Psychological and community dimensions sub-theme.

**Myths and Realities of Citizen Participation in Mexico:**
The Volunteer Effect

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*Abstract:*

Citizen participation and voluntary action in Mexico have become as of late, an important issue of debate and finally the subject of some revealing research. Twenty years after the 1985 Mexico City earthquake, where civil society filled a significant role in disaster attention in the largest city in the world, thousands of volunteers were catalysts for the reconstruction and development of the aftermath. Since then, many new opportunities for civic participation have come forth for issues such as: health, security, drug traffic control, poverty & politics to name a few. Some authors (Reygadas,1998) (Olvera,2001), consider this historical event as landmark for a different kind of participation and the beginning of civil society influence in the country´s transformation. This was clearly demonstrated in a democratic voting process for the 2000 presidential elections that created the fall of a 70 year long political regime. Here, citizen social movements for democracy through various
CSO such as Alianza Cívica and Convergencia de Organismos Civiles por la Democracia managed a new relationship between government and civil society. (Butcher, 2002).

These changes have brought on several important issues for civil society in Mexico: one is that the motivation and the capacity for voluntary action and participation exists, but it requires an outlet in the form of clear causes and solid structures to be effective. (Ziccardi, 2004) The other, is a need for actualization, accountability, leadership and redirection, a need that prevails for all existing Mexican CSO for their own survival since funding shortages, political changes and economic forces can minimize civilian voluntary efforts. The third point is knowledge creation. There is very little information and research on the state and figures in civil society issues and about the Non-Profit sector, especially on participation and voluntarism.

Recently, civil society expressions are becoming stronger and there is more awareness that participation is a must in all aspects of national life. As an example of spontaneous civilian participation, on June 27, 2004, approximately a million people took to the streets in a silent march against delinquency and corruption in Mexico City. Citizen participation could be considered the first step towards the creation of voluntary action and social capital as well. These kinds of activities seem to establish trust networks within societies which are positive for community building. (Fukuyama, 1995) (Putnam, 2000) (Putnam & Fieldstein, 2003). In social capital terms, in Mexico, there seems to be more “bonding” within families and organizations, but what is needed is a bit more “bridging” and reaching out to others in the community to close the inequality gap that is rampant in the nation (Butcher, 2004).

This paper is focused toward the understanding of various forms of voluntary action and participation in today’s Mexico. It is also focused on analyzing ways people work together to create safety networks, public policy and community building. The main source of information is provided from analysis of the data of a current national research project from 2 Cemefi entitled: Solidary Citizen Participation and Volunteer Service in Mexico, where the analysis extends from not only on what comes from organized civil society, like membership in a formal volunteer organization, but also in the actions and attitudes of informal groups and activities, the differences between the two and the implications for participation in the future. Both the quantitative information that surfaces from the nationwide survey and the qualitative analysis from 15 case studies from all regions of the country provide new concepts, diverse cultural patterns and in general, an overall context of voluntary participation in Mexico.

The national scope of the project allows a way to paint a more accurate composite of the actual Mexican scene as far as informal expressions of solidarity as well as organized volunteer work for the benefit of the community as a whole. Its main purpose is to establish a “Mexican Reality” in voluntary action and volunteer citizen participation as this study is the first of its kind. The information obtained from this research project will be able to

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1 Butcher, J (2004) To be a volunteer we follow UN parameters that have already been established in the concepts for this piece of research.

2 Cemefi stands for: Mexican Center for Philanthropy, Centro Mexicano para la Filantropía
eradicate popular myths around charity, volunteer activity and solidarity citizen participation. Realities of participation need to be established on facts that are useful for all societal sectors. These must also become a reliable source of data for more inquiry into this phenomena.

Finally, the paper also emphasizes the importance of continuous research and brings together international data and Mexican studies that are essential in completing the participation and voluntary action scenario such as the ENCUP 2001, 2003 and UNDP Human Development 2004 studies, among others. The paper also presents a historical perspective within the region (Thompson & Toro, 1999) (Arvitzer, 1996), (Verduzco, 2003) and weaves in all the latest findings that look into how Mexico will be able to reach the Millenium Development Goals. (Fuentes & Montes, 2004). How participation and volunteer action play out in societal change provide an effect that can provide an informed basis for decision making in the government public policy arena and reveal ways to enable citizens for more effective participation in community problems that are crucial for the development of the country in all issues, human security in its variants, included.

Introduction:

In Mexico, volunteering and voluntary action have been understudied themes on the research agenda on Third Sector issues. For the past five years, (2001-2005) the Mexican Center for Philanthropy (Cemefi) has fostered encounters with public and private institutions to create a national research agenda for the Sector and to create an interest in understanding civil society through dialogue, participation and exchange of research and ideas of the experts in the field. This seminar has become an annual feature for the institution, each year inviting a different university to become a co-host. The group of other sponsors has grown immensely and they now include not only private and public Mexican universities, many with representation and sister universities in the country, but also government institutions that believe they should have a relationship with CSO and other civil society initiatives.

They began at the National University (UNAM) at the Institute of Economic Research. For this year they are: El Colegio de México, Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Occidente, Universidad Anáhuac, El Colegio Mexiquense, Universidad Iberoamericana, Universidad Veracruzana, Universidad del Valle de México, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Iztapalapa, Tecnológico de Monterrey, Campus Ciudad de México, Universidad Panamericana, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, Instituto Mora, RKG Center for Philanthropy and Community Service in Austin, Regis University in Colorado, Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, Instituto Federal Electoral, Indesol & the Instituto Federal de Acceso a la Información Pública.

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Encuesta Nacional sobre Cultura Política y Prácticas Ciudadanas. (National Survey on Political Culture and Citizen Practices). Other surveys such as the National Survey on the Use of Time (2002) from INEGI, the national statistics agency is also referred to.
For the sixth time in a row in September 2006, the seminar will take place this time, at the Instituto Dr. José María Mora in Mexico City, with the theme of “Civil Society: Citizen Participation and Sustainability”. The Call for Papers can be found in “Inside ISTR” webpage. The title shows us how little by little, individuals that participate are beginning to appear onto the research agenda of such an important reunion. The point to sustain here is that in Mexico, conceptually and traditionally, voluntary action was not considered as the initiator of civil society initiatives. Moreover, volunteers were thought of as individuals with “nothing to do” or with “time on their hands”.

In this introduction I would like to state the reasoning behind these ideas which hopefully will be dissipated with a Mexican national study now in progress at the Cemefi entitled: “Solidary Citizen Participation and Voluntary Service in Mexico”, originally entitled “Voluntary Service in Mexico” which is the fist of its kind since the subject of voluntary action and volunteers per se have not been previously considered research subjects in Mexico. In the Johns Hopkins Comparative Study, (Salamon & Anheier, 1996) one of the 5 established parameters for CSO included in the study specifically had to contain a certain amount of voluntary participation and Mexico was part of the group of countries studied that moved from 8 initially to 22. The same study has continued throughout the world, it now encompasses a second phase and many other countries have been added to the original list. (Verduzco, 2003)

This affirmation does not mean volunteers have been ignored, what it does mean, however, is that there had never been a study to understand the effect of this kind of participation in Mexico in the past. The only way to find out the numbers of volunteers in Mexico would be to look into the registered members of formal CSO in Mexico that have volunteers. This is a task in itself, since there still is no official number of these organizations in the country. The organizations that we can identify clearly are the ones that can offer tax

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4 A list of the annual seminars is included here.


deductible receipts and they are around 5000. Not very many if we compare with the US that has around 2 million non-for-profit organizations that can give tax deductible receipts. These are the “donatarias autorizadas” and are registered in the Mexican tax system. Many CSO in Mexico do not have this deducibility, and there are large numbers of volunteers in these organizations as well, so producing numbers has been quite a challenge for our research team in finding ways to go about creating this information. Another example is the number of hours dedicated to this activity. To find out either at a local or at a national level, the number of hours people give freely of their time for the benefit of others is another difficult task, since we have to consider other national surveys such as the ITAM study, ENAFI (2003) that asks questions on volunteerism and donations and the National Survey on the Use of Time (2002) (2004) from INEGI, the national statistics agency, and evaluate the classification of “time used outside the family for community benefit” as probable volunteer time. Another important source of information on the subject could be the ENCUP 2001,2003 government studies on citizen participation.

One can contrast this data with other countries, where there are several ways to count volunteer participation and look at not only at what they do, but into the quality of the hours given in voluntarism. This research addresses local and national contexts as is the case of Canada and the US where more details are available on this activity.

In 1997, some Mexican researchers interested in the Third Sector began looking into forms of classification of associative ways of working together always referring to the term “organization” (Méndez, 1997: 103-123), thus explaining in economic terms what could be considered the Third Sector in Mexico, at the same time classifying these organizations under eight possible social forms of participation: self-reliance, self effort, institutional social assistance, emergency social assistance, patronage, corporativism, neo-corporativism, social mobilizations and social co-efforts.

More recently, investigators of the civil society Mexican research scene, are beginning to look into ways people get together to form different kinds of “associations” and there has also been an effort to classify them. (Olvera, 2004) As we know, looking only at the formal aspects of volunteering, especially in what would be considered a country of the “South” or an underdeveloped country such as Mexico would be irrelevant, since it could be said that much of the volunteer activity must forcefully take place in an informal setting as well as in the registered formal existing CSO.

This assumption was at the base of one of the hypothesis for the Cemefi Mexican Volunteer Study and the numbers from their recent national survey proves it to be correct.

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5 SAT, stands for: Sistema de Administración Tributaria (Tributary Administration System)
6 Encuesta Nacional de Filantropía. (National Philanthropy Survey)
8 RKG Center for Philanthropy and Community Service at UT in Austin has established a series called “The Investigator” designed for “encouraging research in volunteerism and the management of volunteers”. In its issue: Placing a Value on Volunteer Time, Volume 2, Issue 1, Fall 2005, introduces five different methods for measuring the value of volunteers that broadly fall under the UN volunteer categories.
Organizations and associations have been considered formal forms of citizen participation. The word *volunteer* fits in and is understood well in these kinds of structured CSO. The meaning is work with no pay for the benefit of others not including family. It is the informal aspect of volunteerism that does not receive a connotation. This is why the term “*solidary citizen participation*” was coined for this study, to distinguish it from the formal aspects of volunteering. The informal realm of volunteer time and effort is a serious endeavor, since it turns out that the majority of voluntary activity in the country could be in this classification. In the data presented ahead, the numbers show that this turns out to be true. The reason behind this statement is that added on to the difficulty of becoming a formal organization, many groups are not interested in doing so, since many times they are under the auspices of a larger formal institution, such as the Catholic Church. However, this still means, for the purposes of this study, the same as voluntarism: work with no pay.

In other parts of the world this aspect of informality, beyond a registered CSO, is also being taken into consideration by addressing and studying this issue. “The Poor Philanthropist” (Wilkinson-Maposa, et. al., 2006) presents the results of a recent African study through a qualitative research inquiry conducted by the Building Community Project on how people that have no economic resources present a certain “ethos” of help. This is a study that documents the findings across four African countries: Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. They do not assign all the activities mentioned as volunteer work, since some are considered different forms of exchange in the community, but they do demonstrate how in helping each other out, many countries of the “South” not only survive, but cover many of their needs. In the work done by the UN for 2001, the International Year of the Volunteer, in the toolkit designed for identifying and counting volunteers all over the world the concept is handled as “managed” and “unmanaged”.

The data presented in the rest of this paper intends to provide an idea of what is happening in the volunteer arena in the country. This is why it is presented as a series of Mexican “myths” that are challenged by the information that is beginning to come forth from this work. There are still steps to be taken to finalize the analysis of data and present it in book form with a CD that includes the questionnaire with a statistically valid data base and internationally comparable information so that more research can continue on this subject. The information presented here is taken from work in progress reports from the various researchers that are involved in the study. The design for the Cemefi Mexican Volunteer Study stays basically the same as shown in the methodology at the Toronto ISTR Conference where the historical background, hypothesis, basic concepts and assumptions were presented.9

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9 Butcher, J., (2004), (Working Paper) ISTR Toronto Conference. *Building Citizenship and Voluntary participation in Mexico: Social and Economic Implications from a National Study,* Accessed from: [http://www.istr.org/conferences/toronto/workingpapers/index.html](http://www.istr.org/conferences/toronto/workingpapers/index.html). Methodology for the overall study was proposed in this research paper. The research is now underway and preliminary reports are the basis for this paper. The previous paper also contains the history of volunteer activity in Mexico as well as concepts of voluntary action designed for the Cemefi Mexican Volunteer Study.
However, as results have become available in the past months, many changes have necessarily come about, new concepts come into view, new explanations need to be made. What becomes evident as the study evolves is that “culture DOES matter” (Harrison & Huntington, 2000) and the values that people have and keep go on through generations. In a Mexican study that has continued for 25 years, funded by Banamex, we can follow the trajectory of what Mexicans think is important as far as values go. Family is still considered as the most important for Mexicans. (Alducin, 1989, 1991, 1993) and this may be one of the explanations of the amounts of remittances that go across the Mexican-American border. (Merz, 2005) When another author picks up this study and continues with it and he includes the World Values study (Inglehart & Basáñez, 2004) plus a questionnaire on both sides of the border of Mexico and the U.S., interesting information begins to appear. What seems to happen is that Mexicans associate three times less than Americans do. “Including trust, an additional element that tends to intensify the studies on social capital is participation in voluntary associations. For starters, if we had to describe the Mexicans on this point, the word nearest to their character would be inactivity”…compared to Americans who do belong to formal groups and associations, so, in comparison…”the average Mexican usually associates into one organization, while the Mexican-American does so in two organizations and the Anglo American in three”. Moreno (2005: 149-155) He does not give us an explanation of this data, because this is not the main focus of the book and even though we encounter very low levels of association, this data tells us that the affirmation is partly true, since we think that people associate to form organizations mostly in formal environments. As usual, it depends on how you design the questionnaire and what people understand when they are questioned. The same WVS study gives us comparative data that tells us approximately the percentage of the population that belongs to formal voluntary groups in Mexico. The Cemefi study may challenge or complete some of this information. (Inglehart & Basáñez, 2004)

The Cemefi Mexican Volunteer Study/Survey.

As of July 2005, the Mexican Center for Philanthropy initiated a study on voluntary action based on the methodology explained in the previous ISTR research paper. (Butcher, 2004) Its name: “Solidary Citizen Participation and Voluntary Service in Mexico” The expected results, as presented to the funders were to finish a 12 month study that would determine:

♦ Clarification on the resource contributions, both economic and social of solidary citizen participation and voluntary service in Mexico
♦ Conceptual and statistical information that will establish international comparative basis for discussion on voluntary service, solidarity citizen participation in the Third Sector in Mexico.
Better understanding of the social and cultural processes that influence solidarity and voluntary action in the country.

Publication of results in book form with a CD including survey data base and questionnaire.

Dissemination of the information in diverse media: pamphlets, articles in scientific journals and other magazines, publications and electronic data on website.

Mexican history and context, we theorize, can explain some of the main ideas that have been created around voluntarism in general. (Butcher, 2004) We will call them Myths, in this paper, until we have data that will prove us different. The main objective of the study is to:

“Research voluntary/solidary action and volunteer service to understand and evaluate the contribution of these activities in material resources, time value and influence in citizen participation in Mexico”. 

The inquiry intends to gather information about the majority of volunteer activity within the country using two distinct concepts:

a) On the one hand, a volunteer concept that fits in with world parameters of volunteering and that has been revised for Mexico. Thus, a volunteer is “…a person who out of free will, reaches out investing time and service to a non-for profit-cause that goes beyond family, for the community at large.” (Butcher, 2003) 10 This idea considers all volunteer activity that usually occurs in registered CSO encompassing a formal and regular setting and for this study is understood as “formal” and will be referred here as voluntary service (servicio voluntario). There is a reason to keep the word “service” in the definition, because in serving others, one can experiment exchange of resources maintaining human dignity and equality. This exchange supposes an equal horizontal exchange vs. a vertical authoritarian one. (Butcher, 2003) It is the suggested and preferred term for the United Nations description as well. Most volunteer definitions include a certain degree of organization for it to be considered volunteering. Since this is one of the first attempts to look at these activities, this factor has been purposely left out of our definition to capture informal volunteer participation.

b) The second concept managed for this study is “informal” and it includes all activity that goes on outside of CSO in a personal fashion, sporadic, or very loosely organized. The term coined for this definition is: solidary citizen participation

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10 In Spanish: Voluntario/a: Es la persona que sin perseguir fines de lucro y por elección propia, compromete tiempo y servicio a una actividad que va más allá del ámbito familiar para el beneficio de terceros y de la sociedad en su conjunto. (Butcher, 2003)
participación ciudadana solidaria). This definition also encompasses the spirit of human solidarity instead of just the idea of help or assistance.

**Questionnaire and Survey**

A questionnaire was designed for the Cemefi National Survey of these activities. The name for this survey is ENSAV\textsuperscript{11}, an acronym which stands for National Solidarity and Volunteer Action Survey in Spanish. A description that would encompass both “formal and “informal” aspects of the definition for the people questioned was essential to establish the setting for the questions utilized. For the quantitative portion of the study, a national survey included a representative sample of the general public (Fig. 1). The conceptual frame for the survey is based previous research on voluntarism and philanthropy in Mexico. A pre-codified questionnaire was piloted on nine occasions to capture subtle aspects of the theme with 26 main questions, 13 attitudinal and 16 socio-demographic ones based on past experiences and several other worldwide and national questionnaires on the subject.

The terminology on the questionnaire was designed so that it was understood at a colloquial basic level throughout the country. The sample had to be sufficiently ample and statistically valid. The size was of 1500 interviews, with an error margin of +/-2.5% with 95% reliability. Using a probabilistic framework following the IFE\textsuperscript{12} electoral sections actualized to 2003. This is the kind of framework suggested by United Nations which allows international comparisons.

Several different approaches were taken to design the questionnaire, the most significant one was not asking directly as to which organization the person belonged to from a list of several, which is the usual approach. As a small presentation for the person interviewed, the concept of voluntarism was included so that the activity is what takes priority since a basic problem is that the word “volunteer” is not clearly understood directly translated into Spanish across the board and across the whole country. The interviewer presented this small explanation before beginning...

“I am going to ask you about the help that you give in time and services, or what you gave or give to other people that do not belong to your family, where you do not receive money in return for your services and that you have done this voluntarily. It can be any kind of help: teaching someone to read; organizing events in your community and helping the neighbors, organizing a party for the school or church, directing a sports team weekly, helping out at the local Red Cross or giving free medical services; attending someone who is sick, without him being a relative; help in a religious procession or a local political group; construction for the community. Whatever benefits others, without receiving pay and in a volunteer fashion”. Then, comes a question... Was this understood, or would you want me to repeat this again?

\textsuperscript{11} ENSAV, Encuesta Nacional de Solidaridad y Acción Voluntaria.

\textsuperscript{12} Instituto Federal Electoral (Federal Electorate Institute)
Usually, for these questionnaires, a list of large and prominent organizations is shown to the person interviewed. If they do not understand what volunteerism is all about and they do not belong to any one of those organizations on the list, we would probably get a negative answer. What we have been finding is that using open ended questions like: Have you ever done anything for others without receiving payment for it? And further on, give them a list where they can recognize different kinds of activities and respond in fashion. There are, obviously many direct questions as in all other questionnaires researched for the survey. Especially the people that do belong to a formal CSO, we know they will usually answer directly. The reason behind this is that in Mexico, the numbers of organizations are very low, but the people that help out or have helped out in one way or another, seem to be many.

Our number say that 66% of the Mexican adult population has participated in at least one volunteer activity at some time in their lives, 50% in the past year (September 2004—September 2005) and 40% at the moment of the interview and continue to do so. This includes formal and informal activity. The answers here give us a chance to see how people have contributed for the benefit of others in the course of their life and allow us to follow an individual throughout his/her lifetime. We can find out when they began and when they stopped their activities in the individual survey, the design allowing us to dig deeper into motivational aspects in the Case Studies. One of our main purposes in the overall inquiry by means of a profound analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data is to present a mapping and a scanning of these kinds of activities in the country, the differences and similarities among regions of Mexico, where are the places that people tend to do more for others and why.

Of the 66% mentioned that have undertaken some kind of voluntary activity: 44% have done so through an organization\textsuperscript{13}, 24% have acted informally with friends and neighbors and 32% of this universe have done so on their own, which means that a great number of individuals in Mexico undertake these activities by themselves. These numbers sum 100% of this 66% of the population that says that they participate in solidarity and voluntary activities. If we add 24% of the informal group and 32% of the individuals that act on their own, 56% of the Mexicans that participate do so in informal settings, thus confirming the first and second hypothesis set for the Cemefi research project. This information seems to match with Alejandro Moreno’s previous comments on low association for Mexicans living in Mexico and gives a lot of food for though for future studies since it provides a way to understand what actually happens, clarify what has to be done and give suggestions to guide government and civil society existing associations in finding ways for these numbers to increase. Although many groups have initiated since the

\textsuperscript{13} It must be noted here that this does not means that it is a formal one, most people do not know the legal status of their organization. So here we are including all the ones that the person interviewed classifies in his mind as an “organized group” or “institution”.

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nineties, many groups have also died since then if they do not become institutionalized because of lack of volunteers or because they are not sustainable. Strong civil society institutions are necessary for democratization and stability in any given country.

Fig 1. *Main Survey Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Have you ever done anything for other without receiving payment?</td>
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<td>2. How long ago did you start, or what year did you begin?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. How long did you keep at this activity and what year did you stop doing it?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. How frequently did you do each one of the activities mentioned here?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. In a rough estimate, about how much time a week did you dedicate to this activity?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. What did you do, what kind of activity?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. And how do you give this voluntary service: in an institution or an organized group, or something more informal like working with neighbors or people in your workplace, or by yourself?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. How did you start, did someone invite you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Are you still doing this today? (NO) Why did you stop?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. How old were you when you started this voluntary activity?</td>
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<td>11. How old were you when you started the last activity?</td>
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<td>12. In general, have you made many friends though volunteer activity?</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Do you think that you learned anything new with these volunteer activities for others?</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. There are a lot of reasons for doing things for other, what are yours?</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. What would you say is the main reason for not doing things for others?</td>
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<td>16. In your direct family: husband/wife, parents of brothers &amp; sisters, does anyone participate in voluntary activity?</td>
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<td>17. How many in total are the ones that have done so?</td>
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<td>18. Have you ever invited your relatives or other people to give some of their time in these service activities for others?</td>
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<td>19. What activities have you invited them to?</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Do you ever give money or things to people that are not your relatives?</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. In general, how do you give this: directly, to an organization religious or not, or in some other way?</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. How much would you say you give a month?</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. How do you give it? (coins/ bills/ checks,/ credit card/ monthly quota/ other)</td>
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<tr>
<td>24. Have you received any help from others? What? How?</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. Who did you receive it from?</td>
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<td>26. Do you remember when you received it?</td>
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</table>
In addition to the main questions, a series of attitude questions were included. These are related to citizen participation and voluntary activity and are used in most questionnaires of this type.

27. Do you belong to a group? Which?
28. Is it an institution or an organized group or a group of neighbors or friends, people from work, or acquaintances, or what is it?
29. I am going to read a list of institutions. Tell me for each one, how much do you trust them?
30. Would you say that you can trust most people or that you or that you cannot trust everyone?
31. I am going to read you a list of activities and you tell me if you do them regularly, you did them at some time in your life, or if you would do them or if you would never do them.

32. If you think about all the free time you have during the week, weekends included, more or less how many hours in the week do you think you have left of free time?
33. How probable or improbable do you think it would be that you would give it?
34. If you could do it, how much time do you think you could give to this cause a week?
35. During the past 12 months, could your family put some money away, did you barely made ends meet, did you spent some of your savings or had to borrow money?
36. How do you think your personal economic situation is going to be a year from now: better or worse?
37. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means “it depends on you” and 10 means” it depends totally on the general situation “ and you could choose an intermediate number, On which of these does it depend that your economic situation gets better?
38. How do you find out about the news on TV, radio, papers or talking to other people?
39. On average, how much TV do you watch a day?

Information that this survey provides is that people that belong to groups express more participation in volunteer activities (86%) than those that do not belong (61%). Something similar occurs with people that trust institutions (72%) or people (78%), compared to those that do not (institutions) (62%) (people) (65%); those that say they have been members of some group (79%) in comparison of those who say that they accept that they could do it, but have not done it (57%) or those who recognize that they would never
do it (58%). Then there are those people that say that even if they have free time, it is improbable that they would help (45%) compared to the people that say that if there were some place near their home or workplace, they would be willing to give 3 volunteer hours a week (72%) or even more time (77%). Some people consider that the money they made that year was barely enough (71%) compared to those who said they did not make enough money to pay their bills (60%). There are more volunteers among the people that are optimistic about their economic future in the next year (72%) compared to those that are pessimistic (60%). There are also more individuals that volunteer their time among the people that watch 2 hours of TV a day (73%) than those that watch 3 hours of TV a day. It is also important to note that the disposition to help others is barely modified or does not depend on the kind of source of where they get their information or on who they think is responsible for their economic situation to get better: themselves or the circumstances that surround them. In a first impression of the numbers, this is a general panorama. The project contemplates a full analysis of each of these questions, since we are aware that behind each figure, when it is broken down, the data unfolds.

As an example, further analysis shows that when we look at factors that support these actions we find that religious motivations reflect the amount of volunteer activity since a high percentage of the population will write down they are Roman Catholics on a census, but 67% of the people considered volunteers declare having a religion and 52% declare they do not have one. However, church attendance does have an effect on voluntary action and solidary citizen participation since 60% of those we have considered volunteers go to church more than once a week and 27% go only once a week and 8% do not attend religious services.

Preliminary Results of Survey

Fig. 3. Most Relevant Results.

1. 66% of those interviewed have done at least one volunteer activity for others, 33% two activities, 8% four and 8% five or more.

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Preliminary Results of Survey

Fig. 3. Most Relevant Results.

1. 66% of those interviewed have done at least one volunteer activity for others, 33% two activities, 8% four and 8% five or more.

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**responsibility of Jacqueline Butcher at Cemefi. Some of the data in this paper comes from this initial presentation, however, more information is shown here on not only the results of the survey, but on the qualitative aspects of the project as well. Some “myths” were broken with this first data and other myths seem to be challenged as more information appears. The study with be terminated in July/August 2006 and presented in book form in Spanish in the Fall. Basáñez, M. & Butcher, J., *Mitos y realidades de la participación ciudadana en México*. V Seminario de Investigación sobre el Tercer Sector en México: “Fortalecimiento de la Sociedad Civil en México: ¿Avance o Retroceso? Cemefi/Universidad Iberoamericana, 18 & 19 octubre, 2005, Ciudad de México. This paper presents partial and preliminary findings of the survey designed by the research team and executed in September 2005 by Miguel Bazáñez as part of the project: “Solidary Citizen Participation and Voluntary Service in Mexico”.

15 82% of the population considers themselves Roman Catholic. INEGI 2003 census.**
2. Church, neighbors, school and the sick are the activities mentioned the most.
3. 40% continues doing them today 53% had done them in the last year;
4. 33% has been doing them for more than 10 years, 26% between 10 and 1 years, only 8% has done them for less than a year;
5. 32% does it at least once a week (9% everyday, 10% every third day y 13% weekly);
   21% regularly y 12% sporadically;
6. 7% help up to one hour a week, 25% between 1 and 3, 10% between 3 and 6 y 12% more than 6 hours a week. Un 11% does it sporadically.
7. 53% have made friends y 56% have learned something.
8. 76% Say they do not belong to groups and 24% do;
9. 29% do this in some institution or organized group, 21% alone, 13% with neighbors and friends and 3% more informally.
10. In 45% of their families, someone has done volunteer work.
11. 56% give money, 20% clothes, 17% nothing y 7% food;
12. 63% gives directly, 12% through a church or religious groups y 7% with groups of friends or a non religious organization.
13. 48% gives money in coins, 5% in bills y 2% other.
14. 64% have never received help, 36% have received help. Of those, 16% government, 10% on non relatives, 4% church and 4% other (school, work, organization)

Finally, the socio demographic questions of every survey were made as seen in Figure 4. taking into consideration as mentioned earlier, the voting polls framework.

Fig. 4 Socio demographic characteristics of the survey sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>712</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schooling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>669</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-L</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-H</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocupation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Region | Housewife Does not work | | |
|--------|--------------------------|
| North  | 388 26%                  |
| Occident | 309 21%                |
| Center | 310 21%                  |
| South  | 330 22%                  |
| DF     | 160 11%                  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban</strong></td>
<td>1047</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rural</strong></td>
<td>300</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mixed</strong></td>
<td>150</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catholic</strong></td>
<td>1244</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>152</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>None</strong></td>
<td>91</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>With Partner</strong></td>
<td>493</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Without Partner</strong></td>
<td>255</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Never Married</strong></td>
<td>506</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRI</strong></td>
<td>314</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PAN</strong></td>
<td>191</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRD</strong></td>
<td>111</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>None</strong></td>
<td>690</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TV</strong></td>
<td>1119</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Radio</strong></td>
<td>630</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Press</strong></td>
<td>497</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Until 1</strong></td>
<td>493</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Until 2</strong></td>
<td>506</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Until 3</strong></td>
<td>255</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 or more</strong></td>
<td>216</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative Analysis.

The original design for this Project included both quantitative and qualitative elements. However, in theory, a minimum of 15 case studies were necessary to be able to establish some main trends within the country on voluntary participation in group settings. (Stake, 1994), in a “collective case study” which, theoretically, it is believed that…” understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases…” that can represent the wide range of kinds of volunteering in diverse settings. Theoretically, this approach was seen as the most inductive to project trends and study differences of participation (Butcher, 2002) across the country.

The quantitative element includes the survey and its analysis, of which some data is still forthcoming at the time of this paper. The survey is applied to individuals, thus there is a possibility to observe in numbers what happens in the country as far as numbers of participants and hours they participate. For the qualitative analysis, it was decided that since the unit of analysis of the study is the solidary and voluntary action itself, to acquire a better understanding of voluntary participation, one must approach this action from a Case Study point of view and observe the subject through his/her actions within a group structure, which means either an informal or a formal CSO. However, since the quantitative data shows that many Mexicans do their solidary and voluntary work alone, an individual Case Study was added to look into this phenomena as well.

Which groups would be chosen and why? How many informal groups and how many formal ones and finally which are the most representative groups of voluntary activity in Mexico? If we look at the list, one may question each category. In reviewing the list, for some categories, the choice is quite obvious, for others, it is not. In Mexico, the governmental category is important because there is a basic national government structure for government participation headed traditionally by the wife of the politician at the head of each government office. In a bureaucracy that is three times larger than in the United States with over a 300 million population. Mexico has a population just bit over 100 million. The DIF\textsuperscript{16} is a federal network of family aid and is headed in each state by the governor’s wife. (Butcher, 2002) Several issues should be taken into consideration: the first, is that some of it is not voluntary work, it was a “forced” kind of participation. Syndicates, for example, are not voluntary in Mexico. (Salamon, 2003) In some countries they are considered as voluntary participation and group membership. Secondly, as political transition takes place, some of these structures may become very different. This happened especially during the time of the PRI, the main political party that was 71 years in power until 2000. The heads are not all the same party at this time, but the custom prevails and many individuals have been volunteers within this structure. What has happened over the years is that we can find volunteers working in these groups far beyond the time their husbands or wives were in office.

\textsuperscript{16} DIF, stands for Desarrollo Integral de la Familia, (Integral Family Development)
Another category included here is corporate volunteering. This activity is at its beginning stages in Mexico and Corporate Social Responsibility, a relatively new trend for larger companies. Smaller ones, called PYMES17 are only beginning to consider these programs. However, this category is important to add to the list since companies are beginning to understand the value of employees participating and of these kinds of programs. The rest of the categories have diverse perspectives: religious, juvenile, urban/popular, educational, cultural, recreational (sports), vulnerable groups (women, children, immigrants, indigenous groups, elderly), social causes, rural, community services (health).

A private university, the Tecnológico de Monterrey, with 33 campuses throughout the country, by means of their national Social Service Program, provided the contacts for 12 of the Case Studies. This program is designed for the senior year of all college students and is obligatory in Mexico to obtain a bachelors degree. (Butcher, 2002).

General Objectives of the Qualitative Portion:

To analyze the way that solidary and voluntary action takes place in Mexico in both formal and informal structures based on 15 Case Studies

Specific objectives are to:
1) Analyze the ways in which volunteers activities take place in different kinds of organizations and throughout the whole country.
2) Analyze the reasons why these particular individuals take on such activities within formal and informal organizations.

There was a special importance set on the subjects, in listening to their life trajectory, their reasons for volunteering and the significance of these activities within their daily lives. The systematic gathering of information, through verbalizations of their experiences allows us to delineate and describe a more accurate composite as well as a profile of voluntary action in the country, mostly of individuals that work in structured settings. However, the quantitative information from our national survey tells us there are a significant amount of people that do this kind of work on their own, 21% of volunteers work by themselves, without belonging to an organization. Many times they provide services to people or to organizations, but they do not particularly come from one. They do not belong to either a formal or an informal group. We have considered this informal activity and a Case Study was designed accordingly.

For an approximation to this reality and since this is the first national research on the theme of voluntarism on a national basis, it is first important to question at the network level, which would be called the “traditional” and visible points of volunteers activity, such as formal organizations and then explore more profoundly into individual

17 Pequeñas y Medianas Empresas, (Small and Median size companies)
participation and into individuals that volunteer on their own. In a second chance, these same networks can provide information to questions and interview individuals. For the first part of the project, the survey reflects individuals, but it is more in an organized fashion it is said that volunteers participate. This is why we chose to study volunteers within what we considered to be their usual context.

According to the UN classification of volunteering\textsuperscript{18}, four categories are mentioned:

1) Self-help  
2) Philanthropy of services for others  
3) Campaigns and causes  
4) Participation and self government

For the Mexican case, the first three, at this point in this study, are the ones that we have found to be most present. For this research portion of the whole project, it is fundamental to understand fully the particularities of voluntary action in Mexico. We are also interested in looking at solidary action that is most frequent. The information acquired from the interviews will allow to recover the differences and similarities that reflect Mexican society and come closer to understanding how the social net is woven within the country through interaction. The cultural elements that are reflected in different geographical regions are also important. They reveal the intricacies of social life as well and serve well as indicators of voluntary/solidary participation. The questions of how these subjects participate, why they participate, if these participations change over time and how individual significance is reinforced through actions is another aspect that will be solved by this study.

An important point to mention at this point is that a majority of individuals working within the organizations analyses for our Case Studies, do so as volunteers, even though they hold administrative positions within the organization. Of the 15 Case Studies, 66 people were interviewed, of which 74.2% were volunteers, these were people that did not receive a salary that would let them cover their basic needs. Many times stipends or occasionally room and board are offered by organizations. For our study this is still considered voluntary action. 25.8% are paid staff. Of this sample, 13 volunteers are men and 36 are women meaning that at least as far as the groups and organizations we studied go, the majority of the voluntary activity is female. This is a contrast with the national survey where we find that male and female volunteer work is almost half and half (48% men, 52% women).

\textsuperscript{18} UN Volunteering Toolkit., 2001
Several regions of the country were covered in our investigation. This variable was dependant on the presence of a link between the school and the organizations that were approached. In one region, the Tecnológico de Monterrey did not have a school linked to an organization in their program, so information was gathered by sending an Anthropologist interview individuals in an organization the southern part of Mexico. There are 32 states in the country and one Federal District. The map allows us to see that we can continue our research to further on compare volunteer activity in several regions of Mexico, since only 14 organizations and/or groups were part of the study.
Volunteer organizations in Mexico seem to be quite variable in the ways they assign a salary to their paid personnel. The size of the organization and the external financing is what allows them to have paid personnel. Others would not survive without the volunteers. The organizations were chosen by geographical region, connection with the Tecnológico de Monterrey, formality and type of activity that would cover the diverse types of voluntary/solidary action we wanted covered.

In some groups it is very evident that individuals must give voluntary work and time. Some groups provide a kind of room and board option during the time they served the organization, but received no payment. In other words, if the subjects had other needs or family responsibilities, they had to work and earn money otherwise. In very small organizations, it is almost always the case that the vast majority of participants are volunteers. Most cannot afford paid personnel. We can find volunteers in the various spheres playing different roles within the structure of the organizations. These roles varied from CEO to service provider. In no case, the founder received any kind of salary. Paid employees usually had director and staff positions. Although there is a great heterogeneity among volunteers, we consider that, in the Case Studies there are enough similarities to be able to identify distinctive volunteer profiles for Mexico.

Myths and realities of solidary and voluntary action in Mexico

Myth No. 1. Mexicans do not help regularly, only during natural disasters.

Traditionally Mexican have been considered as generous individuals but mostly in times of disaster earthquakes and floods, and with people closest to them.

Reality

Results of the survey do not support the above statement. Since our national survey showed that 66% of Mexicans have undertaken either formal or informal voluntary work and solidary participation, covering our definition of voluntary work: this is work for others, beyond their families and without receiving payment, at some time in their lives. They have done this on average for 5 years, 6 times a month giving an average of 3 & 1/2 hours each time. If we take into consideration that 33% has done two activities, 16% in three and 8% in five or more, the numbers in hours and frequency would increase.

The above averages come from 33% of individuals that have done this for over 10 years, another group 26%, between 10 and 1 year. 8% has less than a year of voluntary/solidary work. It was also asked if they were still volunteers today and the answer for 40% was yes. The average grows to 53% with the numbers of this past year. This means that there is a large amount of voluntary activity in Mexico. More than we thought. There is also continuity in this kind of work Many individual take on several voluntary tasks as well. It
shows a solidary and caring community, since as third of the country has invested voluntary time for the common good in their lifetime.

**Myth No 2. Mexicans do not participate voluntarily, except in churches**

For this myth we will go back to something mentioned earlier in the introduction. Data from the WVS produced these comments. “For starters, if we had to describe the Mexicans on this point, the word nearest to their character would be inactivity” (Moreno, 2005, p. 149). To solve our community problems we associate three times less than Mexicans living on the US side. “Although not very organized, and not very participative, Mexicans tend to act independently, without using the institutional path, this give us a look into their solidary orientation, and why not their altruistic values.” (Ibid., p. 152)

**Reality**

The survey tells us that of the individuals that volunteer 29% do so in institutions. However, 13% does so in informal settings with friends and 3% informally. The sum of the three variants is 45%, if compared to other countries in the WVS, the number is not so low. Even the 21% of individuals that work on their own mostly shows the difficulty in creating organizations, but not the will to participate voluntarily. Here, our hypothesis is proven correct. There is more informal (37%) than formal (29%) voluntary action.

**Myth 3. Mexicans use free time in family activities, sports and fun, in watching TV, but not in helping others.**

It is true that 65% of Mexicans watch two or more hours of TV a day. In average only 33% watch only an hour. However, Mexicans do donate an important amount of time to volunteer activity.

**Reality**

Survey shows that at least a third of people surveyed (32%) volunteer at least once a week (9% do it every day, 10% every third day and 13% weekly). If we count the hours that people give: 7% gives 1 hour a week, 25% between 1 and 3 hours, 10% between 3 and 6 and 12% more than 6 hours a week. There are also those who do it sporadically: 9%. One of the products of the study will be to give money value to this time.

If we consider that 48% of the people have around 10 free hours a week, and 30% between 3 to 9 hours, and 20% less than 3 hours, you will get an average of 8% of free hours a week. If we look at the average of given voluntary time is 3.6 hours, this means that they have another 4.4 they could give which would confirm answers to the question on the survey about …If you could do it, how much time do you think you could give? The answer was 3.9 hours. We could say that almost half of their free time is given to these activities.

**Myth No. 4. Mexicans do not trust others in general and only trusts his close circle of friends and family**
If we look at the answer in this survey of ... “Would you say that you can trust most people or that you cannot trust people too much?” 79% of people say that you cannot trust and 19% say you can. This is important because the ways that individuals participate in these activities. It will set the pace of how they will do so in the creation of social capital Putnam (2000) and it also creates common values in society.

Reality

Voluntary activity seems to enhance and help the creation of friendship and new networks. It also enhances learning new things. 53% of surveyed individuals answered that they had made friendships through voluntary activity and 56% admits to have learned something new. So voluntary work is only about giving, but also about receiving, since side benefits such as these are received as well.

If we look at the numbers we will find that although family values are still quite strong as Moreno tells us ... “Mexicans keep giving more importance to family than to any other aspect of life” Moreno (2005: 198) We also find that family members of almost half of the people interviewed (45%) had also participated in voluntary activity. This is important to underline where values are formed and how much Mexicans will listen to family in forming volunteer tradition.

Myth no. 5 Mexicans do not contribute with much time, but less with other resources

If we look at the ENCUP (2001,2003) National Survey, the majority of the population (72%) think that people only worry about themselves. However, in the same survey more than half of people answered that the majority of the people practice solidarity with others and the same amount said that people should engage and commit first with their community and secondly with their interests. There seems to be a bit of a contradiction in what these phrases imply.

Reality

The Cemefi survey states that 56% of people generally give money, 20% clothes, 17% nothing & 7%, food. As for the amount, the weekly average of donations ascends to 205 pesos 19 which makes it difficult to sustain our myth. Also, other interesting figures are that Mexicans give 63% directly, 12% through a church or religious groups and 7% through groups of friends and civic groups. We know these results vary after a tragedy or natural disaster. These are customs and figures that need to be considered in future fundraising efforts and as we understand the giving patterns, on how organizations need to focus their structures for funding.

Myth No. 6 Churches are the institutions that give the most

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19 Less than 2 USD.
Traditionally it is said that churches have the mission of helping individuals. Moreover, it is in church activities that people volunteer the most. The Cemefi Survey, ENSAV, tells us that: 42% volunteer in churches, 34% in schools, 33% with neighbors, 21% to the sick and 12% to the poor. The percentages to don sum 100 because some people help in more than one volunteer activity. It is evident that churches are the ones that receive the most, but are they the ones that give the most?

**Reality**

When the individual interviewed was asked if he had received any help, two thirds answer negatively and a third (35%) accepts having received some kind of help since three months ago until over a period of 10 years, which means a global average of 3 years. Most of the help is in food (10%) scholarships (7%), medicine (6%) clothes (4%) and others (money, training, donations room and board, etc.)

However, when asked about who they had received from, almost half (46%) answered that from the government, 28% from persons (not relatives), 12% from various organizations and only 12% from churches. This needs a closer look, because here we can see, at least in perception, churches receive a lot more than they give.

**Myth No. 7** Basically women of high socio economic status fill their life with altruistic activities because they have “nothing to do”.

There is no basis for this statement, except perception, pictures in the papers from high society groups that begin and create foundations and charity groups.

**Reality.**

From the qualitative data and standpoint, myths are also in evidence. From what we can see here in the preliminary information that the qualitative analysis is beginning to show at this point in the study is that voluntary activity is not the activity of unoccupied people, on the contrary. We are beginning to find out that a little under 50% of the individuals in the sample (formal and informal groups) are between 30 and 50 years of age and that they find themselves in an intense stage of economic productive life. If we look at the types of activities, we will find mostly married with children (70%).

Inside organizations, 31% of individuals are dedicated exclusively to volunteer activities and 52% to paid activities. Interesting to see, is that 53% of people have a Bachelors degree, 10% have basic schooling, and more than that, 14% have postgraduate studies. From the interviews, researchers are beginning to find that some people do just “give”, and that it is a kind of vocation for some individuals.

In the influence of religion, it is seen that although not all volunteering is of religious origin, these individuals have Catholic religious family values 50% of people interviewed in this sample mention explicitly that were
educated in homes with Catholic values. Around 85% have had a previous experience in volunteering and 80% recognized having and family influence in activities that “give satisfaction that cannot be paid for in money” and that have to do with “helping others to grow and be better.”

Conclusions

There is analysis still in process to be able to affirm the data presented in our Myths and Realities portion. However, if we look carefully at this information it could be said that they begin to change the general perception on how these activities are viewed in Mexico. There are still many parameters to be set. We are beginning to get new information of the behavior of different regions in the country, a better understanding of motivations, the types of activities that volunteers do, how they are begun and how they continue.

We must also be quite careful with preliminary results. Statistics can be tricky in the sense that averages may be high for different reasons which need revision. People that do a lot can create high averages. One example of this is reflected in the time that volunteers dedicate to these activities. In a more profound analysis of the time issue, we find that Mexicans dedicate 27 eight hour labor days a year to voluntary activity. Only the individuals that were performing a voluntary activity at the time of the interview (40%) count for this number. However, the average comes from three kinds of volunteer modalities:

♦ Intensive volunteers. These dedicate 186 days a year to solidary/volunteer activities. They represent 8% of the national sample
♦ Average volunteers. The individuals dedicate 34 days a year to these activities, they represent 29% of solidary/voluntary activity in the national sample
♦ Sporadic volunteers. These individuals dedicate in average 1.7 days a year and they represent 63% of the solidary and volunteer activity. In the national sample

This affirmation has come out of a careful analysis. Each question and number cannot be taken at face value. We are very aware that understanding this participatory phenomena has become quite a challenge, especially in an unmarked territory where the comparative data is very scarce and one is actually mapping the first steps in this direction.

It is our hope that the Cemefi National Survey, ENSAV, and the results of this study will contribute to a wider overview of volunteer and solidary participation. Time and effort have been put into many things: the selection of the researchers; the questionnaire aspects so it would be colloquial and understandable for the under/average person in Mexico, since the mean in education in the country is 5 years of schooling; the methodology; the consideration of both quantitative and qualitative aspects where the researchers in different areas did not receive the influence of the other for less bias in the results; the timing and orchestration where all interviews were managed by one
researcher in a certain time period through a nationwide electronic system, so she could get an overview of what was happening, but at the same time she could control the interviewers and their questioning. The many problems in choosing organizations plus electing the right individual to interview after participant observation was also carefully scrutinized. These are all inside details that may never be part of a publication, but that make research what it is: a way to question, to discover and to question again.

We know that this is the “tip of the iceberg” of what really happens in Mexico. This study was created to find out what is happening in the voluntary scene, and also to validate voluntary action in its various forms. We are aware that the structure of voluntary citizen participation is very complex as are the social structures in Mexican society. It is our wish and intent to be able to contribute a small portion of knowledge on this activity, as well as to be able to touch, analyze and understand the many generous and solidary attitudes of individuals than partake in this country. This study, added onto more information in the field may hopefully help prepare a basis for social public policy creation as well as a view into organized civil society to understand and revise participation within these organizations and question, as well, how they act out for the “public good”. How good and how public may be what comes next.

References:

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