It has been until recently that there has been an opportunity to study the conformation of civil society, the number of donations that Mexicans give and the amount of volunteer activity in Mexico. Research (Butcher, 1999) (Verduzco, 2003) (Moreno, 2005) has indicated the need to recognize not only the value of time and effort that individuals give but also the amount of donations of money and in kind that Mexicans are able to give to their community. Several national surveys (ENAFI, 2005, 2008) (ENSAV, 2005) designed to answer the questions of giving both in time and in various resources have emerged in the past decade that begin to paint the picture of the reality of Mexican civil society. The first survey was directed towards the issues of donation of money and volunteer time within formal organizations. The second was designed to not only look at these aspects of giving but included those acts of solidarity that are found in informal settings. In Mexico, another recent study (Butcher, 2008) demonstrated that many individuals participate informally, a common occurrence in developing countries, where on the one hand it is difficult to initiate and sustain a non-profit organization and on the other, the systematization of the “help” or volunteer work that individuals provide still remains lacking.

This paper will present a comparative analysis on several levels of the most recent research on giving and volunteering in Mexico in various key aspects, utilizing three major elements: First, the number of organizations in the country. In 2008, the Mexican government agreed to initiate a Satellite Account based on UN parameters of System of National Accounts to explore and confirm the status and number of the nonprofit institutions in the country. This information will be available as of 2010 for public purposes and will be part of the data analyzed to be able to count the number of Mexican organizations as well as the volunteer hours individuals donate to various causes. The second element will be the data emanating from two surveys on giving and volunteering, mentioned earlier, which are, at the moment, being cross-referenced and compared to establish the similarities and differences amongst the information on volunteer activity. The results of this exercise will set the stage and help in the design for a new survey on giving, the ENSAV 2010, that will be the follow up, five years later of the initial work on Mexican solidarity. The third element this paper will contain is relevant information from the current CIVICUS Civil Society Index investigation undertaken by two Mexican NGOs: Cemefi, the Mexican Center for Philanthropy and Iniciativa Ciudadana para la Promoción de la Cultura del Diálogo, A.C. (2008) that will provide a context that has evolved since the last CSI study performed in Mexico in 2000.

There is a need to further advance in the understanding of the panorama of philanthropy and giving in Mexico. Comparisons are necessary to help researchers create methodologies that will deliver precise information on the Third Sector. The purpose of this analysis is to present data that will provide insight into how Mexican volunteers perform, how many non-profit organizations exist and how the present day context of civil society influences the necessary changes that both government and civil society need to perform to make pertinent decisions in reference to the sector.

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