Community Development Challenges in Rural Guatemala

Maryam Jamali

SIT Graduate Institute

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/capstones

Part of the Latin American Studies Commons, and the Other International and Area Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

Jamali, Maryam, "Community Development Challenges in Rural Guatemala" (2012). Capstone Collection. 2557.
https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/capstones/2557
Community Development Challenges In Rural Guatemala

Maryam Jamali
PIM 69

A capstone paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Intercultural Service, Leadership, and Management at the School for International Training Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, U.S.A.

July 2012

Tatsushi Arai
CONSENT TO USE OF CAPSTONE

I hereby grant permission for World Learning to publish my Capstone on its websites and in any of its digital/electronic collections, and to reproduce and transmit my CAPSTONE ELECTRONICALLY. I understand that World Learning’s websites and digital collections are publicly available via the Internet. I agree that World Learning is NOT responsible for any unauthorized use of my Capstone by any third party who might access it on the Internet or otherwise.

Author’s Signature: Maryam Jamali Date: June 23, 2012

© Maryam Jamali, 2012. All rights reserved.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. **ABSTRACT**  

II. **INTRODUCTION**  
- *Peace Corps and work context in Guatemala*  
- *Brief overview of obstacles women and youth face in rural community development*  

III. **LITERATURE REVIEW**  
- *Women and poverty*  
- *Violence against women*  
- *Gender discrimination and inequality*  
- *Obstacles affecting youth*  

IV. **RESEARCH DESIGN**  
- *Methodology/Site and Sample Selection*  
- *Challenges as a Researcher*  

V. **FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**  
- *Data Collection and Analysis*  
- *Community youth diagnostic (questionnaire results)*  
- *Interview results*  

VI. **DISCUSSION**  
- *Conclusion*  

VII. **WORKS CITED**  

VIII. **APPENDICES**  
- **APENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**  
- **APENDIX B: MAP OF SAN MARCOS, GUATEMALA**  
- **APENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE**
ABSTRACT

In Guatemala women and youth often do not enjoy the same privileges that men do making it harder for them to be involved in the social sphere and in control of decision-making in their lives. Gender based inequality, certain cultural norms, and general structural weakness and impunity are factors that important to analyze and take in consideration in regards to the challenges that women face in Guatemalan society. This paper aims to analyze the question of community development challenges in rural Guatemala. Specifically, focus will be placed on the major obstacles that affect women and youth in community development, presenting literature review on how those obstacles have affected women and youth, their significance in relation to their participation in community development, suggestions on what can be done, and to provide some insights and reflections throughout the paper as a Peace Corps Volunteer who experienced working with these challenges. Method of inquiry consisted of relying greatly on literature review in supporting the arguments and analysis, documented field notes/observations and work journals, community youth diagnostic results, and two supplementary interviews with Guatemalans who had relevant work experience with women and youth.

The findings suggest that major obstacles such as extreme poverty, family violence, and gender discrimination and inequality can be addressed if we provide a space for women and youth to participate, and advocate on behalf of their rights in conjunction with educating the public (women, youth, and men) and pushing for greater accountability on behalf of the authorities/system. Encouraging women and youth’s participation through education and increasing their knowledge on existing opportunities, involving men in the discussion, and empowering women and youth with decision-making in their lives and activities and projects that affect their community, will all be ways in which true transformation and further community development can come about.
INTRODUCTION

The success of rural community development and progress within a society has a lot to do with the people involved, their commitment and dedication, the level of awareness and desire for change, structures and laws, and the availability of access to resources and opportunities among other factors. In rural Guatemala, women and youth are the most marginalized groups and are less active in society. In particular, indigenous women do not have equal opportunities and face many limitations, and the youth are unmotivated. I was sent to Guatemala on August 12th 2010 as a Peace Corps Volunteer to work as a Municipal Development Advisor. I lived and worked in a rural community in the western highlands in San Antonio Sacatepéquez in the department of San Marcos for a year and a half. After working specifically at the Municipal Women’s Office and being exposed to working with youth, I decided to dedicate my capstone paper in understanding the difficulties and challenges of rural community development.

Rural community development can best be understood when a holistic approach that examines women and youth’s active participation and their presence in society is studied and taken into consideration. This is important since women and youth consist of more than half of the population in San Antonio, thus, studying their involvement is crucial and will facilitate further suggestions and efforts in the promotion of a long-term development strategy and transformation in the community. Moreover, by looking into the obstacles that limit these minority groups in society and how it affects them it’ll help our understanding as individuals who work in the international realm. In addition, this research will serve as a means for community members and interested local and international organizations in the identification of problems and challenges
associated with women and youth in community development, the significance of advocating for change, increase awareness, and instigate action and greater participation for sustainable community development. Literature review, studying field notes and work experiences, presenting results from a community youth diagnostic, and hearing from two Guatemalans who live this reality will also help us grasp a better understanding on the complexities of rural community development challenges in Guatemala, and give us a perspective in the international development field. In the following sections, I will first give our readers some background information and context about Peace Corps and the location of where I worked, and later I will present literature review to support my arguments, followed by research design and findings, and conclude with further discussion.

**Peace Corps and Work Context in Guatemala**

Peace Corps is an international government agency that was created in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy with a mission to promote peace and friendship in countries around the world. They are active in about 70 different countries and have three primary goals: to help people of interested countries in meeting their needs for trained men and women, help promote a greater understanding of Americans on the part of the people served, and to help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

San Antonio Sacatepéquez had a population of about 18,000 habitants and was a very rural community that consisted mainly of indigenous people. Generally, the municipality has a vital role in the community because it encompasses a great many responsibilities and provides a variety of services such as cultural events, infrastructural projects, social activities, and
informational workshops, etc… It is a place where people go to get assistance and to be connected with unique opportunities that may not have otherwise existed without the establishment of this government body. Due to a lot of discrimination and gender based violence against women, in December of 2010 it became mandatory for all municipalities to have a Municipal Women’s Office dedicated to providing programs that would support women, youth, and the elderly. Our primary goal was to create structured women groups of 10 + members in order to provide them with municipal services, connect them to external organizations and social programs, psychological support, informational presentations, raising awareness on a variety of topics, and to train and assist them with community projects. While the first year of my service there was a great emphasis on working with women, later on we occasionally did activities with youth which sparked my interest to advocate for a Municipal Youth’s Office that would be dedicated to offering assistance to youth. Within a couple months, after increased advocacy efforts on behalf of myself, another Peace Corps Volunteer, and a youth leader in soliciting support from the mayor and council members, presentations on youth issues, doing youth diagnostics, gathering information about youth problems by engaging with youth and promoting their activities, we were able to officially establish and get an unanimous vote on behalf of the mayor and council members for the creation of the Municipal Youth’s Office. This was a success and a new beginning for community members in San Antonio Sacatepéquez in providing them greater opportunities and care for youth activities and programs.

**Brief overview of obstacles women and youth face in rural community development**

Before I address the complexities of community development by looking at how it affects women and youth with literature review, I would like to present a brief overview of what I
experienced on the ground. Throughout my time working at the Municipal Women’s Office I witnessed a lot of limitations and problems that women were dealing with and were challenged by as they attempted to join women groups and participate in various activities. To begin with, most women that lived in the highlands were illiterate, if they had education it was at a very low level (fifth grade being the average), the families very poor, there were cases of violence against women, and a lot of gender discrimination (very male-centric culture that made the decisions and controlled their lives). The situation with youth was lack of motivation and interest in participating for presentations or organizing activities with the Municipal Youth’s Office. Although poverty, being busy with school and/or work, coming from broken families, and household responsibilities (mainly expected of girls) were some factors for their lack of desire in participation, the youth had a history of being neglected in their community and did not have the right guidance at home in terms of motivation and putting them on the right track, and the harsh reality of not many opportunities being available to them. I shall develop these issues further throughout my paper when I talk about the obstacles affecting youth.

In the following section (literature review) I will demonstrate a general conceptual overview of relevant theories that will go beyond the context of Guatemala, but I will also briefly draw parallels between these key concepts and the defining characteristics of Guatemala’s society, which will be analyzed in the sections that follow.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section is meant to elaborate on the issues that are critical in rural community development, in particular as it relates to the involvement of women and youth and the challenges that have
affected their presence in community development. There are several aspects affecting women in San Antonio Sacatepéquez which include extreme poverty, violence against women, and gender discrimination and inequality. These factors have hindered their ability to fully engage in community activities, lowered their self-esteem and independence, and continue to restrict their agency and community development efforts. The human poverty framework and human rights approach stress on the importance of the poverty of choices and opportunities, and our right to life and equality. Poverty must be addressed and taken in consideration when analyzing women’s situation. Women are minority groups that don’t have much access to opportunities and resources, which has hindered their progress in community development. The human rights approach emphasizes the right to be free of poverty since poverty is an injustice. The human rights approach is meant to empower people in defending their basic rights, preventing discrimination, and social exclusion. If women were respected equally, had access to resources and decision-making just like men, their participation in society would have been higher regardless of their income, that is an important factor but not the only factor when looking at poverty. Gender equality and women’s empowerment are vital both to the protection and expansion of human rights and to gain socioeconomic development.

Violence against women is another phenomenon in developing countries like Guatemala that is very prevalent and dominant. The gender-based violence theory is applicable as it looks at how women have long been targeted for abuse and domestic violence, the psychological affects (low self-esteem, trauma, etc…), the denial of human rights, inequality, gender discrimination, and impunity. Our psychological needs, such as self-esteem, empowerment, and freedom to choose
are critical in advancing our growth and independence, and the ability to act. In Guatemala, discrimination and inequality affect women in many ways. Generally, they are not decision makers in their lives nor are they expected to reach high social positions and be active members in society. They are discriminated against based on their gender and not taken serious in the work environment. The gender analysis framework sheds light on ways which women are affected in society based on the expected gender roles, cultural expectations and norms, and the institutional policies and structures that fail to create equality and implement laws.

It is important to mention though, that cultural sensitivity is important when using the gender-based theory, because a developing country’s norms and way of life are at times very different than our own in the U.S. Accordingly, in order to understand more about gender inequality within the context of San Antonio Sacatepéquez we must pay attention to the culture of this small rural town where men were the predominant providers, decision-makers, and in charge of financial matters. This reality by itself created a system whereby women were not expected and encouraged to continue with education and instead were to marry and be primarily involved with reproduction. Although, many women and girls were in fact opposed to this and did want change, and realized how this system needs to be broken and changed in order for them to have independence, agency, be active in society, and to be able to help contribute to their families financially as well.

Obstacles that youth face consist of gender discrimination, poverty and working in the fields instead of continuing with their education, lack of employment and opportunities, and coming from broken families. Youth are also very significant in community development and are future
leaders, so neglecting them will only encourage risky behaviors and apathy. A sustainable approach to rural community development is one that also places importance on their participation as well. Economic and political participation is a substantial step towards integrating youth, developing leadership, and responsibility and organization in encouraging their involvement in the community and personal growth.

**Women and poverty**

The World Bank defines poverty in three degrees: *extreme poverty* means that income is less than $1 a day and that the household cannot meet basic needs for survival. They are chronically hungry, unable to get health care, lack safe drinking water and sanitation, cannot afford education for their children and perhaps lack of rudimentary shelter—a roof to keep rain out of the hut-and basic articles of clothing, like shoes. Extreme poverty can be described as “the poverty that kills.” *Moderate poverty* is defined as living on $1 to $2 a day, whereby basic needs are met but just barely. And *relative poverty* is defined by household income level below a given proportion of the national average, means missing things that the middle class now takes for granted (Sachs 2005). Based on where I lived in Guatemala, specifically in SAS, when poverty is mentioned in this paper it is a reference to extreme poverty and moderate poverty in economic terms.

Now before examining how poverty plays a role in women’s lives it is important to develop the definition of poverty without just looking at it in terms of a monetary value above, because focus will not just be in economic terms but rather the human aspect as well. Poverty does not have a
single meaning; instead it has a series of meanings connected by a series of resemblances (Spicker 2006). Fukuda-Parr (Fukuda-Parr 1999, as cited in the Human Development Report 1997) states that “It is in the deprivation of the lives people lead that poverty manifests itself. Poverty can be defined as the denial of the opportunities and choices most basic to human life – opportunity to lead a long, healthy, and creative life, and to enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self-esteem, and respect from others” (p. 100).

Human poverty is multidimensional, poverty of choices and opportunities can be more applicable than income for policy-makers and others in taking action to eradicate poverty for they place an emphasis on the deep-seated structural causes of poverty and lead directly to strategies of empowerment. Human poverty can be more relevant for an engendered understanding of poverty than income poverty. Exclusion from participation in decision-making is not dependent on income levels. Participation in decision-making is associated with freedom and to the respect of others in the community (Fukuda-Parr 1999). In societies throughout the world, women face restrictions on their choices and opportunities that men do not. Although these gender differences often lead to lower income for women, critical choices and opportunities are related to other human outcomes. Empirical studies of poverty focusing on income can mask poverty of opportunities and choices. Furthermore, gender bias has led to lower survival for women, despite of their biological advantage. And in political participation, women are the most deprived, holding only 7.5 percent of ministerial positions in government and 13 percent in parliaments (Fukuda-Parr 1999). These, along with many other indicators of human development and deprivation, should be utilized for monitoring poverty as it affects women and men differently.
So in essence what the authors argue above is that we need to widen our perspective while looking at how poverty affects women, and take into consideration this notion of access to resources and freedom of choice. It affects women differently since in many developing countries such as Guatemala, women are often limited in their choices and are culturally expected to be submissive and obedient. Opportunities for participation are also much lesser due to the obligations and responsibilities that they bear.

Ogrondik (2011) states how human progress is definitely affected when women, who represent over half of the global population, own only one percent of the world’s wealth and hold only sixteen percent of the world’s legislative position. When women are poor and being abused by violence not only are their rights compromised, but the development of the whole society is at stake. A 2009 World Bank report found that almost half of the Guatemalan population is poor, that over the last ten years, rates of poverty have only marginally dropped, and that the incidence of extreme poverty – about 15 percent of the population - has remained the same. The report also shows that the country’s distribution of wealth is extremely unequal as the wealthiest 20 percent of the population controls 58 percent of the wealth, while the poorest 20 percent controls just over 3 percent of the wealth. Furthermore, social indicators such as education, health and mortality rates show that the country ranks as one of the worst in the region, surpassed only by Haiti. Poverty also disproportionately effects the indigenous population, as over three quarters of indigenous Guatemalans are poor and indigenous mothers are three times more likely to die from pregnancy complications than non-indigenous women (Ogrodnik 2011). This reality by itself creates a huge barrier in front of women’s participation in the social sphere and their ability
to progress in satisfying their developmental needs, and achieving a name for themselves in social positions.

Speth (1998) states, “The right to be free of the crushing burden of poverty must be counted among the most fundamental of human rights. Poverty is brutal. It is embedded in all realms of the existence of poor people, and extends beyond lack of income” (p. 1). He argues that in a world where absolute numbers of people living in poverty are growing, where vast wealth coexists with the most desperate forms of impoverishment, development cooperation is more necessary now than ever. An end to poverty remains the ultimate goal, and the development community continues to look for entry points to poverty elimination that will most likely bring success. One such new entry point to poverty elimination is the human rights approach to poverty. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has mad poverty eradication its main priority for many years. Traditional measures of poverty are themselves insufficient. The development community has long known that identifying an income or consumption cutoff below which people are poor, offers an incomplete picture of poverty. Although income focuses on a critical dimension of poverty, it only partially describes the many levels of human destitution. An emphasis on income measure poverty neglects the specifics of each community.

Each community has “necessary needs,” and these necessities vary across cultures and historical situations. People lack income for a variety of reasons, including unemployment, limited access to resources, illiteracy, poor health and marginalization from society. Deprivation poverty, as presented in the 1997 Human Development Report, is not the same thing as income poverty.
The correlation between income poverty (using the US $1 a day standard) and human deprivation is not in particular strong. Thus, it is vital to see poverty in the aspects of both income and other deprivations. Income is only a limited interpretation of these deprivations; it is not the cause of these deprivations (Speth 1998).

Seth (1998) states that conceivably the most basic human right challenged by poverty is the right to life. Nearly one-third of the people in the least developed countries, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa, cannot expect to live beyond the age of 40. Another mark of poverty, adult illiteracy, means that the poor are significantly limited in their access to knowledge, to information and to the press as well as in their ability to exercise connected rights such as political participation. Women are the hardest hit by human poverty, and compromise an estimated 70 percent of the world’s poor. Typically, women have additional obstacles such as unequal opportunities to education and health services as to the productive assets by which they can hope to break free from the restraints of poverty. In developing countries, women make up 60 percent of the illiterate adults; female enrollment at the primary education level is 13 percent less than male enrollment and female wages are only three-fourths of male wages. In a sense women undergo compounded poverty. Another facet of women’s poverty is violence. Violence against women who are poor is pervasive in many societies, and women in these societies are afforded little resources against domestic violence (Speth 1998).

A special event on poverty eradication was held at the United Nations in May 1997. Discussions focused on the argument that eradicating mass poverty is as much a political challenge as an economic challenge because it requires political stability, conflict prevention, sound governance
and political will. The promotion of human rights—be they civil, political, cultural, economic, or social—are critical aspects in our battle to eliminate poverty. In January 1998, UNDP prepared a position paper entitled, “Integrating Human Rights with Sustainable Human Development,” to promote dialogue and action on the connections between human rights and sustainable development. In her introduction to this policy paper Mrs. Mary Robinson, UN high commissioner for human rights, expressed, “We must understand the role of human rights as empowering of individuals and communities. By protecting these rights, we can help prevent many conflicts based poverty, discrimination and (social, economic and political) exclusion that continue to plague humanity and destroy decades of development efforts” (Speth 1998).

Speth argues that the human rights approach to poverty eradication is motivated by duty. Even if we, as human beings, do not feel particularly charitable, even if we believe we can wall ourselves off from the consequences of poverty, we must respect the rights of others, including the right to be free from poverty. Poverty is an injustice, a denial of freedom from want. For example, enacting and implementing equal opportunity laws will aid in empowering men and women to gain more equitable access to resources, liberating individual initiative and creating economic opportunities. Legislating against gender discrimination will boost the capabilities of women by proving them better access to credit and other productive resources, property and inheritance rights and improved political participation and representation (Speth 1998).

This conceptual framework (human right approach) by Speth holds merit in my view because it is a strategic and holistic approach in comprehending and attempting to eliminate poverty. Approaching poverty as a right enables us to demand justice and seek legislative and policy
measures that would aim at reforming the system as a whole instead of just focusing on economic development. Therefore, the human poverty (engendered understanding of poverty) and human rights approach are attractive and reasonable frameworks in which can help us better understand the complexities and connections when looking at women in poverty and the obstacles that stand in their way in rural community development.

**Violence against women**

Beyond their harsh reality of poverty, violence against women is another limitation that prevents women from having a healthy and active life in society. Ogrodnik’s (2011) refers to a comment from the UN General Secretary in her article that explains, “Women who experience violence suffer a range of health problems and their ability to earn a living and to participate in public life is diminished” (p.6). Violence against women ultimately paralyzes women, denies the family of needed sources of income and emotional strength, and limits the country’s development as a whole. This violence stems from poverty and inequality that increases social exclusion.

Violence against women is not always an individual act, macro-policies of states and governments may also result in human rights violations and violence. Examples of such violence consist of preventable malnutrition, preventable diseases or complication during pregnancy and childbirth ending in death. Violence against women generally derives from the perceived inferiority of women and their unequal status by laws and societal norms (WIN News 2000). Violence against women has been widely acknowledged as a pervasive global problem.
It is an enduring impediment to the empowerment of women and, more broadly, to social justice and peace. Cultures of violence are based on repression, denial, and manipulation. Historically women have been blamed, shamed, and silenced about the violence perpetrated against them, especially sexual violence. Silence around gender violence contributes to the violence by maintaining it and intensifying its traumatic impact on victims and the broader consequences for all women (Elliott 2007).

Ellsberg (2006) states how the UN provides a broad framework for comprehending violence against women, also referred to as gender-based violence (GBV), as any act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life” (p. 326). Examples consist of prenatal sex selection and neglect of girls, trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, and violence against women is circumstances of armed conflict. The most common and well documented forms of violence are intimate partner violence, also known as “domestic violence” and sexual violence by non-partners (i.e., child sexual abuse, child rape). For the purposes of the context of where I worked in Guatemala, “domestic violence” will be what I am referring to when taking about GBV.

Hayes (2007) states how during 2002-2007, 2,000 women have been killed in Guatemala. This unprecedented level of murders of women in the country is the most extreme expression of GBV in addition to the supreme violation of human rights, explicitly linked to widespread poverty rooted in historical patterns of inequality, exclusion and discrimination. GBV and murder of
women is destabilizing development initiatives by Guatemala, by impeding the ability of women, their families, and communities to participate in the social, cultural, economic, and political life of the country. Data on violence against women show that the state has failed to protect women and girls sufficiently from violence and murder and to investigate and apprehend the perpetrators. This sends a sign to those who commit these crimes that they can continue to do so with impunity.

What this means for women in development is crucial in realizing how this affects their self-esteem and prevents them from being active and productive in their lives. This violence places a huge psychological scar on women that affects their self-esteem and the way in which they view themselves in society. GBV is regarded as rooted in gender inequality, discrimination against women and violation of human rights, above all the right to life. The mobilization of women’s social movements in Latin America and worldwide led to the celebration of the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in 1993. These were the first mechanisms to address violence against women on an international level. It is believed that GBV occurs more frequently in fragile socio-economic contexts with political and judicial exclusion and where human rights violations are tolerated. Essentially, it contributes greatly to the GBV theory as it strongly underlines institutional weakness and impunity in maintain levels of violence against women while challenging the state on this. At an individual level, physical, psychological and sexual violence against women has serious mental health and behavioral repercussions. Violence causes post-traumatic stress syndrome, depression, anxiety and low self-esteem. GBV at community level can be taken as a new form of subjugating the population and restricting the freedom of movement through the use of terror, specifically related to women, and as such
hinders progress in participation and peace building. GBV is a public health, security and human rights problem directly obstructing long-term development efforts. Development is clearly under threat when women are excluded from participating in, contributing to and benefiting from development initiatives and from political decision making at micro and macro levels, since their participation is critical to encouraging lasting change (Hayes 2007).

Basically, the authors expressed how the GBV theory approaches violence against women by looking at deep rooted problems that women face in society, whether it’s societal norms, oppression, violation of human rights, or inequality. This approach places emphasis on women in development since they are the most marginalized and deprived of opportunities. Such an obstacle in development puts women in a very tough position whereby participation decreases in community development and insecurity on their behalf increases. If women do not feel safe and respected they are less likely interested in wanting to be active in social and political spheres, and continue to feel a sense of hopelessness especially when their institutions fail to provide them sufficient support. It must be noted that impunity is one of the main reasons that violence continues to affect women in particular in Guatemala. The state is very weak and not helpful in alleviating this problem. There are laws that are supposed to protect women, but the problems lies in the fact that these laws aren’t implemented or enforced. There are very few police at a given post in a town and only some possess training on violence against women, which was provided by international organizations such as the UN.
Gender discrimination and inequality

Another major obstacle in a woman’s progress in development is gender discrimination resulting in inequality. Kabeer (2003) explains that, “‘Gender’ refers to the rules, norms, customs and practices by which biological differences between males and females are translated into socially constructed differences between men and women and boy and girls. This results in the two genders being valued differently and in their having unequal opportunities and life chances” (p. 2). Gender inequality is made both through society’s formal laws and statues and through unwritten norms and shared understandings. It is not only widespread across all societies but also the most predominant form of social disadvantage within societies.

Sarkar (2006) expresses how there are three reasons why gender analysis is relevant to all aspects of economic and the social development and more precisely to the core Millennium Development Goals (MGDs). The first reason is that gender inequality is the most prevalent; a feature of social relations in all societies, although it shows itself variously in different places. The second reason is that it cuts across all other forms of socio-economic differentiation. “It is a feature of rich as well as poor groups and racially dominant as well as racially subordinate groups. The intersection of gender discrimination with economic deprivation tends to produce intensified forms of disadvantage, more often for women and girls than for men and boys” (p.33). For this reason the gender analysis of poverty would examine the problem in terms of unequal relationships between women and men, girls and boys, but tends to emphasize on the bigger disadvantage of women and girls. The third and last reason is that gender relations influence and structure the relations of production and reproduction, between economic activity and the care of human beings, and thus between economic growth and human development.
They are workers in both spheres, the most responsible and hence with most at stake, those who suffer most when the two spheres meet at cross-purposes, and those most sensitive to the need for better integration between the two. It is in this setting of women at the juncture of productive and reproductive activities that give rise to potential collaborations and trade-offs that policymakers need to be conscious of in their attempts to achieve the MDGs (Sarkar 2006).

In those regions of the world where women’s mobility in the public is severely restricted by social norms, and where households are organized along corporate lines, with the control of family resources, labor and decision-making largely vested in the hands of the senior male, gender discrimination is presented in extreme forms. Gender analysis is about the ability to make connections that are not always obvious in the first instance.

Sarkar (2006) stated that the concept of bringing gender issues into the mainstream of society was vividly established at the General Conference of UNESCO as a global strategy for promoting gender equality in the Platform for Action on Women, which was held in Beijing in 1995. The platform presented twelve areas of main concern, such as: “The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women, Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training, Violence against women, Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making levels, and Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women” (p.9). There are also three key principles of gender mainstreaming as defined by the Commonwealth Secretariat: empowerment (having control over the decisions and issues that affects one’s life), accountability (underlines that change within an organization and within society cannot be achieved unless the people who constitute these feel motivated to do so), and integration effort (high degree of analysis and
coordination are necessary in order to ensure that gender mainstreaming functions as a holistic approach aimed at the transformation of the structures that create and perpetuate gender inequalities” (Sarkar, 2006, p. 4). Essentially, gender mainstreaming goes beyond women’s participation; it means bringing the knowledge, experience, and interest of women and men to bear on the development goals. It is the transformation of unequal social and institutional structures into equal and just structures for both women and men (Sarkar 2006).

Bouta (2004) states that a key development challenge is to address factors that limit women’s participation in local community development efforts and their representation in decision making structures and processes. Relating to this, Kabeer (2003) states how women’s empowerment and agency becomes critical in relation to the limitations they face. Agency in relation to empowerment entails not only actively exercising choice, but also doing this in ways that challenges power relations. It involves changes in how people see themselves (their sense of self-worth) and their ability for action. A lot of measurements that are taken with women in development are to encourage this notion of agency, and greater involvement in the selection and implementation of community projects and activities.

There is also an acute cultural factor in Guatemala referred to as Machismo (“A strong or exaggerated sense of masculinity stressing attributes such as physical courage, virility, domination of women, and aggressiveness”) that has effected and plays a strong role in the lives of indigenous women and women in urban areas (American Heritage Dictionary). Bellino (Bellino 2009-2010, as cited in GHRC 2009a; Monterroso 2009; Portenier 2007) states that “another oft-cited reason of feminicide is a broader culture of machismo” (p. 7). “Feminicide is
a political term. It encompasses more than Femicide because it holds responsible not only the male perpetrators but also the state and judicial structures that normalize misogyny. In Guatemala, feminicide is a crime that exists because of the absence of state guarantees to protect the rights of women” (Guatemala Human Rights Commission). Between 2001-2009, 4,876 women have been killed, and it is believed that this phenomenon is more prevalent in urban areas of Guatemala, these “gender-based” barbaric crimes have been characterized as “femicides” (Guatemala Human Rights Commission). Bellino (2009-2010) states that among Guatemalan women who recognize the reality of feminicide, every woman she spoke to during personal interviews shared the same theory that men are killing women to forcefully communicate their distaste for women’s growing independence. After the peace accords, women had increased opportunities to become socially and politically engaged, but feminicide is meant to place women back in their (domestic) place. Though machismo is often theorized as an innate cultural force, gender inequality is historically rooted in official policy. Essentially, women not only do not possess equal opportunities but are also being targeted for domestic violence and death due to their gender and having gained more independence in urban areas.

In rural Guatemala, there are two specific frameworks that fit the best when looking into gender analysis as a way of understanding how a women’s gender affects and impacts her role in her daily life and in society. The first one is, the Women’s Empowerment Framework that was developed by Sara Hlupekile Longwe, a gender expert from Lusaka, Zambia. Her model is political, arguing that a women’s poverty is the result of oppression and exploitation (rather than lack of productivity), and that to reduce poverty women must be empowered. The framework
suggests five progressively greater levels of equality that can be achieved (listed from highest to lowest):

1. “Control - equal control over in decision-making over factors of production.

2. Participation - equal participation in decision-making process related to policymaking, planning, and administration.

3. Conscientisation – attaining equal understanding of gender roles and gender division of labor that is fair and agreeable.

4. Access – equal access to the factors of production by removing discriminatory provision in the laws.

5. Welfare – having equal access to material welfare (food, income, medical care)” (Quoted in Miller and Razavi).

The framework suggested above by Longwe is related to the conditions and challenges that Guatemalan women face in their society. As noted earlier in the paper when we analyzed human poverty, which is a result of lack of power in the decision-making in one’s life, the first point on the list that refers to control or empowerment is a fundamental base that can facilitate a woman’s self-esteem and ability in taking action in her personal life and in her community. Moreover, encouraging Guatemalan women to be more active and participate in the decision-making process related to policy-making is also critical because their participation can further enrich and reform laws that would benefit and protect women, in addition to providing a space for them to advocate on behalf of their rights and in demanding greater accountability on behalf of the authorities.
Another framework that highlights the development problems women face in San Antonio Sacatepéquez is the Social Relations Approach that was created by Naila Kabeer at the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex, UK, that draws on overtly structural feminist roots. It is more broadly oriented than earlier approaches, locating the family and household within the network of social relations linking them to the community, market, and the state. The Social Relations Approach permits the resulting analysis to show how gender and other inequalities are created and reproduced within structural and institutional factors, and then to design policies that can enable women to work to change those obstacles that constrain them. The Social Relations Approach asserts that:

- “Development is a process for increasing human well-being (survival, security, and autonomy), and not just about economic growth or increased productivity.

- Social relations determine people’s roles, rights, responsibilities, and claims over others.

- Institutions are key to producing and maintaining social inequalities, including gender inequalities.

- The operations of institutions reflect different gender policies.

- Analysis for planning needs to examine whether immediate, underlying, and/or structural factors are responsible for the problems, and what their effects on those involved” (Kabeer 1994).

The framework suggested by Kabeer is also very important in how it applies to Guatemalan society, because a lot of the challenges and obstacles that was mentioned in the previous sections in how affects women has a lot to do with impunity and the overall structural weakness of the
Guatemalan system. In essence, placing an emphasis on the role that institutions play and pushing for structural reform and accountability will be a strategic way in creating change at its roots.

Fundamentally, gender analysis is a broader framework that is utilized when conducting studies on women in relation to their role in society and their personal well-being. Discrimination and inequalities that are embedded within cultural norms such as *machismo*, lack of accountability with institutional structures, and the targeted violence against women, are all contributing factors that continue to perpetuate discrimination against women and limit their ability to live a healthy and productive life in their communities. Consequences are low self-esteem and self-worth, which result in a decline in a women’s ability to take control in decision-making and restricts her autonomy. This dynamic helps explain and correlates with the low level of participation that I witnessed among Guatemalan women in community development. Therefore, The Women’s Empowerment Framework and Social Relation Approach are strategic frameworks that aim to enhance a women’s agency and push for more legislative and structural reform and accountability.

*Obstacles affecting youth*

Cunningham (2008) states that “Many youth in Latin American Countries are at risk, and investing in them will have a positive impact on social and economic development in the region, both today and well into the future” (p. 4). The Municipal Youth Office was established in an
attempt to help provide access to resources and opportunities for youth. In the community where I lived, it was very difficult to engage youth in activities and educational presentations. Main reasons for this were due to having a variety of family issues and living with poverty, which meant that they had to work (busy schedule) and didn’t have money to travel to the urban center where the municipality was located. According to Cunningham (2008) the outcome of being affected by poverty and coming from broken families places youth at risk and prevents them from being healthy active members in society. The feeling of having a parent who cares is a shielding factor for risky behaviors. Young people who feel a connection with a parent more likely stay in school, do not enter the labor force prematurely, avoid the use of drugs and alcohol, and are less violent than those who do not have this emotional connection to their parents. Young people who engage in activities with their parents, can talk to their parents, or feel a sense of closeness to their parents are also less likely to participate in risky behaviors. Household poverty is a strong and constant correlate of risky behavior.

Some of the youth in San Antonio Sacatepéquez were not that close with their parents; their father was either absent or very strict while their mother had psychological issues either suffering from violence or not being able to have a voice in the decision-making of their youth’s life. These comments were expressed to me informally by the youth in group meetings. Kurtenbach (2008) states that Guatemala is and during the last decades has been a very young country. At the beginning of the 21st century a quarter of the population are youths between 15 and 29. The issue of “youth” first became relevant during the last decade of the 19th century when the Liberal Party attempted to modernize the country featuring “youth” as the vanguard that could be formed
by education. Levinson (2005) states that although education was seen as the primary instrument to transform children and youth into citizens, the Guatemalan state neither had the political will nor invested the necessary resources to establish a system of public education. While there is a longstanding tradition of private education for those who can afford it, public schools only began to spread to the countryside during the reform between 1944 – 1954. The circumstances of youth in traditional Mayan communities reflects mostly the typical patterns of rural societies; children working with other relatives in the subsistence economy and helping the field. Economic participation could be a chance for social mobility but is no option for Guatemala youth as they lack perspectives in the labour market. Most of them survive in the informal economy. Those between age 15 and 29 constitute 38% of the economic active population; more than half of them work in the agricultural division (Kurtenbach 2008). Kurtenbach talks about how political participation could be another means of change but is rather restricted too: 60% of youth do not vote although the age cohort of those between 18 and 29 constitute 25% of the country’s electorate (PDH 2004). This low level of political participation is reflected in the field of political parties as well as the local level where youth only rarely are engaged in the development councils.

Cunningham (2008) also mentions how realizing the potential of Latin American and Caribbean’s youth is essential not only to their well-being but also to the long-term welfare of the entire region. Young people’s families, communities, and governments—as well as private, non-profit, and international organizations—have a responsibility to help youth reach their potential. Young people are generally perceived as the source of many problems plaguing the
Latin American and Caribbean region today. Youth unemployment rates are reaching new highs, and girls are giving birth at younger and younger ages, placing huge psychological and financial costs on young people and on their societies. Unemployment, binge substance use, gangs and violence, and sexual initiation are some major obstacles that the youth in this region are facing.

What can be taken away from what the authors discussed above is the important role that the youth play in community development and the society as a whole. It is important to pay attention to the youth in community development because they are the future leaders and actors. If the youth are not given a space today in society and not attended to or given chances in terms of access to quality education and employment, their personal, social, and political growth will be at a halt and static. They will develop a sense of apathy, hopelessness, and engage in risky behaviors instead.

**RESEARCH DESIGN**

Throughout the literature review, factors such as human poverty, lack of opportunities and apathy affecting youth, violence against women, and gender discrimination and inequality demonstrated to be obstacles that are affecting women and youth in community development in reaching their potential to participate and be involved in society. The theories and frameworks mentioned earlier shed light on the obstacles that affect women and youth, but the comments were general in scope. Consequently, I decided to conduct my research using the qualitative
research methodology by conducting two interviews with Guatemalans in the effort to hear from individuals themselves who live and work with women and youth within these contexts, have experienced a similar event, or are familiar with how this issue has affected their community. Additionally, I supplemented the findings by presenting the results of a community youth diagnostic that was conducted in four middle schools of different communities and one youth group while I was working in the Municipal Youth’s Office in Guatemala for around four months, in an effort to demonstrate some of the comments and opinions expressed by various youth in San Antonito Sacatepéquez in relation to the problems affecting their community.

**Methodology/Site and sample selection**

Conducting a qualitative research was chosen to understand community development challenges in the context of rural Guatemala. The main purpose for a qualitative research is learning by the use of collecting data (images, sounds, and words), knowledge, and information as well as the objective of improving some social circumstance. Rossman (2003) explains how “a qualitative inquiry as a form of research is rooted in empiricism; that is, the philosophical tradition that argues that knowledge is obtained by direct experience through the physical senses. At the same time, qualitative researchers are also influenced by the Platonic view that knowledge residing a priori within our minds shapes the images we receive. This, qualitative researchers use their experience and intuition as they make sense of the worlds they explore” (p. 6). Field notes, observations, and work journals were documented and collected in a natural setting at the site where I worked at in Guatemala. Further research that included literature review and two interviews were conducted in the U.S., via a 3 hour individual Skype session with each of the interviewees (the coordinator for the Municipal Women’s Office and a youth leader). Two
specific subjects were interviewed as their experiences and knowledge related specifically to understanding the challenges that affect women and youth in community development.

The utilization of the community youth diagnostic was meant to be a small sample of gathered opinions and comments on the problems and challenges that the youth have in San Antonio Sacatepéquez. The diagnostic was a questionnaire that contained 10 questions that the youth filled out anonymously that included the following points: identify your sex, age, study or work or both, your community, identify the problems, your interests for activities, whether you are currently part of an organized youth group, your availability and interest in helping to volunteer with the Municipal Youth’s Office, your expectations and aspirations from the municipal office, and other comments. These questionnaires were passed out in a random fashion (the school principal selected the class based on availability) to one class in each of the four different middle schools in different communities (two of the schools were located in the highlands and two was conducted in the urban area where the municipality is located), and to one youth group that was interested in coordinating activities with the Municipal Youth’s Office. The youth group “Paz Joven” is part of a national youth group dedicated to promoting a culture of peace and tolerance, capacity building, and leadership skills amongst the youth. This group was active in the community and involved with the municipality. Note: it is important to mention that the participants of these schools came from a variety of different communities from the highlands and urban areas, and not necessarily the designated community of the school that they were attending.
Challenges as a Researcher

In February 2012 I was evacuated of the country due to security reasons and the threat of my site going under the “state of siege.” Therefore, due to this abrupt evacuation whereby I was not notified ahead of time, it placed my research design in a challenging position having to rely on methods that are not ideal but practical considering the situation. Understanding that face-to-face interviews and present informal interactions and observations would have been a more preferable way of gathering data, knowledge, and information, I was limited to conducting my methodologies via the Internet by using Skype, e-mails, or telephone calls. As a researcher, although my circumstances were not ideal, I ultimately managed to use the gathered information in Guatemala, along with the literature support and the interviews to strengthen my research.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Data Collection and Analysis

What I experienced as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guatemala was directly supported and presented in the frameworks and theories presented in the literature review section. Throughout my time working at the Municipal Women’s Office and Municipal Youth’s Office, I kept a work journal and documented my experiences that I reflected on periodically. Field-notes and observations were also an ongoing effort when examining why there were low levels of participation and commitment to projects on behalf of the women, and why some youth were interested but not organized while others showed complete apathy for engaging more with the Municipal Youth’s Office. The most vivid examples that helped me analyze the situation and
obstacles that women and youth were facing was the level of involvement and interest I had invested in by visiting various communities and talking with women groups, community leaders, the youth, and community members. Domestic violence, gender discrimination and inequality, and extreme poverty were some potent factors that were witnessed in women’s lives and a contributing factor to the decreased level of their engagement in the community, and had a great impact on their self-esteem and decision-making at the individual level.

The human poverty framework and human rights approach, GBV theory, and gender analysis framework all helped with increasing my awareness and depth of understanding on these issues, which affect a lot of women and youth in developing countries such as Guatemala. Below, I will present some findings on the community youth diagnostic and interview results with the Municipal Women’s Office coordinator and youth leader who helped by sharing their experiences and knowledge on these issues.

**Community youth diagnostic (questionnaire results)**

The community youth diagnostic that was described in the methodology section of this paper was conducted with the objective of hearing from the youth and incorporating them in the process and establishment of the Municipal Youth’s Office. Since previous records or data were not available, we (the Municipal Women’s Office coordinator, youth leader, volunteers, I and another Peace Corps Volunteer) decided to strengthen the structure and strategy of the Municipal Youth’s Office by documenting first-hand what problems and challenges the youth would identify in affecting them in their communities. The results were tabulated (results presented below) and presented to municipal and council members, along with the mayor.
The questionnaire (please see appendix C) was given to four middle school classes (ages 13 - 17) that consisted of 150 students who participated. There were more girls in a given classroom verses boys, and the majority were from the highlands who worked and studied. Chart (a) below presents major problems that the youth identified in their communities:

![Problems Identified by the Youth (ages 13 - 17) in four Middle Schools](image)

**Chart (a)**

Basically, chart (a) demonstrates that 111 participants marked alcoholism, 82 juvenile delinquency, 55 domestic violence, 18 sexually transmitted diseases, 47 gender discrimination against women, 83 drug abuse, 98 early marriages, 123 environmental contamination, and 92 participants marked lack of opportunities to be some of the problems that the youth encounter in their communities. Other problems that the youth identified consisted of: 56 participants that marked unwanted pregnancies, 80 lack of adequate training for jobs, and 11 orphans, as other problems in their community. The previous problems demonstrated in the chart were the most
agreed upon and marked. Considering these obstacles that the youth face, there is much work to be done in terms of attending to the youth at an early-on stage so that we can minimize the risky behaviors as they go through their adolescence and teenage years. Cunningham touched on this issue and addressed earlier on in the previous sections how young people’s families, communities, governments, and non-profits and international organizations have a responsibility to help youth reach their potential. So if we start within the community, educating the parents and involving them in the process in regards to the well-being of their youth is as much important as encouraging the youth to participate. For this reason, I was very pleased for the municipality in San Antonio Sacatepéquez, to have taken this initiative and responsibility in helping the capacity building of their youth and providing them a space to engage in the community.

What we also discovered was the high level of interest on behalf all of the 150 participants wanting educational presentations, employment opportunities, workshops and training on subjects such as leadership, sexuality, health, alcoholism and drug abuse, arts and music classes and center, and scholarships for continuing higher education. This made me realize better that the youth do have a desire for change and participation in community development, but due to the lack of resources, leadership and guidance, and the obstacles mentioned earlier, a lot of the youth have become dispersed and disorganized, and mainly engaged with helping their families in the field and/or occupied with household chores. For this reason their participation was limited, and the level of consistency and organization on their behalf was also minimal in coordinating and planning youth activities.
The *Paz Joven* youth group (ages 18 -22) mainly consisted of girls, and the majority worked instead of studying, while some stayed at home. Chart (b) below presents some of the problems they identified in their communities:

![Problems Identified by Paz Joven (ages 18 -22)](chart.png)

**Chart (b)**

Essentially, 17 participants agreed upon and marked lack of job opportunities, 14 alcoholism, 11 early marriages, 12 environmental contamination, 8 unwanted pregnancies, and 8 of the participants identified drug abuse to be major problems affecting their communities. In this case where we have older youth, lack of job opportunities was given the most priority. Based on this, what Kurtenbach stated earlier throughout the paper in terms of economic participation is also a means by which the youth can increase their participation and social mobility. Programs that would orientate and train the older youth for the job market will create greater attraction on behalf of the older youth and perhaps increase their willingness in wanting to participate in more activities offered by the Municipal Youth’s Office. It should also be noted that, due to time restrictions and other limitations at work, we were only able to pass out the questionnaire to one
youth group that consisted between the ages of 18-22, thus, I am aware that this is only one limited example that included 19 individuals who participated in this diagnostic.

The findings demonstrated similarities in that it concluded how both (Paz Joven and participants from the Middle Schools) identified drug abuse, alcoholism, lack of job opportunities, and early marriages to be of the most dominant problems in their communities. What can be concluded for these results and findings is that the youth in San Antonio Sacatepéquez face fundamental obstacles and challenges that have limited and affected their level of participation in the community. Regardless of the situation interest does exist amongst the youth, hence, if the Municipal Youth Office continues supporting their youth with the help of engaging more people in the community and other interested international NGOs, the youth will have greater chances for a brighter future with the possibility of more opportunities being presented to them, because this involvement with their municipality can provide the youth with resources and greater education that they otherwise wouldn’t have access to.

Continuing, we will first hear from a youth leader who was the exception, and was greatly involved inside and outside her community despite the many obstacles.

*Interview results*

*Note: Fake names have been given.*

Interviewee # 1 (Maria):

Maria is a 19 year old youth leader that has been active in her community and working with youth for many years. She started joining youth groups at the age of 14 and when older she
became more expressive and understood better the importance of involving youth in community development. She expressed to me how she believes that hearing a youth’s opinion is significant, and stated that although the youth are not the solution to community problems they do have knowledge that they can share. She stated that the youth are growing and can transform a society. She is part of the national group called *Paz Joven* (Youth for Peace), which has immensely helped in her personal development and engaged her with various community projects with the help of coordination of local and international organizations. They want participation to be holistic and the change sustainable. *Paz Joven* promotes a culture of peace, justice, solidarity, and tolerance via working and involving youth in society. She supported the Municipal Women’s Office because of the support the office provides to youth activities and its legal aid and assistance to women. She greatly encourages citizen participation and placed an emphasis on the importance of voting and being active. Below are some of the highlighted points that she expressed in the interview:

- The youth require continuous growth and personal development via access to knowledge and information and adequate training
- The youth are knowledgeable and capable of resolving problems
- Theater has been a means by which *Paz Joven* has transmitted social messages to the public
- If youth participation increases, the community can change for the better. Resources is important in facilitating this change
- Although Maria’s family did not support her involvement with *Paz Joven* in the beginning, throughout time she had shifted her family views by demonstrating the
positive effects and changes the personal growth that have resulted from her engagement in this group

- Many of the youth have either lost their families; their mother or father have left in search of jobs in other countries, and some father’s alcoholism was pointed out as a major problem affecting the youth
- Some youth bear many responsibilities because of their broken families and are primary caregivers in the household
- Many families do not provide adequate guidance and believe education is worth it and prefer their youth to help in the field
- Patriarchy is the dominant system, and some women are restricted from participating in the community and are heavily dependent on their husband (financially and in decision-making)
- Many women do not look for jobs due to inadequate levels of education or prior training for the job market
- Maria greatly supports the Municipal Youth’s Office and believes it to have a vital role in the community since at home the youth don’t get the sufficient support from their families
- The youth do have an interest in participating but also are very interested in trainings and opportunities that would connect them to the job market
- Poverty and lack of the community leaders and authorities being involved with the youth are other challenges in their community
- The youth do not have access quality education and information
- Low self-esteem and being timid of speaking their minds is another obstacle the youth face
- Many of the youth want to continue higher education but lack the proper funding and support
- International organizations and Peace Corps volunteers have provided great support in the community

Interviewing Maria was very helpful and informational as it emphasized on a lot of serious problems and obstacles that affect youth in their involvement in community development and their personal lives in general, that was touched upon in the earlier sections of the paper. It stressed again how important it is to keep the youth in mind when we think of community development and the progress of a country. Levinson reminded us in the previous section how the Guatemalan state neither had the political will nor invested in the necessary resources to provide a system of public education. In Guatemala, many of the public schools do not provide adequate quality education because of the lack of resources or preparation that the teachers have. Only those that can afford private institutions can hope for a greater prospect for their youth leaving many of the other youth with limited possibilities. So in essence, in order to help with the development of the youth and engaging them in the community, many parties need to be involved and informed starting with the families, communities, government, and community leaders and authorities.

Next I will present and share information from the Municipal Women’s Office coordinator who is really involved with the women and youth in San Antonio Sacatepéquez.
Interviewee # 2 (Catalina):

Catalina decided to work with the Municipal Women’s Office to increase and promote women’s participation and inform them on their rights. She expressed that due to the culture of machismo women face a lot of discrimination and suffer from domestic violence, and have premature pregnancies. The impact of the office is that it gives women’s issues a priority and promotes their participation in the community, in addition to informing women about equality. Catalina mentioned that last year the women’s participation was extremely low and inconsistent due to the election year in Guatemala, but now has increased more as women are a bit more motivated to engage in activities with the municipality. Below are some of the highlighted points that she expressed during the interview:

- *Machismo*, fear of participating, low self-esteem, illiteracy, and domestic violence are some of the problems that women encounter
- Women are discriminated against because of the fact that they are women and are not given equal access to education
- Cultural norms do not expect women to continue higher education and dedicating to production
- Youth participation is not high at the moment, however, they have been soliciting the assistance of the municipality for activities, trainings, and other opportunities that they can get involved in
- Major problems that the youth encounter are alcoholism, early marriages, and lack of job opportunities
- International organization do play a vital role in providing greater technical assistance and funding of activities for the municipality that would greatly benefit people in the community
- Catalina expressed how working at the Municipal Women’s Office made her more aware about the conditions affecting women and the importance of encouraging women’s participation and informing and educating them

- Involving men in terms of educating them and informing them on the issues related to women is also an important point to take in consideration when tackling the issues that affect women in society

What can be concluded from these two interviews are the similarities and patterns that both interviewees identified in relation to the obstacles and challenges that women and youth face. Inequality, domestic violence, and the dominant culture of *machismo* seem to be the most prevalent. They also both stressed the importance of informing and educating the women and youth as well as promoting their participation in the community. Basically, the results from the questionnaire and the two interviews touched upon the concept of poverty of choices and resources, and the lack of control in decision-making in one’s lives. In addition, what was emphasized above was the importance of structural reform (greater education quality for all, accountability on behalf of the authorities, etc...), involving community leaders, and the importance of gender equality. A society’s progress can be further facilitated if all parties are involved in the development of the community (women, men, and youth). This holistic approach promotes solidarity and takes into consideration the roles of each and every individual in how they can contribute and be a part of the solution.
DISCUSSION

Conclusion

Challenges that affect rural Guatemala in community development are not foreign to the overall obstacles that women and youth face in developing countries around the world. Factors such as human poverty, violence against women, and gender discrimination and inequality greatly impact a women’s self-esteem and agency, and her engagement in community development. And poverty, lack of resources and opportunities, and parental neglect are all serious issues affecting youth that help explain better why the level of their participation was limited and inconsistent within the community. The human poverty framework challenges us to look deeper and beyond the surface; it is a multi-dimensional way of studying poverty and it examines a women’s freedom to choice and opportunities, and looks at why women are marginalized in society. The human rights approach questions the base of poverty (economic and human) and views the ability to be free from poverty as a human right, because poverty is an injustice.

Engendered studies such as human poverty, the GBV theory, and gender analysis, permits us to understand the significance of why it’s imperative to include and promote women’s involvement in community development. Also, it demonstrates the injustice that women endure because of their gender such as, inequality, discriminatory cultural norms, and the institutional weakness that perpetuates impunity and limits a woman’s ability to fully participate and contribute in society. Community youth diagnostic results and interview results conducted with the Municipal Women’s Office coordinator and a youth leader brought to the surface specific obstacles that women and youth face in San Antonio Sacatepéquez. Transformation and sustainable change
can come about in a community when all members are involved and committed, and enjoy equal privileges and access to opportunities. Barriers such as poverty (economic terms), lack of adequate guidance and support from their families, and not being able to achieve higher education are great challenges that the youth face in San Antonio Sacatepéquez. Overcoming such obstacles and moving towards a better future is a daily struggle that the youth deal with in this community. And women, who are dominated by a culture of *machismo*, have unequal access to opportunities and choice, and have been affected by domestic violence have lower self-esteem and fear of participating in community development.

Kabeer’s recommendation on The Women’s Empowerment Framework and the Social Relations Approach is a model that developing countries such as Guatemala should use in order create equality and challenge institutions for legal reform, and the implementation of the laws that protect women. Women present over half of the world’s population but hold very little positions of authority in the world. So this strategy seeks to empower and involve women in the social and political sphere, which will enhance their contribution in community development.

Ultimately, the lessons learned throughout my Peace Corps service and this research highlighted the importance of understanding the context of a community, and the challenges of community development in rural Guatemala. This research can be of use to community members in San Antonio Sacatepéquez, the municipality, Guatemalan GO and NGOs, local and international development organizations, potential Peace Corps volunteers, and those who wish to learn more about the issues that affect women and youth in developing countries. Additionally, a range of studies this research has consulted provides frameworks and theories that are applicable and
insightful that highlight aspects that are important for sustainable change in a rural community
and why the participation of these minority groups is significant.

Although this study offered an in-depth look into the issues that affect women and youth in the
community, I recommend that further inquiry include the role of the men in community
development and how they can be a part of the solution. We cannot transform a community if
we don’t involve and educate the men as well. At the Municipal Women’s Office, since the
office was dedicated to attending women and youth, I only had brief encounters and
opportunities of working with the men, which made me realize how important it is to engage
them with dialogues and training revolving around the challenges that women face and their
youth face. Thus, I do wonder what their perspective is and how they view their role, and if
there are some that challenge the status quo and promote greater equality for women despite the
overall narrative and perception of men. Moreover, further research can be done in terms of
looking closer to the structural deficiencies (lack of adequate personnel, training, awareness,
response to incidents of violence, gender bias, etc…) within Guatemala and the patterns of
impunity. This can highlight what aspects of the law need to be reformed, enforced, and/or
advanced. Hence, involving men by educating/raising their awareness on the issues and pushing
for structural change are also important components that shed light to the complexities of social
change.
WORKS CITED


APPENDICES

APENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions for the Municipal Women’s Office Coordinator

Introduction Questions/Get to know the Interviewee and her work

1. Describe briefly what you do and why you decided to work at this office?

Women’s Situation/Gender

2. Talk a little about the importance of this office and how it impacts the community?
3. Describe the level and consistency of women’s participation in meetings and activities? Is it high or low? Is it consistent? Please provide an example.
4. What are main factors that limit women’s needs in development?
5. In your opinion and based on your experience, what are ways to encourage women’s participation?
6. What types of discrimination do women face in your community?

Opinions on the Municipal Youth Office/International Assistance

7. How do you view the newly established Municipal Youth Office (is it recommendable, effective, waste of money, etc...)? Does the municipality support this decision? What are some of the comments?
8. What is the status on youth participation?
9. What are main problems with youth?
10. What role do their parents play in the lives of youth?
11. What role do international organizations/volunteers play in relation to the municipal women and youth offices? Please provide an example of an international organization that has worked with your office and how it affected your work and community.

Reflection

12. How has working with women affected your understanding about community development and change?
13. Is there a connection between women and youth participation status, how so?

Other

14. Is there anything else you would like to add (recommendations, suggestions, etc…)?
15. Do you have any questions or concerns for me?
Interview Questions for the Youth Leader

Introduction Questions/Get to know the Interviewee and her work

1. Describe briefly what you do and why did you decided to help the Municipal Women’s Office?
2. How long have you worked with youth and what do you enjoy the most about working with youth?

Family Issues/Gender

3. What role do parents play in their children’s life (are they present, absent, flexible, strict, etc...)?
4. What types of discrimination do girls face in your community? Please provide some examples.

Opinions on the Municipal Youth Office/International Assistance

5. What role and affect do you believe the Municipal Youth Office will have in the community?
6. How motivated are youth in participating with municipal activities and other events?
7. What obstacles stand in the way of youth involvement?
8. What concerns you the most about the situation with youth?
9. What role do international organizations/volunteers play in your community? Please provide an example of an international organization that has worked in your community and the affects it made, if any (for better or for worse)?

Reflection

10. What role has the Municipal Women’s Office had in the creation of the Municipal Youth Office and youth activities?
11. As a youth leader and someone who has had years of experience working with youth and is knowledgeable about the challenges facing youth, what message do you have for organizations that want to work with youth in your community?

Other

12. Is there anything else you would like to add (recommendations, suggestions, etc…)?
13. Do you have any concerns or questions for me?
APENDIX B: MAP OF SAN MARCOS, GUATEMALA
Community Youth Diagnostic 2011

Questionnaire

This questionnaire has been created by the Municipal Youth’s Office.

1) Sex:
   F  □  M  □

   Age:
   13 – 17  □  18 – 22  □

2) What is your occupation?

   Student  □  Work  □  Student and Working  □
   Other (briefly explain):

3) What community do you live in?

4) Identify the problems in your community (you can select more than one):

   a) Juvenile Delinquency  □
   b) Family Violence  □
   c) Alcoholism  □
   d) Gender Discrimination Against Women  □
   e) Sexually Transmitted Diseases and/or HIV/AIDS  □
   f) Lack of Training for Employment  □
   g) Other (briefly explain):
   h) Premature Pregnancies  □
   i) Early Marriages  □
   j) Drugs  □
   k) Unemployment  □
   l) Environmental Contamination  □
Community Youth Diagnostic 2011

5) What are your areas of interest (you can select more than one)?
   a) Educational Training (gender equality, sexually transmitted diseases, environment, health, etc...)  
   b) Arts and Crafts  
   c) Cooking  
   d) Sports  
   e) Workshops (vocational training, carpentry, mechanics, construction, etc...)  
   f) Dance  
   g) Other (briefly explain):

6) Are you interested in participating in activities in relation to your interests and activities that focus on preventing and resolving problems in your community?
   Yes ☐ No ☐

7) Are you interested in volunteer work to help with the development of your community?
   Yes ☐ No ☐

8) Are you part of any organized group? Yes ☐ No ☐ Briefly explain?

9) What are your expectations from the Municipal Youth’s Office?

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

10) Other Comments:

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________