



'It's for Oaxaca' Fundraising Campaign

## MEXICO - Why we should help Oaxaca

Oaxaca Community Foundation

Monday 19 March 2007, posted by [Manuela Garza Ascencio](#)

- Oaxaca is one of the states with the greatest poverty and most extreme marginalization in Mexico. The poverty in some Oaxacan communities is comparable to contexts similar to Africa and India.
- 60% of the total Oaxacan population lives in municipalities that are considered very high and highly marginalized.
- 22% of the population is illiterate and 45% have not completed a high school education, with a ratio of 15 to 1 being men. A logical dissatisfaction with Oaxaca's deplorable educational system has played a pivotal part in the state's recent conflict.

For the last 25 years, a group of more than 60,000 teachers has expressed its demands for better working conditions and improved standards of education. In the month of May, during their peaceful demonstration, they were violently dislodged by government forces. This provoked the birth of the APPO (Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca) social movement, and spurred radical participation in diverse forms. Among them was the organization of civil society in search of a democratic reform for the state.

For 6 frightening months the state (principally the city of Oaxaca and its united municipalities), was subject to diverse manifestations, the closing of streets, the absence of public safety and security, numerous confrontations resulting in tremendous violence, and more than 27 deaths. As a display of governmental repression, over 200 social leaders were imprisoned. In summary: it has been a massive civilian uprising.

Today, estrangement between the organizations of civil society and the government is utterly polarized, the disputes between the political parties intensifying. Oaxaca's citizens no longer know the path their state is headed in.

### **What do we predict for the year 2007?**

- The conflict has still not been resolved. No agreement exists between the Magestry, the APPO and the Government, and the movement has clandestinely strengthened.
- In the month of August we will hold elections for local legislatures of State Congress. In the month of October, the elections will end in 570 municipalities, of which 70% are governed by traditional local 'uses and customs' (usos y costumbres) and the other the other 30% by national political parties.
- We predict increased incidents of poverty, especially among the marginal groups. Last year the industrial sector reported that more than 2,500 jobs have been suspended and terminated, at the

staggering loss of more than 8 billion Mexican pesos.

- The individual self-seeking interests of the political parties are more prevalent than ever, as well as those of other powerful groups. The ruling political party (PRI) is weak, and the opposing parties represent an opportunity for civil society to influence State Congress. Without a doubt, repression from the government is fierce, and passions could, at any given moment, overflow into incomparably violent conflicts.

### **How has this context affected the organizations of civil society?**

- The polarization and the profound distancing between civil society and its state government, have drastically weakened our state's social fibers.
- The organizations of civil society find themselves in permanent erosion politically, socially, and economically.
- Donations and financing opportunities within the local sector are minimal, considering the social polarization and the crumbling economy. But there is also the delicate issue of possible links or alliances of the private initiative (at the operating level as well as within the governments core), integrating with civil organizations, which is frowned upon by the local governor. Consequently, even though the Foundation is recognized within its own society as a transparent, superior, and vital asset to Oaxaca's progression, such political displays of power and repression have made it nearly impossible to depend on local assistance.
- On a national level, companies, foundations and individuals that participated with diverse organizations have stopped doing so in light of the great political and social movement.
- On an international level, the majority of the foundations, development agencies and enterprises, among other actors, have stopped offering economic assistance, due to the supposed risk that investing amidst this context represents.

### **How has this context affected the Oaxaca Community Foundation?**

- In the last 10 years the Foundation:

\*Has achieved co-investments of 192 million pesos with organizations from civil society, the business sector, and the government.

\*Has benefited 11,000 children and youth, 7,600 women and 10,500 men.

\* The base of local donations (individuals) has reached a number of 743, though in the present context we conserve only 117.

\* We depended on 5 actively working funds, today there is only one.

\* Of 156 small businesses, only 15 continue contributing today.

\* Of more than 70 local health professionals dedicated to sharing their time and talent, due to fears of reprisal and/or a decrease in personal wages, their participation is nonexistent.

\* Since last year, 12 International Foundations with a history of helping our Foundation have not renewed agreements or given finances.

- The Foundation's annual estimate in the last 4 years has reached a sum of a million and a half US dollars, of which 70% came from local resources and 30% from international resources. For the present year, the Foundation does not have the resources to conduct its existing programs and suffers great difficulty to support its operating costs.

- The members of the board are discouraged, especially by the polarization between the government and the organized civil society.
- The operative staff is disconcerted over the present crisis, without the sufficient elements to predict the impending outcome of Oaxaca, of the Foundation, or even their own professional and personal futures.
- The Foundation's core is weakened and wearied by the political, social, and economic crisis of the state. As a financing organization, our institutional strength has been compromised. In the wake of a civil society which itself is at risk, our capacity to carry out processes, projects, and initiatives is rapidly deteriorating.

### **What is Oaxaca Community Foundation doing and proposing to do?**

- In November of 2006 we held an art Auction in Mexico City in collaboration with la Asociación México Japonesa, A.C., and eighteen Oaxacan painters, among other affiliates.
  - At the end of 2006, our 2007 Agenda was printed, with a printing of 2,200 copies and the collaboration of twenty local enterprises.
- Both initiatives were carried out as a means of relieving part of the financial crisis.

- Over the present year:

We've designed an emergent national fundraising Campaign, designated: "Es por Oaxaca" ("It's for Oaxaca"), which to this date has gained affiliates such as:

- \* Agencia de Comunicación y Mercadotecnia, Grupo Consultores en Comunicación Social, S.C. (Agency of Communication and, Social Communication Consultant Group);
- \* Fundación Televisa, A.C. (Televisa Foundation);
- \* Espera Social (revista local) Espera Social (local magazine);

The procedure of increasing funds to this date have been cash deposits to a bank account through 800 and 900 dialing codes. The methods of communication to this date have been: television spots, eight magazines with national distribution and one local, e-mail, and the web page. The above mentioned campaign began February 2nd.

We continue to seek a greater number of affiliates with the objective of increasing the visibility of the Campaign and the amplification of resources.

We've designed and are finalizing details of an emergent fund raising Campaign in the United States (California and New York), also designated: "It's for Oaxaca," which to this date has gained affiliates such as The International Community Foundation with offices in San Diego, CA, as well as other Community Foundations who've invited migrant groups to join the cause, employers, enterprises, consulates, individuals and groups with an interest in helping Oaxaca.

We've strengthened alliances with the Synergos Institute in New York to promote and define the campaign. Two volunteers whom are Mexican residents in New York have further obtained the cooperation of other strategic groups.

- In addition:

- We are forming an alliance with la Fundación del Empresariado Mexicano (FUNDEMEX) y la Cámara Mexicana de la Industria de la Construcción (CEMIC).
- Likewise, we're searching for alliances within the national sector with la Asociación Nacional de la Publicidad, A.C. (National Association of Publicity), Confederación Nacional Turística (National Tourist Confederation), Corporativa de Fundaciones (Cooperative of Foundations), Fundación Expo-

Guadalajara(Expo-Guadalajara Foundation), and CEMEFL, among other actors.

• By way of a series of extraordinary reunions with our Board of Directors, and specifically with some of the integrants of our Fundraising Committee, this year we plan to strengthen our national Campaign with at least:

- Two Fund raising events.
- Alliances with “Empresas con Causa Social” offering our campaign.
- Launch 2008 Agenda and Calendar.
- Broaden our base of “Associates” y “Affiliates”.

Finally, to emphasize the intent for collaboration, so as to invigorate the collection of finances from the following local actors:

- Eventos Especiales CANIRAC (Special Events “CANIRAC”)
  - Casa de las Artesanías de Oaxaca (House of Artisans of Oaxaca)
  - Organización de Maestros Oaxaqueños del Arte Popular(Organization of Popular Oaxacan Art Teachers)
  - Grupo Folklórico del ITO (Folklore Group of ITO)
    - \* Consejo de Agroindustriales del Estado Oaxaca(Board of Agro-Industries of the State of Oaxaca)
  - Oaxacan Painters and Sculptors
  - Private businesses
  - Youth volunteers, among others.
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Translated from Spanish by **Michelle Ortega**.