Go Communities!

Special Edition

PPD

Honduras

UNDP

GEF — The GEF Small Grants Programme

Community Voice

Credits
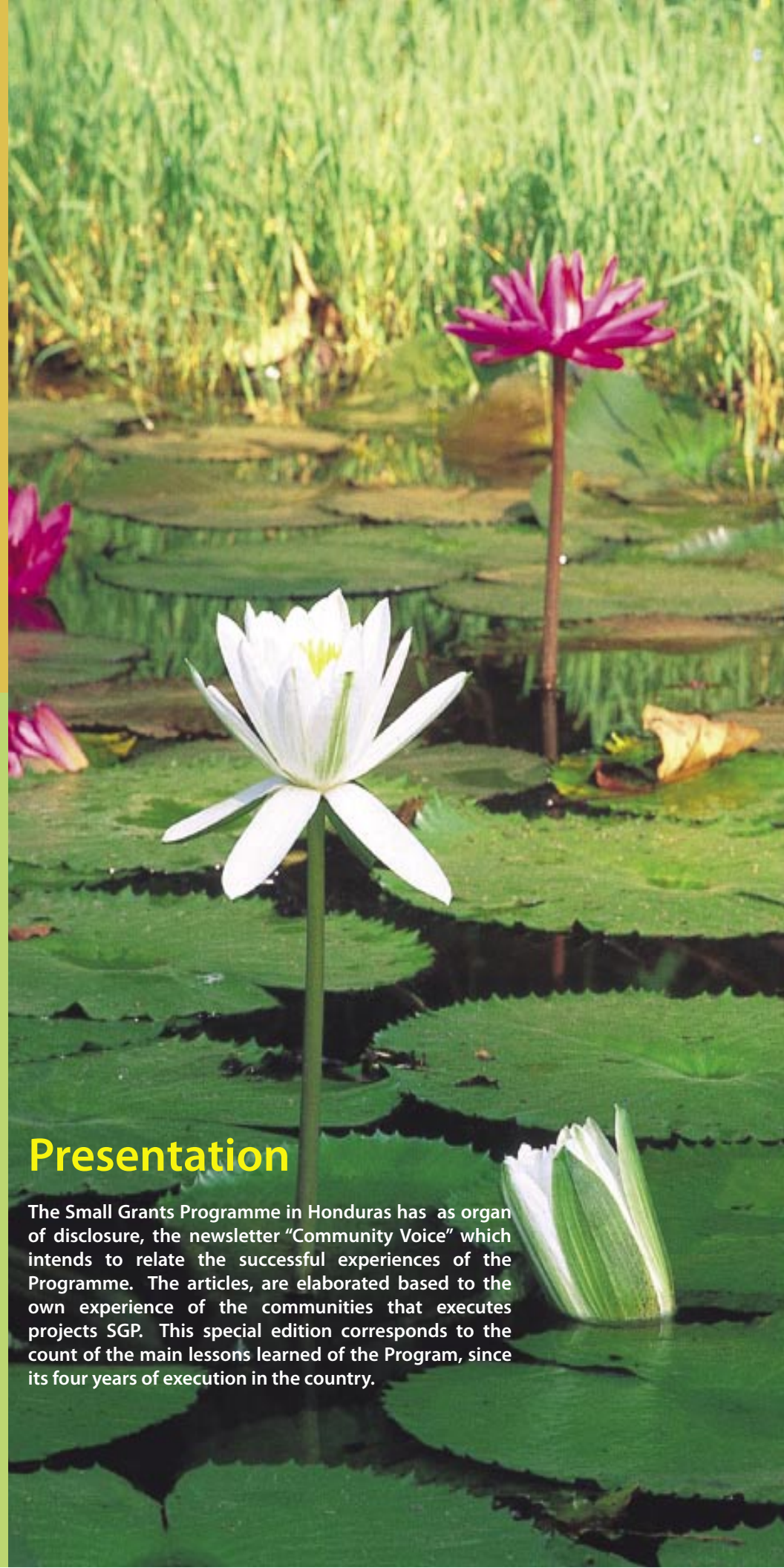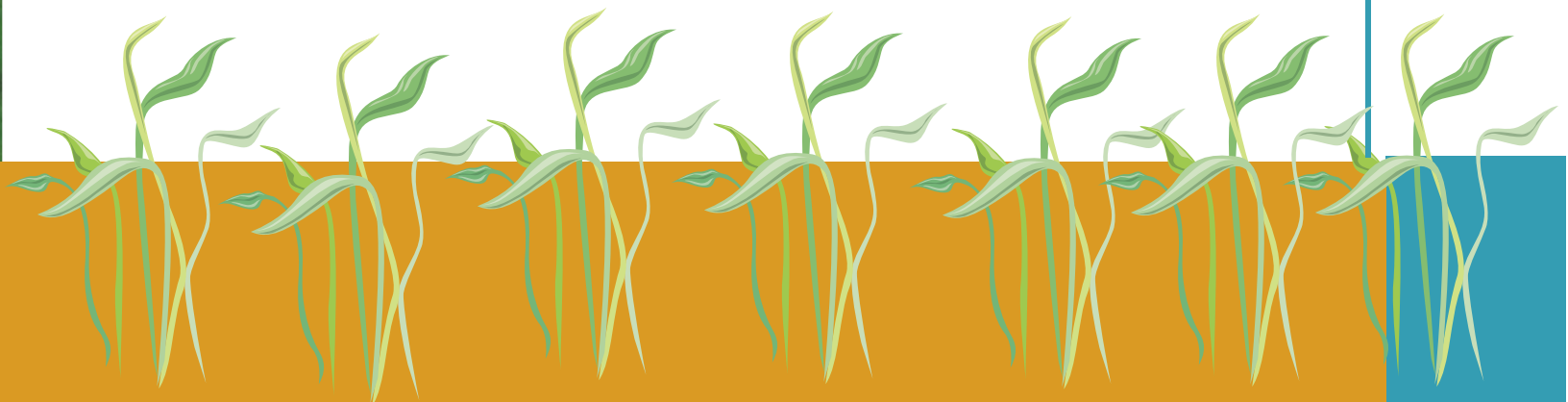
Presentation

The Small Grants Programme in Honduras has as organ of disclosure, the newsletter "Community Voice" which intends to relate the successful experiences of the Programme. The articles, are elaborated based to the own experience of the communities that executes projects SGP. This special edition corresponds to the count of the main lessons learned of the Program, since its four years of execution in the country.

Contents

Small Grants Programme in Honduras and its contribution to Local Development and Poverty Reduction.

Within four years of the SGP existence in Honduras, its work team has demonstrated its commitment with the development of poor people through the results of their work. This team is integrated by
Community Based Organizations (CBO), NGOs technical assistance, local government, and the committee board and technicians of the program.

During all this years, the focus of the program has been the
enforcement of the local capacities, facilitating resources for the empowerment of the people and their communities' .Therefore, people has been able to get involved in participation processes for the conservation of biodiversity, creation of employment opportunities, food security, among other topics.

The empowerment of the people is essential in order to obtain a satisfactory development of the poorest communities in Honduras. The commitment of these communities in the following up of the initiatives that they have formulated, guarantees that the results provided by the SGP would be used in legitimates strategies to reduce rural poverty.
Therefore, significant changes in how they perceive cooperation in comparison with local challenges would be attained.

Valorar el potencial cultural de las comunidades y sus recursos naturales, nos ha orientado para apoyar temas poco promovidos en el pais como el ecoturismo rural; de igual manera otros temas como alimentación y formas renovables de energia que surgen como necesidades inmediatas de la gente. Asimismo se estan visibilizando situaciones graves de violación de derechos a pueblos indígenas en la region de la Moskitia y acompañando acciones de incidencia para canalizar la atención del estado hacia estos sectores.

El aporte del PPD Honduras en materia de lecciones aprendidas es el resultado del cumplimiento de cuatro mandatos estab-   lecidos a nivel de país:

1. Trabajando solamente con OBC locales

Colocar los fondos directamente en las comunidades y sus OBC, ha sido todo un reto para el programa, existen limitaciones como la carencia de estructuras financieras sólidas y ONGs acompañantes, logistica y otros; pero creemos que son estas formas de organización quienes deben recibir el financiamiento de forma que los recursos llegue sin intermediacion a la gente.

El éxito de los proyectos ejecutados por las comunidades depende de, entre otros elementos, de una asistencia técnica familiarizada y comprometida con la gente local y sus objetivos. La comunidad debe contar con asesoría financiera que les permita llevar un adecuado registro de gastos e inversiones y desarrollar herramientas de control y gerenciacion del proceso de inversion.

Sí bien la colocación de fondos directamente en las OBC locales es un reto, solo de esa manera se ha podido asegurar que las comunidades logren un verdadero empoderamiento de los proyectos, que desarrollen capacidades que antes no tenían y contribuyen a desarrollar su autoestima y les convierte en actores locales claves con capacidades para orientar inversiones colectivas y desarrollar relaciones horizontales con el Programa y las ONG. La mejor parte de todo es que la comunidad recibe los fondos y los administra, establece controles internos y asumen retos tecnicos y gerenciales para cumplir con la ejecución de los recursos

El concepto de que la gente decide sobre lo que desea, coloca a la ONG como un proveedor de servicios en relacion horizontal con la organización local; y en este nuevo escenario negocian terminos de referencia con la comunidad y no con el programa, el resultado es que se permite una relacion mas honesta y responsable de la ONG con las obligaciones del proyecto cuando es la comunidad quien contrata sus servicios y no el programa.

"Cuando uno quiere contratar una persona o una consultoría, nosotros no escogiamos a la consultoría que queríamos, otros no llenaban los requisitos; cuando firmamos los TDR con la consultoría hicimos una especie de agenda para lo restantes meses, hicimos que la empresa consultora cumpliera con la agenda, como nosotros eramos los patronnes. Mi reflexión es que sí podemos ser patrones y el hecho de que seamos campesinos, no quiere decir que no podemos reclamar", dice Rosario del Proyecto Huertos Familiares Integrados en la Comundiad de Río Negro. "Ahora el proyecto no nos viene a ordenar lo que tenemos que hacer"

SGP is making the difference because people are gaining self esteem, self confidence, respect, and also they are being motivated. The main goal is not to give money to people so that they can buy or build things, but to help them to develop their own skills in order to become the column of their community development. Without these elements the project would be just another experience, cold, with no results and reports that none will read.

"We have to be demanding with the NGO because when I considered working with them I wonder if it was worthy to pay all that money to the technician. With all that money, what else could have been done in the project? He used to arrive late whenever I needed assistance with planting. Besides, there was only one technician who supervised the four projects; therefore, we have to demand more of their presence so that it would be worthy to pay. "Said Lisandro Lagos, from the project "Reconverting Cattle System from Extensive to Intensive."

1. Municipal Recognition, No Legal Recognition

Since SGP Honduras was established as a mandate and principle of work with OBC only, the duty has been to adapt to the conditions of this small local structure to ensure their access to funds for their initiatives. In communities where SGP facilitates resources, the OBC are often unprotected structures, without an adequate financial structure, without legal recognition and with no resources (In Honduras every project must need Legal Recognition to work). Consequently, OBCs are vulnerable and with limitations to receive external support.

For a base organization or community to receive external financial support, the funds have to be administrated by the NGO. In the worst case scenario it could be disqualified if it does not have the document of Legal Recognition which cost $1,370 (25,000 HL) in Honduras. Besides, it is necessary to have money for other expenses and to have "Friends in Highest Places" (Politicians) to speed the negotiation process. As result, to have a Legal Recognition it would mean to deter the development of communal initiatives, and to put aside poor people because they are not at the level of this legal requirement. Also, it is a fact that the Legal Recognition does not guarantee that the assigned CBO would fulfil the condition of poor organization or that it would be lawful.

However, the existence of local organizations that do not have Legal Recognition should not be ignored by programmes such as SGP, and neither the legitimacy of their demands and their need of support. In Honduras, the municipality law has given authority to majors and municipal governments to recognize or deny the legitimacy of local organizations within their territory. This is the legal tool that assists the SGP in the registration and recognition of the CBOs, choosing to accept the recognition awarded by municipal authorities.

The Legal Recognition facilitates an organization the opening of bank accounts and other transactions because banks do not like to take risks and avoid participating in activities such as money laundry. In order to solve this issue, the programme has demonstrated its support by sending letters to the banks, explaining the nature of the programme. Moreover, the programme has requested the banks their support in poverty reduction and nature conservation, being the only possible way to open bank accounts.

El programa plantea en su estrategia de comunicación y movilización de fondos, que la sostenibilidad de los proyectos financiados pasa por la alta visibilidad de las OBC y que en consecuencia el programa ocupa un segundo nivel de presencia en la estrategia de apalancamiento de fondos y comunicación sobre las iniciativas locales, aparece solo como un actor de soporte para la gente.

Ayudar a instalar capacidades locales no se limita al ambito estrictamente comunitario, las OBC aprenden, si se les da el protagonismo, a desencadenar nuevas iniciativas cuando se les facilita la logistica, el contacto y los medios de comunicación para hacerlo; en esta dinamica las ONGs y el PPD aparecen totalmente invisibilizadas para dar paso al aprendizaje a los duenios de la experiencia.

Cuando es la gente quien hace la ponencia, la explicacion, la rueda de prensa, las notas y llamadas telefonicas, no solo crecen ellos sino que paralelamente se logra que la cooperacion se ponga a prueba, se cuestione y cuestione el dogma de que los beneficiarios del desarrollo requieren de intermediacion para ser elegibles porque, aducen, que la gente se roba el dinero, no sabe hacer informes tecnicos y financieros o que son tan pobres para tomar desiciones por su cuenta. El terror o miedo, como se llame, a esta postura se va diluyendo y genera arranques de credibilidad hacia las comunidades que con éxito tienen experiencias valiosas.

Este esquema que matricula a la gente como incapaz ha venido cultivando en el pais una nueva clase social formada por consultores, tecnicos, asesores directores de ONGs y funcionarios de Gobierno quienes han sido realmente, en muchos casos, los beneficiarios de los recursos destinados para el desarrollo. Esta clase avanza rapidamente desde el nivel de clase media a alta con el financiamiento de una intermediacion perjuiciosa para los pobres del mundo. "Como voy aprender a montar en bicicleta si solo me la enseñas y no me la prestas porque estas montado en ella" en palabras de Lisandro la bicicleta es la responsabilidad del proyecto, los costos administrativos, contratacion de personal, desiciones, beneficio por equipos y vehiculos, etc. que quedan en manos de la ONG mientras la gente es solo un receptor pasivo.

Datos de Interés

Los grupos que beneficia el PPD, 8,108 pertencen a la etnia Miskita, 4,000 pertencen al pueblo Garífuna, 224 pertencen a la etnia Indígena Pech, 153 pertencen a la etnia Indígena Tawahka. De igual manera el PPD beneficia a 6,314 comunitarios de origen Ladino – Mestizo.

De los proyectos comunitarios que está siendo apoyados por el PPD, 22 responden a actividades productivas como; agricultura sostenible, agroforestería, ganadería intensiva, transformación de la madera y producción de medicametos naturales.

De los proyectos comunitarios que está siendo apoyados por el PPD, 24 responden a actividades productivas enmarcadas en la modalidad de Ecoturismo y Turismo Rural.

4. Workshops for Formulation of Project Document

The most precious moment and which is symbolic in the construction of capacities proposed by SDP Honduras is the Workshop for Project Proposal Creation. In a week members of the previously selected communities, chosen based on their profiles, will begin to brainstorm their ideas which will lead to the final creation of a project and document to be presented to the National Steering Committee of SGP.

Prior to the workshop, the community or organization will select the men and women who will participate and who must remember to represent and advocate for the interests of everybody. These candidates must be well informed of the proposal since it will be their responsibility to write down the project. The program establishes as a norm the participation of women, an experienced leader, as well as new leaders.

Before beginning the workshop, these candidates must discuss, clarify, and enrich the proposed ideas, prepare a group and community information, determine project expenses, etc. in order to write down a complete and thorough document. In most instances, they should request needed data such as aid letters, maps, reports, diagnostics, studies, or any important information from NGO´s, government enterprises and government sponsored projects which have been working in the region. The presence of an accompanying technician, chosen by the community, is required. This is fundamental because it allows the CBO and NGO to start together, establish where they are heading, and allows both to see the horizon. Consequently, their bonding is more efficient and probably more important, since it builds relationships between people which are fundamental for the upcoming difficulties and challenges.

"It is important for communities to know how to choose who they will send to the Project Creation Workshop, they must have good information about the community's situation", says Teresa who is a supporter of the Organizacion Fraternal Negra de Honduras (OFRANEH).

SGP also invites technicians of NGO's to provide support to each community in the writing, style, and coherence of the final document, as well as the use of computers and other tools that people might find difficult to use. We look for technicians that have experience in the creation of projects, who are acquainted with the program's methodology, and, most importantly, who are characterized by a high level of commitment and respect for the people.

This Week, with no doubt, is the difference for several reasons:

- Personal and trustful relationships are established between NGO, CBO, and SGP. The workshop's space is more than an initial exercise for the creation of a logical framework and budget. It approaches, fundamentally, the human being, assuring to ease the accomplishment of their responsibilities and dreams. These are people who come and go; they need to call us to make any type of inquiries. If this relationship is not accomplished, there will be no trust, they will never call us and thus, they will prefer making mistakes. There's no doubt that this would create more work for the team, but the local superhabit will compensate the effort.

- It allows us to know aptitudes and values approach and work with people's self-esteem: "they can do it, there is no limit to the capacity and imagination of the people, no one is born learned, and the program puts no limits." Honesty, transparency, and democracy are approached and taught. People are asked to follow an honour code by remaining silent and without raising their hands. It is emphasized that as honest people, they will not fail the program. Moreover, dishonest people are not admitted in the workshop.

- Capacities are established so that the community can create its own proposals starting from the methodology and experience obtained from the workshop.

- A space for learning is provided to the technicians with the aim of strengthening their aid and consulting capacities, and breaking taboos in the straight and horizontal relationships with the people through the methodological practice.

Afterwards, a methodology to formulate and put in order disperse information is provided. This exercise takes resting time of the workshop, and it is developed in nine moments defined with popular names, so that people would get familiar with them. In fact, it is just a good used of the Rapid Participative Diagnostic tools (RPD) and means of life, which are:

Mapping of the Community: *"loosing the fingers"*

We began to draw the community map with the initials explanations: at this point we try the local resources such as woods, pastures, mounts, corn plantations, roads, ways, rivers, places with potential for tourism, wells, houses, schools, health centres, antique places, etc.
Our goal is to go back to their community and show them their territory in paper, just a picture of the community in which they live. It is a mean of life artistic representation.

Pattern of actives: *"Discovering Richness"*

When we have elaborated the map, we start to make a list of the actives or community resources. This exercise is easy because the participants know the community very well, and the resources they have. The actives or capital are all the capacities or resources that people have in order to live, and they express the level of prosperity of the community. Moreover, this exercise helps the habitants of a community to value their area. It makes them aware of their fortune; therefore, they take possession of their richness, which also raise their self-esteem.

The Strategies *"How can we do it "*

Then, we identified the strategies used by the community to solve their problems and needs. Strategies are all those options, alternatives; possibilities that people decide to do in order to progress. In other words, it is the way people used their resources to improve their living conditions.

Organizations Diagrams *"These and Those"*

In this step, it is necessary that the participants establish the relationship of the different organizations with the community, and the rank of importance given according to their performance in the community.

The goal is to identify the local and external organizations, in other words, those organizations that are in the community but do not belong to the community. It is important to have a descriptive and graphic idea about group that is presenting the project at a local, municipal, regional, national and international level.

Local Organizations: *"The Local Ones "*

If the diagrams exercise has been concluded properly, it would be easier to place the information of every local organization.

The focus of this step is to identify the agenda, activities, beneficiaries and involved actives from every local organization in order to find out how are the local efforts being used, and if it is being attained equilibrium in the actives attention. Here is very important to have as a focal point the level of information that the participants have about the local actors.

External Organizations *"The Outsiders"*

In this step we can use the instruction of the previous step; however, the level of difficulty could be higher because external organizations are not that familiar to the participants. Also, it is possible that the participants have some doubts relating the agenda, activities and beneficiaries.

In this analysis of the organization, the SGP is presented uncovered because it gives information about the Programme and the paid employees. Also, it is explained that a horizontal relationship is preferred, and not vertical one, and that we are not bribing anyone, and we owe nothing to anybody. Moreover, we stated that we do not go to the communities to take advantages of their women or to steal archaeological artefacts or to get drunks. They have to know that someone is above us and they can report any wrong behaviour.

Organization Story: *¡the past!*

Today, we will leave other organizations alone and will focus on ourselves, meaning, in our organization. In this step we will try to organize the story of our organization, remember important deeds, activities developed, used strategies and results obtained. We have to be careful and report not only positive deeds but also the negatives, and those that have put at risk the existence of the organization. Also, we will explain how we solve such problems.

Also, we should avoid exaggerating deeds and minimize others, so that the store can be presented in an honest manner.

Organization Agenda *"What we are doing"*

In this organization we are trying to establish the organization task, what we do and how we do it, and the strategies we use. Besides, we identify the difficulties we are facing so that we can find out what are our weaknesses and threats in or outside the projects.

Elaborating the Proposal: *"The Baking Process"*

It is the "hot" moment in the writing process in which the technicians appear on stage. They have been previously asked to give space to people by being brief when speaking, and that they should speak in a clearly manner. The formulation of the budget was a precious moment because it was wonderful rural producers working until midnight with the technician when the bed time was 7:00 pm.

Also, it is amazing to build up financially their own projects, which facilitate them to work up to 18 hours a day in order to attain an exact work.

When the people and the technician are working together, the Project and its formulation process is going well, but when the technician is working by himself, something is going wrong.

Defining Terms: *"The Name of the Baby/ or Project"*

During the workshop final day we receive from the facilitators several copies of the project document that we have being writing. It is important to state that we have being doing our best and that we send the information to the organization or community. Many projects did not subscribe during this step because some people did not have clear the nature of the project or the idea did not fulfil the requirements of the Programme.

The Workshop of Formulation of Project Document is also a good opportunity to provide knowledge. Governmental offices, projects, and other CBOs are invited to develop projects with the SGP, and to approach interesting topics for the communities. Further, we have the projects fair in which the communities share experiences and strategies. Finally, this is a good opportunity to reflect about the current situation, its contradictions, richness and options.