



Newsletter of Companion Community Development Alternatives

10 years cooperating in development projects with communities in El Salvador and the United States

CoCoDA ADOPTS LOGO

How it represents the organization

Over the past year, CoCoDA board members and staff have been working with each other and with consultants to identify ways to present our message more effectively. One important part of this process has been development of the new CoCoDA logo that you see for the first time on the masthead of this issue of *The Companion*.

The work of CoCoDA is complex. It involves board members in the United States from the west coast to the east coast, and staff members in the United States and in El Salvador. It involves Associate organizations in El Salvador and affiliate groups in the United States, each with its own priorities and planning process. There are no two ways about it: planning and executing community-based development projects across borders is an inherently complicated process. In this reality lies something very positive, for the labor and communication that go into our projects become part of the fabric of the people-oriented international relationships that we seek to create.

The curved arrows of the logo represent an exchange of equals, circling around barriers to connect with and nurture each other. Our name at the center signifies the coordinating role CoCoDA seeks to play. The statement, "Community to Comunidad" is meant to express the direct, mutually supportive connection between the peoples of different nations and cultures that is the heart of our work--and the work of our hearts.

We hope that our new logo will help broaden CoCoDA's appeal and increase support for the great work of all of those who make CoCoDA's programs successful.

William H. Abrashkin
CoCoDA Board Member

Long time coming -- Eighteen "popular" teachers from Santa Marta, Cabañas, El Salvador received diplomas last November as teachers in basic education. Most began teaching as teenagers during the war over 10 years ago. Finally they are now employed by the government-funded EDUCO program. CoCoDA has provided \$54,245 in scholarships for these teachers since 1992.



Photo courtesy of ADES (2002)

SANTA MARTA HIGH SCHOOL BECOMES A REALITY

DePauw students lead campaign to support first two years

Students from the DePauw University (Greencastle, Indiana) 2002 Winter Term trip to El Salvador returned home with the goal of helping friends they'd met in Santa Marta get a high school started in their community.

Within six months, the DPU students, with support from an anonymous contributor and the Portage Area Coalition for Sanctuary (OH), had raised the funds for a \$6,000 CoCoDA grant to help pay a high school teacher to teach classes 5 days a week for 2002 and 2003. Doctors for Global Health and CRISPAZ also have contributed to the project.

Thirty-six students studied in the Santa Marta high school in 2002, which has been accredited by the Salvadoran Ministry of Education through their distance learning program. These first-ever Santa Marta high school students, all of whom studied grades 1 through 9 in the classes of Santa Marta's "popular

teachers", averaged 8.7 on a 1-10 grading scale. The subjects included math, social studies, natural sciences, civics, English and computer literacy.

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Project & program news

✦ CRC gives 5-year performance report on Loan Fund for Women in Suchitoto

In February-March, 2002, Manuel Romero Meléndez led a participatory evaluation of the performance of the Loan Fund for Women of the *Secretaría de la Mujer* (Women's Secretariat - SM) of the CRC (see sidebar, p.3) in Suchitoto, Cuscatlán, which was begun with a \$10,000 seed grant from CoCoDA / Blue Grass CoCo Project (KY) in 1997.

During the first five years of the Fund's operation, 143 loans were issued to 51 women, totaling \$28,163 in loans. Of the borrowers, 45% used the loans for farming: basic grains (corn, sorghum, sesame), vegetables and, to a lesser extent, sugar cane; 39% used their loans for small-scale business ventures, such as stores out of their homes; and 16% used their loans for animal projects, such as pigs, chickens and cattle. Of the 143 loans issued, 108 (75.5%) have been repaid, leaving 35 (24.5%) pending payment, most of which are past due in payments. Romero interviewed 36 women from 10 different communities who had fallen behind on their loan payments.

Of the women interviewed who produced corn or sorghum, 6 said they sold their harvest immediately to be able to pay back their loan; and 12 said they stored their grain in metal silos waiting for prices to go up to sell and be able to pay back their loan. Production was limited due to draught and plagues. Three women farmers emigrated to the United States due to economic difficulties.

Of these women interviewed who had livestock projects, 2 had cattle, 2 had pigs, 1 had chickens for eating, and 1 had laying hens. Those with cows benefited from dairy products, then offspring which were sold for economic gain; of the 2 with pigs, one lost hers due to unsanitary conditions that led to disease, the other fattened the pigs and sold them; the woman with chickens for eating successfully raised 2 generations but then had a disease that killed all her chicks and she stopped production after that,

**CRC Loan Fund for Women
1997 - 2001**

- \$10,000 = Start-up capital for Fund from CoCoDA grant
- \$28,163 = Total amount lent from Fund 1997-2001
- 143 loans issued to 51 women from Suchitoto
- \$197 = Average size of loan
- Size of the loans ranged from \$34 to \$571
- 18% APR interest rate was charged on loans
- All loans were made in the Salvadoran currency, colones.

- Percentage of borrower pay back:
1997: 12 loans; 91.6% pay back
1998: 38 loans; 92.1% pay back
1999: 44 loans; 65.9% pay back
2000: 33 loans; 69.7% pay back
2001: 16 loans; 62.5% pay back
Total: 143 loans; 75.5% pay back
(35 loans representing \$7,920 in principal and interest payments were outstanding as of March, 2002)

- Loans used for:
Farming - 45%
Small businesses - 39%
Livestock - 16%

although they still have a coop with feed and water bins for 300 chicks; the woman with laying hens stopped production due to health problems.

Romero spoke with 20 women who started small stores to sell drinks, basic foods, personal hygiene items, snacks and candy. One store in the community of San Rafael la Bermuda has an artisan oven for baking French bread. A number of these stores are no longer functioning. The most successful has been a gas canister sales store.

Of the women interviewed who had missed payment on their loans, 72% said they did not receive any training for managing their loans. Of these same women, 94% said they received their loans in the moment that they needed them. Most said they saw immediate benefits from the loans, allowing them to produce grains for family consumption or to generate income for the family, but

they fell into debt when they faced crop failures, drops in market prices, or drops in sales.

In summary, borrowers fell behind in payments on their loans due to factors relating to the market (fluctuation in prices, low-paying intermediaries, saturated market in the case of small businesses, etc.), to the environment (draughts, plagues and diseases without adequate education for avoiding such problems, etc.), and to limitations of the Loan Fund program itself (lack of education and training for beneficiaries and inadequate follow-up with the borrowers regarding the use and management of the loans).

Romero's recommendations for improving the Loan Fund program, based on input from beneficiaries, are:

1. Design a policy for recuperation of delinquent loans, pardoning the unpaid

(continued next page)

Loan Fund (continued from p. 2)

interest and late payment fees, to allow at least for recuperation of the principal -- especially for those cases in which the loans were due up to 4 years ago.

2. Recuperate those loans issued within the past year, according to the terms of the loan, with 2002 as the time period for payment.

3. Provide training in loan management and administration to borrowers at the beginning of the year, and then make follow-up field visits in the course of the year.

Representatives of the CRC's Women's Secretariat (SM), the entity responsible for management of the Loan Fund, suggested that the 18% interest rate they charge may be too high. That rate was established following a CoCoDA-coordinated visit by a team of business management specialists from the Kellogg Corps program at Northwestern University in 1997. The Kellogg team recommended they set interest rates at "2% below the prevailing bank rate in Suchitoto. This rate gives (the borrowers) a break from bank rates but will lead toward independence from subsidized funding in the future." (1997 Kellogg Corps Study)



Photo by Laura Chien (2001)



Photo courtesy of CRC (2002)

Credit management workshop -- In an effort to improve the loan recuperation rate, the CRC's Secretaria de la Mujer is sponsoring more training in credit management for women borrowers, as in this 2002 workshop.

The SM also wants to improve their ability to evaluate the social and economic situation of each beneficiary, to help improve the loan recuperation rate. Yet they insist that socially beneficial loan programs for low-income borrowers in rural El Salvador are risky by nature due to circumstances beyond the borrowers' control, such as draught, drastic drops in market prices, or sometimes family problems.

The SM requires that there be a women's committee in the beneficiaries community, and that committee plays an active role in promoting the Fund in their community, and interviewing women seeking loans.

The SM wants to increase the amount of capital in the Fund, and provide more technical assistance to borrowers. With funding from the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet (MN) and the Columbus Fellowship of Reconciliation (IN), CoCoDA made a \$2,760 grant to the CRC in April, 2003 for training in loan management, business administration, and international free trade agreements for 30 beneficiaries of the loan fund in Suchitoto.

Crab soup -- A borrower of the CRC's Loan Fund for Women used her loan to take advantage of Lago Suchitlan and the increasing presence of tourists in Suchitoto. On weekends, people find the ambience and clean air of Suchitoto a nice break from San Salvador. The Loan Fund is helping women participate in this economic opportunity.

CoCoDA

Companion Community Development Alternatives (CoCoDA) cooperates in democratic, community-based, social and economic development in Central America and promotes awareness and social responsibility in the United States for more just relations with Latin America. CoCoDA presently cooperates with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in El Salvador in the areas of:

- Popular Education •
- Women's Development •
- Community Economic Development •
- Democratic Communications •
- Community Health •



Salvadoran associate organizations:

- ADES: Association for Economic and Social Development, Santa Marta •
- CRC: Committee for the Reconstruction and Socio-economic Development of Communities of Suchitoto, Cuscatlan •
- IBE: Emmanuel Baptist Church •
- REDES: Salvadoran Foundation for Reconstruction and Development •



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Most of CoCoDA's funding comes from individual members who contribute \$25 or more per year (\$15 student and low-income) and from CoCo Groups, which are independent groups and organizations in the United States that cooperate with CoCoDA in program initiatives. New members and CoCo Groups are always welcome.

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✦ Community health programs are having an impact in Santa Marta

Dr. Aristides Pérez, a doctor from the Salvadoran Ministry of Health, who is now in his second year serving in the Santa Marta Clinic in Cabañas, El Salvador, attends regular meetings with health professionals serving in other parts of Cabañas. A recent topic of discussion was the problem of teen pregnancies. In Cabañas there is a pregnancy rate of 25% among women between the ages of 10 and 19 years old.

When Dr. Pérez told his colleagues that in the rural communities of cantón Santa Marta the pregnancy rate for this age group was only 6.5%, they questioned his data. But he explained that the low pregnancy rate was a result of sex education in the schools, workshops led by a youth organization called CoCoSI, and house to house *charlas* (discussions) led by community health promoters.

"Patchwork Central and CoCoDA can take satisfaction from this because your financial support has helped make this (health education) possible," says Brenda Hubbard, coordinator of the Santa Marta Rehabilitation Center and the CoCoSI program. The past two years Patchwork Central in Evansville, Indiana has raised \$2,000 each year for CoCoDA grants to ADES (see sidebar, p. 3), to help fund the educational work of CoCoSI and the stipend of René Beltrán, a massage therapist in the Rehab Center.

The Patchwork/CoCoDA grant and \$1,000 from Atlanta-based Doctors for Global Health (DGH) was the principal funding for CoCoSI and the Rehab Center in 2002. Towards the end of last year, though, DGH secured a two-year grant of \$8,000 per year from Levi Strauss to support Hubbard's work with CoCoSI and the Rehab Center.

"We finally were able to give René a raise of ₡100 colones (\$11.42) a month so he now receives a monthly stipend of ₡900 (\$104.86)," says Hubbard. René works in the Rehab Center 5 days per week, typically providing from 60 to 100 treatments per month for 20 or more patients. While he does some physical therapy, many of his patients are children with chronic respiratory problems.

The Rehab Center is equipped with a

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nebulizer that takes the liquid medicine albuterol and creates a steam that is inhaled by the patients to help treat the infected lungs.

Patients seeking treatment at the Rehab Center are asked to pay ₡3 (\$.34) per treatment, but no one is turned away if he or she cannot pay. While the Center's revenue is not enough to cover stipends, medicines or supplies, the Center was able to pay electric and water bills in 2002 from patients' fees.

The Levi Strauss grant has also funded the beginning of a new program called *Espacio Mujer* (Hubbard translates this, "Womyn Space"). Santa Marta resident Lucía Rivas is now employed by the Rehab Center to provide manual therapy to women in the rural communities who



Affordable health care -- René Beltrán (above left) was trained by Brenda Hubbard (above right) for providing physical therapy and respiratory treatment for patients. He has staffed the Santa Marta Rehab Center for several years. Now Lucía Rivas, mother of ten, works with Beltrán in the Center, providing manual therapy for women. Hubbard also works with a youth troupe called CoCoSI who do sex education and AIDS prevention workshops throughout the region.

suffer from stress-related pains and ailments. A new room that was built onto the Rehab Center by a CoCoDA/DePauw University Service Team in January 2002 has been equipped with a stove to warm heat packs and a stereo CD player to play relaxing music during therapy sessions.

Espacio Mujer also includes a home visitation effort created at the request of CoCoSI youth. "The youth kept saying 'When are you going to start talking with our parents about these things (sex education and gender roles)?'," says Hubbard. "The youth want to be able to communicate with their parents."

The *Espacio Mujer* sessions have just begun and are being held in 10 Santa

Marta homes. There are three sessions held in each home on the following themes: "AIDS education and prevention" in which a video produced in Mexico is used, which depicts life after a positive HIV testing; "Domestic and Sexual Violence"; and "Gender". "We are saving the 'Gender' session for last because we don't want the women to bail out of the sessions early," says Hubbard, hinting that gender roles is the most sensitive topic they deal with.

Presently there are 15 members of CoCoSI, primarily young people. They devote most of their time to giving educational presentations on "Domestic and Sexual Violence", "Training for Leadership and Organizing," and "Masculinity". They have just begun outreach in two new communities without much history of community-based health programs. A CoCoDA / Columbia University Public Health team will work with CoCoSI in May-June, 2003 for developing new materials and techniques.

CoCoSI members are now receiving a recognition of ₡50 (\$5.71) for each workshop they give. "They are so over-worked," says Hubbard of the CoCoSI members who, in addition to their public education activities, meet among themselves once a week and on occasion have a resource person come to speak on different topics. Several weeks ago, for example, CoCoSI and ADES sponsored a presentation on "Capitalism and Democracy" which was attended by over 200 students from around Cabañas.

For those who have seen the health program in Santa Marta develop from a sparsely supplied dirt-floor clinic during the final years of the war, news today of the community-focussed health services now provided by the Santa Marta programs is heartening. Community residents have oversight of the Santa Marta health facilities and services through a legal entity called ACODES.

While the country of El Salvador is embroiled in a debate about whether or not the national health care system will be privatized, Santa Marta, with very limited funding, is providing affordable, community-focused health care for the people of northern Cabañas.

✦ **Children from U.S. and El Salvador share cultures, art and hopes for a better world**

Based on the theme, "A world united, what does it mean to you?" students from Santa Marta, El Salvador exchanged oil pastel drawings and photographs with children in Virgil Grissom and Alan Shepherd Schools near the Quad Cities in Eastern Iowa. Students explored cooperation, unity and the impact of peace and war on their daily lives.

An artist from the Family Museum of Arts and Science revisited the classrooms to talk about the work received from El Salvador. Children learned about some of the traditional art forms of El Salvador, including weaving. They created a large weaving done with individual strips of fabric stating their hopes after having learned about El Salvador and its challenges.

"I wish that all people were treated equally and would get respect and could share their opinions," said one part of the weaving. I want a world where "Peace is strong, world trust is stronger, but world love is strongest," said another.

The art work was exhibited in the participating schools. Color copies were laminated and shown during July and August at the Family Museum of Arts and Science, in collaboration with "Paintbrush Diplomacy", a not-for-profit international program of children's art.

We are grateful to CoCoDA for the exceptional spontaneity and contacts that allowed us to get materials sent back and forth at virtually no cost. We felt grateful that our kids could appreciate the circumstances of youngsters in another country and understand their similar desires that 'war would go away' and 'the world would be full of peace, love and friendship'. It may not solve all the problems, but starting as children, maybe some of these kids will.

Nancy Senn
Program Manager, Family Museum
Bettendorf, Iowa



Photo courtesy of the CRC (2002)

Kids Crossing Borders -- CoCoDA coordinated two art and culture exchanges between children in the United States and El Salvador in 2002. The exchange sponsored by The Family Museum of Arts and Science of Bettendorf (IA) and ADES, and an exchange between kids in the Rafael Palacios school in La Mora, Suchitoto (above) and African American kids in the Jubilee Summer Program of Broadway United Methodist Church in Indianapolis (IN), sponsored by the H.C. Gemmer Family Christian Foundation (IN) and the CRC.

✦ **Global issues and local culture combine at CoCoDA Encuentro in Berea, Kentucky**

"Globalization, Women and Development" was the focus of the 2002 CoCoDA Encuentro weekend held in Berea, KY, on May 10 & 11, 2002. More than twenty-five people from around the U.S., El Salvador and Argentina attended. At registration on Friday evening people took advantage of the relaxed time to renew acquaintances, hear about recent trips and generally catch up on each others' projects and involvements.

Saturday's program was organized by Peggy Rivage-Seul, head of Women's Studies at Berea College and Ann Butwell, who works with EPICA

(Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean). Otilia González, a community organizer of the CRC in Suchitoto, El Salvador, and CoCoDA board member, Maria Teresa Tula, were part of the program.

The program was presented in the style of popular education. Ann and Peggy read a poem written by a Chilean poet. This set the tone of understanding the dichotomy of thinking of the two worlds, how women from different economic worlds interpret the same terms. Part of the presentation was more informal. Otilia treated the group as she would a group in El Salvador, using

various methods to get shy people involved.

Maria spoke from her perspective of a woman deeply involved in the struggle for economic and social justice with the human rights organization COMADRES. She helped us understand how difficult a woman's life still is in the current reality of El Salvador.

Peggy presented changing models clarifying the evolution of women's integration into a society becoming global in scope. Underlying her discussion were several questions: Why should we adopt the first world, Western definitions of the woman's role? And, how can we rename success so that the caring activities of women are valued as much as being a corporate lawyer?

The day was topped off by a grand barbecue hosted by the Rivage-Seuls. The evening started with skits on topics selected in the afternoon, and ended with a great concert of Appalachian folk music presented by the husband and wife duo of Al White on guitar and Alice McClain on violin and bass.

Harriet Bromley
Blue Grass CoCo Project (KY)

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Dinámicas -- Otilia González of the CRC (left) and Ann Butwell (right) lead an energetic, educational session relating to globalization, models of development and gender at the 2002 CoCoDA Encuentro, held on the campus of Berea College in central Kentucky. González also visited CoCo Groups in Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio and Maryland during her U.S. visit. In her presentations, she used techniques for group participation that have been effective with rural communities in El Salvador. The Partners in Justice Fund of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet (MN), the Union Church of Christ Berea (KY), and an anonymous contributor underwrote costs of González' U.S. visit.



Photo by Harriet Bromley (2002)

The CoCo forum

The CoCo forum presents insights and opinions of participants in the Companionship-in-Development Program. Opinions expressed do not necessarily represent those of CoCoDA or its members.

"LET'S GO, KIDS!"

Why I took them to El Salvador

Over the years my interaction with Salvadorans has radically changed my viewpoint on the world; and, in fact, my whole outlook on life. It has motivated me to speak out from an alternative viewpoint --- one that is not at all accepted by the mainstream in this country. Because of who I have become, life has sometimes not been easy for my children. When they want to go shopping for clothes, they get lectures about slave labor; when their schools are flooded with "patriotic war talk," they get lectures about U.S. support for "death squads" in Latin America.

Therefore, it was important to me that they experience what I have experienced so that they might judge for themselves. Several years ago, I took my older son, Andy, to El Salvador with a CoCoDA/Patchwork Central (IN) delegation. We traveled to Usulután. As is the case with children, the effect was not immediately noticeable. However, when it came time for him to go to college, he selected Earlham, a Quaker school known for its strong commitment to world peace with justice.

This past summer I once again made arrangements with CoCoDA to take my two other children, Mandie and Corey, to El Salvador. This time we traveled with the youth delegation from River Road Unitarian Church (MD). We went to the community of Santa Marta. What an eye opening experience it was for them! They met and made friends with Salvadoran teenagers, and they got the rare chance to see what the world looks like from those teenagers' point of view.

For me, it was, once again, a life affirming experience.

Dorothy Chao
Blue Grass CoCo Project
Berea, Kentucky

Survival

From where I sit in the truck bed
I can really feel the motion:
We are bouncing and jarring up the road.
We are late; we are flying along
In an effort to catch up with the others.

From where I sit in the truck bed
I can't see where we are going.
All I can see is a weaving of hands -
All different sizes and colors -
Hanging on to the grab bar;
Within a tangle of arms surrounding each other.

From where I sit on this earth,
I can't see where the monstrous economic powers are taking us.
But I can certainly feel the motion.
I know instinctively with all my being
That as long as we hang on tightly to each other
They will never, never be able to shake us loose!

Dorothy Chao
Cabañas, El Salvador - July, 2002

Dorothy Chao has worked in home health care programs in Appalachia for the past 18 years. She has been to El Salvador 3 times with CoCoDA delegations, and to Nicaragua twice. Her children Andy, Corey and Mandie have joined her on trips to El Salvador. She is a member of the Blue Grass CoCo Project and served a term on the CoCoDA Board of Directors. At right, posing on a mountain in El Salvador last summer are (from right to left) Mandie, Dorothy and Corey Chao, and Julian Boggs, a friend from Berea.



MY LIFE AS A SALVADORAN CAMPESINO IN THE REALITY OF TODAY'S WORLD

Alfonso Rivas of Copapayo, El Salvador tells about life before, during and after war

I was born in the *cantón* of Copapayo, in the municipality of Suchitoto, Cuscatlán, El Salvador.

My family is of *campesina* (peasant farmer) origins, economically humble. My mother was named Aminta Sosa, my father is named Ángel Rivas. They had 9 kids - three girls and six boys. I was child number five.

I remember when I was a child my parents were quite poor. They didn't have much to give us. They struggled to have corn, beans, sometimes rice, on rare occasions cheese and eggs, and very rarely we would eat meat.

When I was seven years old I went to first grade in the little school in Copapayo. There was no kindergarten. I remember that I failed first grade. At that age I also would take lunch to my father and brothers who were working in the *milpa* (cornfield). We also hauled firewood from the woods for cooking.

When I was ten I studied fifth grade in a *cantón* called Trinidad that was seven kilometers (4.3 miles) from Copapayo. I would go with friends every day. Until then I did not have shoes, I went all around without shoes. I remember that for my teachers I was a good student. I worked with my father in the *milpa* on weekends.

When I finished sixth grade my father didn't want me to continue studying, he wanted me to work with him in the fields, but I wanted to study more. I also remember when they build the dam and created Cerrón Grande, what is today Lake Suchitlán. Various families from Copapayo were forced to evacuate to the departamento of Chalatenango. One of my sisters went and took me with her. I studied there for three years, through ninth grade.

By this time there were popular (grassroots) movements, of campesinos, students, laborers, construction workers, university personnel. I was scared to get involved because in those days they assassinated the sub-director of the institute where we studied. All of this intimidated me, but finally I got involved in the process little by little.



Welcome to El Salvador – CoCoDA staff person Alfonso Rivas (on the left) has devoted the last 14 years to helping campesino communities of El Salvador have self-representation on national and international levels, to defend their rights and respond to their needs. Here he is with Ernest Bauer, a participant on a CoCoDA delegation in March, 2002. Alfonso still farms in Copapayo, and has five children with his compañera, María Isabel Miranda.

When the school year ended, I went back to Copapayo to my parents' place. The repression from paramilitary groups and security forces was already severe by then. I remember one month of June they murdered seven of my friends from class. This was terrible for me.

At that point, you couldn't live in El Salvador. The repression was more murderous every day, which isolated a great many *campesina* people who were left with two options: emigrate to the city and participate with the paramilitaries or get involved in the revolutionary popular campesino movement. That is how the most sacred rights of living a tranquil life began to disappear.

By then there was not contact with the cities, only military operations and bombardments. From that time on we participated in the conflict until 1989. There were difficult moments. I'll give some example: The sixth of August of 1983 a plane murdered my mother; the 23rd of November that same year, a military operation massacred 118 people from Copapayo. Among the dead were two of my uncles, brothers of my mother, and other relatives.

In 1989 I participated in the movement to organize displaced and refugee communities in Honduras so that people could return to El Salvador and repopulate the *depopulated* zones, and begin to cultivate the land for subsistence. That is how I began to work in support of the communities.

Once there were repopulated communities there was a need to form an organization to represent them the different needs these people had, such as food, healthcare, education, housing, and other resources to be able to work. That is how the *Comité de Repobladores de Cabañas y Cuscatlán* (CRCC) formed. Later it became ADES in Cabañas and the CRC in Cuscatlán. In 1992 the peace accords were signed and I participated in the concentration of the guerrilla forces until the demobilization of combatants.

Now, the great majority of people in El Salvador suffer from much uncertainty. At the time of the peace accords there were possibilities for improving democratic and political conditions in our country, and to try to push for orienting social and economic policies to support the least protected sectors. But every day the agricultural sector, which supports the livelihood of the campesino sector, is weakened. Cotton production has gone under, coffee is almost done in, and now the government is thinking of importing sugar at lower prices. The communities where we work are facing difficulties and will continue to have them when the TLC (Free Trade Agreement) becomes a reality.

These agreements eliminate tariffs to facilitate international commerce. The poor do not compete in this because they do not have products they can sell, and they become only consumers. Also, if tariffs are eliminated, the government will lose a vital source of income. In my opinion, the TLC will not bring a more dignified life for campesinos.

Alfonso Rivas
CoCoDA Projects Coordinator
(translated from Spanish)

We envision
a global
community
founded on just
relations
among people
and nations,
rooted in the
democratic
sharing of
resources for
sustainable
social and
economic
development.

CoCoDA
Vision Statement



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CoCoDA Calendar 2003 - 04

Upcoming Delegations to El Salvador

Columbia University Public Health Service Trip - May 23 - June 10
River Road Unitarian Church Youth/Adult Delegation - July 6 - 19
Patchwork Central Community Health Delegation - July 17 - 29
Washington Ethical Society Youth Delegation - July 19 - August 2
DePauw University Winter Term Service Trip - January, 2004

Upcoming U.S. speaking tours

Scholarship Fund for Popular Education U.S. Tour Fall, 2003

To report on the process of academic advancement and insertion into the public education
system of popular teachers in schools
of Suchitoto, Cuscatlán and Santa Marta, Cabañas

