair and armonic relations at the personal, family and community levels.

- The training processes have promoted the strengthening of the knowledge and learning of the communities on their rights and obligations as citizens, on the laws concerning citizen participation, both at the local and national level. This has also encouraged new advocacy initiatives with concrete proposals related to municipal and departmental development plans, with a more sustainable and integrated vision which incorporated social, environmental and cultural elements.
4. BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Throughout the evaluation lessons learned emerged from the best practices of MS’s work. Some of them are outlined above in the achievements section. Others that came out during the workshop with organizations were:

- That youth working with other youth that know the context is a successful strategy.
- The importance in strengthening the cultural identity and age range, as they help to strengthen self-esteem, provide security, allow proposal of alternatives and nurture principles and values.
- Workshops with volunteer promoters for local tourism are replicated with other groups, making the efforts more sustainable.
- The support for transportation and communications has been key to stimulate participation.
- The educational area is a hands-on learning experience that is enriching for youth, as showed with the Pop No’j experience.
- Encouraging the complementation of adult experiences with new techniques and ideas from young people unifies the communities and enriches the processes.
- The thematic groups are a vehicle for articulation, complementing efforts and learning among partners.
- The limited number of partners allowed for better quality of accompaniment.
- Strengthening the organizations and the capacity of staff has been an important factor in consolidating the organizing efforts at the local level.
- The link between local, regional and national level organizations breaks through the isolation and there is potential for initiatives with other approaches.
- Fluent communication and the experience of the MS representative were key in moving the program forward.
- The simple format for reports and proposals, in line with the priorities of the organizations, limited bureaucratic efforts giving more weight to substantial aspects.
- The permanent connection with training or learning initiatives with partner organizations was quite useful.
- Strengthening of administrative aspects is highly valued.
- Learn history from the local level.
- Animate, encourage, celebrate success.
- Promote commercial fairs, tourism.
- Accompaniment before authorities.
- Visits to other municipalities to share ideas and experiences.

On the other hand, it was stated that the major factors that affect and influence the context have considerable weight in the shaping and viability of the initiatives of the groups. For this reason it is important to assess more consistently the achievements and strategies put into practice, so as to realistically adapt them to respond to the enormous challenges being faced by the population.
4.1 What is needed to improve?

Organizations agree in the need to make greater links between the local, national and regional levels. Yet, all of the organizations have limited financial and human resources and new initiatives also impact their work agendas and priorities. For this reason there is a certain level of ambivalence in this respect.

The need to closer link initiatives of economic solidarity to national level campaigns was stressed. This is needed to be joined by advocacy efforts and alliances that allow more access to markets beyond local levels.

The need to learn more about the strategy and guidelines of AAG and to articulate efforts with partners (without adding workload for the organizations) was stated during the evaluation.

The importance for maintaining and strengthening thematic groups, both from the administrative side and substantive follow up side of things, was repeatedly stated.

In the workshop with partner organizations other points were brought up.

- Provide more attention to community based organizations,
- Differentiate roles and support of social organizations and NGOs on-the-ground
- Make best use of mutual to complement their strategies
- Learn new elements, changes in context, adjust projects and strategies
- That the local organizations create their agendas for the support of NGOs and agencies
- Increase in funding to continue following up on the work
- Link issue of citizen participation in all training processes
- Share analysis with other national and regional based organizations.
- Deepen cultural understanding of peoples
- Discuss the topic of gender and strategies to approach it
- Provide support to systematize processes, especially work experiences with women and the obstacles encountered.

Also, it was stressed that there is a need to expand the focus in local governments to support more processes of municipal strengthening that involve businesses and social sectors in efforts of municipal development, and to carry out advocacy work that respond to the agendas of the population.

Another important element was identified related to the fact that in the same area several organizations were supported with specific projects, in which each organization focused on their priorities or expertise, which did not always favour articulating efforts. In this sense, the importance of considering formulating projects that involve different organizations in a given geographical area was suggested, within which organizations can provide inputs based on their experience, expertise or capacity towards a common effort.
5. LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- The merger between MS and ActionAidG is relatively new, but now is the opportunity to strengthen its strategy based on their past experience and support. The recent naming of a person to provide continuity to these processes is an opportunity to strengthen immediate communication with the partner organizations. It is particularly important to speed up the process of discussing the continuation of support to partner organizations, keeping the close relationships already established.

- ActionAid Denmark is interested in funding a study regarding the experience of agro-fuels that could be complementary to the efforts developed by AAG in this area. Such trans-atlantic cooperation is appreciated and encouraged.

- MS´s work has focused on gender and AAG has focused is efforts to strengthen women´s rights. It is important to take advantage of the wealth of experience of both organizations which in our opinion complement each other and are not exclusive.

- In processes of social change, NGOs are going to advocate very little in relation to the huge bombardment of the current ideological model. It is necessary to provide more consistency to the processes in terms of analysis and improve the means used and the multiple relations AAG and MS have established to back the partners´analysis and positions.

- It is recommended that the thematic groups continue as a part of AAG´s work; it has been suggested that an institutional agreement be signed regarding the commitment to follow up with thematic group.

- To expedite and strengthen the support ADAM provides to other partner organizations to show their products and promote income generating initiatives.

- We recommend strengthening the links between local experiences of trade justice with the advocacy efforts AAG carries out on the national level.

Annexes

1. Terms of reference
2. Inception Note
3. Evaluation itinerary
4. Interview guide
5. List of people interviewed
6. Workshop design
7. Format of reflection for workshop
8. List of consulted documents.