

Crowding In Collective Remittances: Lessons Learned from State-
HTA Collaborations in El Salvador

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Background

The decade of the 1990s has seen a precipitous rise in the receipt of individual and collective remittances sent back to communities across the globe from migrants in wealthier countries. Governments in Latin America are increasingly devising programs to stimulate and channel investment from individual and collective remittances. A key conduit for such investment in Latin America is the Home Town Association (HTA). Community associations formed by migrants in the host countries are channeling collective remittances for development: paving roads, laying pipes for potable water, building schools and health-centers, and investing community-owned businesses as a means to improve the lives and livelihoods of their family and community members in their countries of origin (Gammage et al, 2004; Sanabria, 2003; Levitt, 2002; Orozco, 2003, 2000; Hamilton and Chinchilla, 1999; Goldring, 1996, 2004).

Governmental, multilateral and bilateral agencies are also exploring ways to encourage investment from collective remittances—recruiting HTAs as new sources of private funds that can complement public monies and relieve binding budgetary and fiscal constraints for overburdened governments in Latin America (Sanabria and Mojica, 2003; USAID, 2003; Johnson and Sedaca, 2004).

Although the successes are notable, and much has been achieved, much remains to be analyzed about the nature of these collective remittance mechanisms, the transparency of decision-making across countries and continents, the role of central and local governments and NGOs in channeling collective remittances, how leadership has emerged and its gender dimensions, and the extent to which recipients and beneficiaries are organized and actively engaged in the selection and oversight of projects. In particular, there is a need to explore the democratic and participatory nature of the investments undertaken and consider the extent to which the intended beneficiaries participate and have voice in these processes.

In many instances projects are conceived and designed in the United States and shaped by the guidelines of donor organizations offering co-financing, with little input from the potential beneficiaries (Gammage et al, 2004). HTA leadership frequently has little exposure to participatory methodologies and practices to ensure that beneficiaries are fully involved. As a result, these projects may be ill-conceived, may not meet the needs of the home communities, and may be quickly abandoned because they are not in the interests of the receiving community. Furthermore, where men play a prominent role in the leadership of HTAs, it is possible that women's concerns are diminished or that less attention is paid to women as an important and growing proportion of the beneficiaries (Goldring, 2001; Mahler, 2000).

Similarly, as local and central governments and NGOs become involved in channeling and managing collective remittance investment, the HTAs and their community

¹ I would like to thank Hector Cordero, Carlo Dade, Kay Andrade Eekhoff, Scott Robinson, Amy Shannon and Oscar Chacón for comments on earlier versions of this paper.

counterparts may lose protagonism in this process, and their efforts and energies may become co-opted.

This paper describes the context for the current state and non-governmental initiatives with HTAs focusing on the social investment fund, and details the key actors and the salient practices of transnational community development through the FISDL in El Salvador. It also develops recommendations about how to promote more participatory and inclusive decision-making within these transnational structures, as well as how to support HTAs in their engagement with the state and non governmental development agencies.

The findings derive from an interdisciplinary research project funded by the Ford Foundation and Inter-American Foundation. The research explored and documented the role that Home Town Associations play for migrant communities in Greater Washington DC and their communities of origin in El Salvador. The recommendations emerge from the accompaniment of four HTAs and interviews with over 50 members of 37 different organizations that engage in transnational activities.² The analysis is relevant not only for state-HTA relations, but also for other bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental organizations seeking to engage HTAs in transnational projects and activities.

HTAs: Diverging Opinions

Researchers and practitioners remain polarized about the value of HTA contributions for development purposes and the role of the state and NGOs in fostering or encouraging transnational projects. Some researchers and HTA members are concerned that attempts to foster or channel the investment of collective remittances represent an unfair extra-territorial tax on poor migrants living abroad.³ Certainly, such initiatives are consonant with the neo-liberal goals of reducing fiscal burdens and increasing private sector provision of public goods and services. Goldring (2002a:68) observes of the Mexican state *Dos por Uno* programs that these initiatives “could be interpreted as part of a top-down political project to improve the ruling party’s image among a disaffected sector of the population and to bring those Mexicans into the symbolic fold of the national community.” Political engagement and diaspora ‘citizenship’ is effectively reduced to co-financing public works programs and building small infrastructure.

Similarly, authors such as Guarnizo (1998) emphasize that programs operated and managed by the state which foster transnational engagement constitute attempts to retrieve power from the diaspora and to co-opt and maintain state control and patronage. Although status may be conferred through such projects and patronage extended to the HTA leadership and affiliates, power is also managed, channeled and circumscribed by the state. The extent to which claims upon the state are ratified in return for migrant participation is in flux.

² Among these organizations, I am particularly grateful to members of Comunidad Unida de Chinameca, Comité Pro Mejoramiento de El Chiquirín, El Comité Tejar and the Comité Pro Playa El Tamarindo, Comunidades Unidas Salvadoreñas, el Centro Latino Cuscatlán, Fundación Unidos por Intipucá, the Salvadoran Association for the Conservation of the Environment and the Comité Uluazapa.

³ This concern has become magnified as the volumes of collective remittances have risen. Concomitantly, the demands for voting rights abroad have also become more voluble as HTAs and their leadership seek dual citizenship in return for their participation.

Yet, even state-led programs create ‘contested space’, where outcomes are negotiated iteratively and migrant cooperation can be offered and with-held. As Goldring (2002a) notes the Mexican *Dos por Uno* program provided clear incentives for the agglomeration of Mexican hometowns and the formation of federations, strengthening relations between the federations and the clubs, and between some state governors and mayors. These programs may have enabled HTAs to reposition themselves with respect to local and state government and occasionally demand greater accountability and transparency in some aspects of state and local investments and expenditures.⁴ Diaspora members are increasingly engaged in the political outcomes in their communities: bankrolling campaigns, and even standing for office.⁵

Other researchers and activists champion HTAs as a means of galvanizing social, economic and political change (Kearney, 1992) and supporting community projects in home towns. Guarnizo (2003) states: “Besides their symbolic value, community projects supported by migrants represent important contributions to local economic and social development.” Portes and Landolt (2000) underscore that the quality of life in transnational towns that receive transnational aid is significantly enhanced by these contributions. Certainly, two of the communities studied for this research, El Chiquirín, La Unión, and Chinameca, San Miguel, have been greatly improved by the availability of collective remittances: schools have been built and expanded; roads paved and graded; houses constructed—upgrading huts to brick buildings with concrete and tiled floors; and local organizational capacity has been created and enhanced (Gammage et al, 2004).

In addition to the welfare implications and economic multipliers from the investment and expenditure of collective remittances these projects can engender significant political spillovers, mobilizing social capital and influencing local and regional governments’ expenditures. Both Levitt (2001) and Goldring (1998, 2002b, 2003) concur that financing local development projects and contributing to philanthropic endeavors valorize status and can create and uphold political influence in communities of origin. Indeed Smith (2002) posits that migrant transnational organizations are forcing the state to engage them in new ways, “either in kind or in degree.” Certainly, in the case of El Tejar, La Unión, El Salvador, we observed a number of occasions where the HTA demanded greater accountability and transparency from the mayor and refused to collaborate with municipal projects until election promises were fulfilled (Gammage et al, 2004).

Mahler (2000), however, views the transnational political capital mobilized through state-HTA engagement with skepticism. She maintains that such engagement empowers local and transnational elites and becomes a medium for certain groups—most notably the wealthy and politically savvy—to pursue their interests. Similarly, Robinson (2005) highlights the role played by traditional elites in the Mexican transnational sphere capitalizing on

⁴ Popkin (2002) reports similar findings comparing Guatemalan and Salvadoran state-led engagement with HTAs. Popkin attributes the relative success of Salvadoran organizations’ negotiations with local government to the comparatively “higher levels of post war democracy” in El Salvador.

⁵ Two migrants from Zacatecas living in the United States recently won mayoral races and two others currently hold seats in the state legislature (Thompson, 2005).

financial flows, capturing rents from the transfer of remittances, and appropriating new rents through telecommunications technologies.

Still other development practitioners and researchers dismiss HTAs as a transitory phenomenon, subordinate to largely clientalist and philanthropic motivations, with little development potential. Orozco (2000) highlights the weaknesses of HTAs identifying that few associations have an established organizational structure or strong community counterparts in their home country. Similarly, Orozco contends that decision-making processes are largely ad hoc and their support is typically limited to less than \$10,000 per year. But as Landolt (1997) asserts: “There are endless variations on the basic structure of the Salvadoran hometown association. For instance, some associations are legally incorporated, others are not; some have internal elections for president, secretary and treasurers while others may not even have formal posts for their members; some have a representative or even sister organization in the town of origin through which resources are channeled, while others work directly with the local government, the Asociación de Desarrollo Comunitario (ADESCO), or another institution such as the church...”

Different types of structures present different opportunities to engage with the state, contribute to transnational organization, build local capacity, and garner resources for development. Smaller, ad hoc and informal associations frequently have less leverage and legitimacy both in their participation with their Home Town Communities and in their engagement with the state. Similarly, smaller associations typically have more restricted access to social capital and their fund-raising capabilities are limited. Among the four HTAs accompanied for this research⁶, two generated more than US\$20,000 in contributions in specific years and had been in existence for more than 10 years. All four organizations had contributed to building and strengthening local community organizations that function as counterparts and independent organizations in their own right. There is evidence that these findings are not isolated and that many HTAs make positive contributions to welfare and well-being in their communities (Sanabria, 2003; Portes and Landolt, 2000; Kearney, 1992).

Despite these conflicting interpretations and claims about collective remittances and the associations that channel these contributions, HTAs continue to operate in El Salvador and elsewhere, the majority unaided by development or state agencies and NGOs. Only a few NGOs work with HTAs transnationally, among these the most prominent are El Rescate in Los Angeles, CARECEN and the Pan American Development Foundation. But for the most-part, HTA activity has emerged organically in El Salvador without significant state-led intervention. Notwithstanding, HTAs in El Salvador occasionally seek-out, or agree to work with, municipalities and have applied for project co-financing through central government programs.

HTA contributions clearly represent a small proportion of total remittance flows in El Salvador—but can have significant impact in certain municipalities where funds make up as much as 10% of local municipal budgets and are largely discretionary (Gammage et al, 2004; Stoltz Chinchilla and Hamilton, 1998). Furthermore, the HTA-municipal collaboration may present an opportunity for both the municipality and the HTA to capture additional

⁶ The four organizations that were accompanied were: Comunidad Unida de Chinameca, Comité Pro-Mejoramiento de El Chiquirín, Comité El Tejar and Comité Pro Mejoramiento de El Tamarindo.

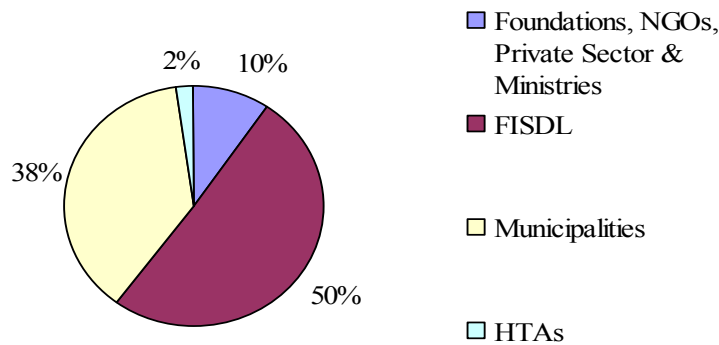
funds for local use from central government. The spillovers engendered through this collaboration have the potential to extend beyond the investment itself and can support the mobilization of transnational social capital and even foster the exchange and transfer of skills and organizational capacity.

The State and Transnational Organizations in El Salvador

The Social Investment Fund in El Salvador—Fondo de Inversión Social para el Desarrollo Local (FISDL)—began to focus on Salvadorans in the diaspora in late 1999. The FISDL program Unidos por la Solidaridad is an innovative mechanism which promotes the participation of municipalities, NGOs and Salvadoran organizations abroad in financing and building small infrastructure for schools, communal recreation facilities and health centers. This program is modeled on a similar mechanism operated by the Mexican government that matches funds transferred by home-town associations in the United States and Canada (República de El Salvador, 2002; FISDL 2000, 2003, 2004). To date, there have been 14 separate grant competitions through the United for Solidarity program that have been able to channel more than \$11 million to 45 projects in 27 municipalities throughout El Salvador.

Although Salvadoran HTAs are contributing, the bulk of funds (50%) come from the FISDL and from the municipalities (38%). The funds available through the FISDL come primarily from loans extended by the Inter-American Development Bank as well as from central government funds (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Funding for Unidos por la Solidaridad, 2000-2004



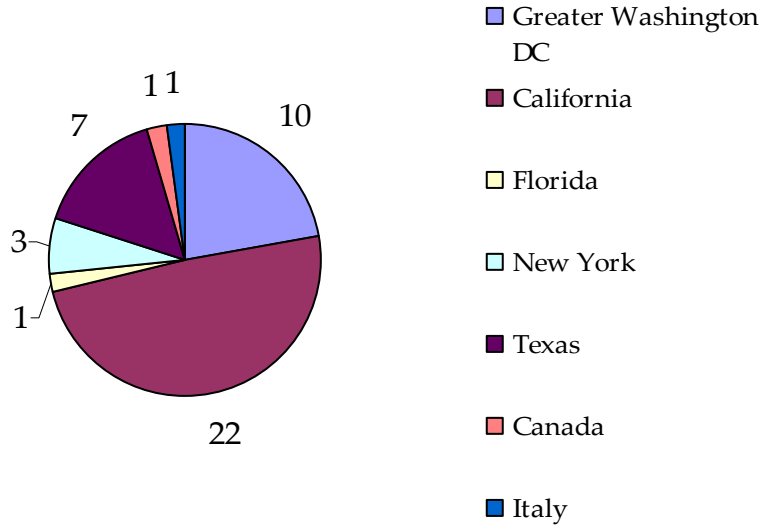
Source: FISDL (2003, 2004)

Between 1999 and 2003, the FISDL, as noted, has executed 45 projects with HTAs and local municipalities and NGOs in 27 municipalities in El Salvador. A total of \$11.4 has been invested in these projects with \$7 million coming from the FISDL, \$2.3 million from the municipalities and ministries and a further \$2.1 million from the HTAs.⁷

⁷ It is probable that this accounting greatly underestimates the value of contributions in kind and in labor effort made by HTAs and their counterparts.

The majority of HTAs with which the FISDL collaborates are located in California and Greater Washington DC (see Figure 2).

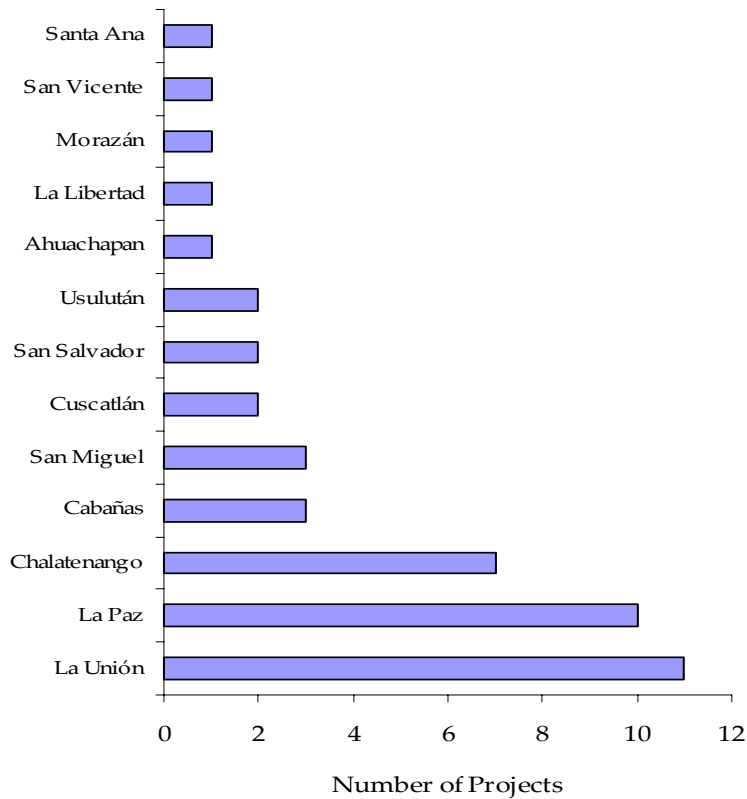
Figure 2. Number and Location of HTAs Working with FISDL, 2000-2004



Source: FISDL (2003, 2004)

Not surprisingly, given the profile of post-civil war emigration, the HTA projects with FISDL funding are disproportionately concentrated in eastern El Salvador and in certain former conflictive zones (See Figure 3). Furthermore, within these departments, the projects are concentrated among a limited number of municipalities—with some HTAs receiving financing for several projects over the course of 3 years. For example, the Comité El Piche en Los Ángeles has been able to fund five discrete projects respectively with co-financing from the FISDL. The Comité Pro-Mejoramiento de El Chiquirín and the Fundación Unidos por Intipucá have each been able to fund three projects. Similarly, the Comité Paraíso de Osorio Residentes en Los Ángeles (CORPORLA) has been able to co-fund two projects with FISDL support.

Figure 3. Location of Current HTA Projects Co-Financed by the FISDL by Department



Source: FISDL (2003, 2004)

Projects are ranked according to the proportion of co-financing provided by HTA and non-governmental sources and priority is given to those projects that involve the municipality. The fund supports the construction and maintenance of basic community infrastructure. According to the restrictions placed on the program, funds are not available for housing, salaries and equipment for municipalities, credit for productive projects, the purchase of vehicles and livestock, community festivals, and activities that have an explicit religious or political purpose.

Transnational Tensions and the Limitations of a Social Investment Fund Approach

The relations between the HTAs and the Salvadoran government reflect a diversity of political tendencies and webs of patronage and exclusion—but there are clearly differences of opinion about the objectives of any state-HTA engagement.⁸ Some HTAs feel that the government has failed to invest sufficiently in their home towns and that the dearth of basic infrastructure reflects a dereliction of duty to provide even the minimal services required to guarantee human survival. These HTAs express mistrust about sudden interest on the part of the government in their activities and the expenditure of collective remittances and feel that the intention is only to shift responsibility onto the diaspora, imposing a tax beyond the national boundaries. Yet a substantial group of migrants' organizations is calling for greater involvement with the government and seeking out opportunities for collaboration—albeit on their own terms (Salvadoreños en el Mundo, 2004).

Many of the HTA membership feel conflicted about their investments in the home town community—precisely because they feel this allows the central and local government to extricate themselves from their responsibility to the people and to their communities.

“What do we do? We are patriotic, because the government appears to be blind to the need of the people. They don't seem to care about the humble people and the poor people.” Male HTA member, Maryland.

“Oh, the government only comes around during the elections, after that they disappear.” Male HTA member, Virginia.

“Yes, perhaps we are taking the responsibility away from the government. The committees, by supporting their communities in one way or another helping out, relieve the government of their responsibility allowing them to keep more money in their pockets.” Male HTA member, Los Angeles.

“It is important that we don't forget the people there. But the projects that we do, these take away responsibility from the government. The government looks at us like a gold mine. Privatizing everything, all the services. They seem to have the idea that the people can pay. And if not that the “hermanos lejanos” will pay. Any dialogue with the government is a manipulation. How can we take on this role without taking on the role of government. It all seems to be left to us here.” Woman HTA member, Washington DC.

Among the committees accompanied through the Ford and Inter-American Foundation grants between June 2003 and January 2005, different perspectives prevailed about participating in the FISDL mechanism to co-finance projects in their home towns. The Comité Pro Mejoramiento Amigos de El Chiquirín has collaborated extensively with the FISDL and is extremely pleased with the outcomes of these collaborations. Juan Membreño, the president of the ADESCO⁹ in El Chiquirín described these collaborations with the FISDL and the municipality as being particularly fruitful:

⁸ Goldring (2002a, 1998) provides a critical analysis of power, status and patronage in transnational networks as factors motivating state-HTA engagement in Mexico.

⁹ An ADESCO is an Asociación para el Desarrollo Comunal, a structure that has been encouraged as part of efforts to decentralize government expenditures and encourage citizen participation in rural areas.

“...they [the HTA in Virginia] want to support large projects and have managed to do so with us [the ADESCO], with the FISDL and with the municipality...they have built two classrooms in the school. We now have 8th grade classes; they have paved a road; we have a community center. They have done a lot with the mayor’s office; they even invested in the football field.”

In contrast, Comunidad Unida de Chinameca has chosen not to seek co-financing through central government mechanisms, or to collaborate with the municipality, largely because members prefer not to cede control over the projects that they finance to other agencies. CUC members were concerned, for example, that programs such as Unidos por la Solidaridad require close collaboration and co-financing with local government and stipulate that only government-approved contractors assume the role of building and maintaining infrastructure. The objection voiced by the HTA leadership and members in Virginia was that they believed many of these contractors to be corrupt and inefficient, and that CUC as a committee made up of builders, carpenters, electricians, and plumbers, preferred to control and oversee the construction and maintenance themselves. Since all members of CUC work full time, some at several jobs, they are unable to oversee and maintain effective control over any project once it has been handed off to another agency or contractor. CUC prefer to use their vacation time to undertake the bulk of their construction and project-related work, because they can ensure that it is completed to their specifications in a timely and efficient manner. As one member pointed out:

“if we raise the money, we want to be sure it is being spent properly. We know what a good building looks like, if it has strong foundations, if the wiring was done properly, whether the drainage is right. We don’t want to be pushed aside in the very area where we have competence. We have spent a lot of time and effort to do this, we want to be sure it is done right.”

Other groups are open to collaboration with the FISDL and the municipality, but appear not to know how to access these agencies and resources. The committee members in Washington DC and their counterparts in El Tejar, for example, are open to working with the local government but have concerns about how to do this. Isidro Alvarez, a key member of the counterpart organization in El Tejar explained:

“Unfortunately, we haven’t worked closely with the mayor—primarily because we don’t know how to do that. We don’t know how to solicit support from the local government, what doors to knock on, whether there is money or not.”

These two examples of CUC and El Tejar are illustrative of HTAs that are unwilling or unable to work with the FISDL and the local government—largely because they do not have sufficient information about how to do so, or because they have not negotiated the political allegiances required, or they feel that their needs, concerns and strengths are not likely to be fully incorporated in such a collaboration. Part of the problem stems from the nature of the mechanism through which this collaboration is being funded—and part of the problem reflects the complexities of undertaking transnational community projects in countries emerging from civil war, where deep political, religious and class cleavages can undermine trust and reciprocity.

The FISDL grew out of the social investment fund approach to mitigating structural adjustment costs. Established in 1990, the Fondo de Inversión Social (FIS) was originally intended to function as a temporary institution—specifically, by investing in small infrastructure development and repair. In 1992, some of the reconstruction activities in the National Reconstruction Plan, mandated by the Peace Accords, were passed over to the FIS. In 1996, the FIS was restructured and became the FISDL. Funds come from a variety of sources including the central government, as well as loans from the Inter-American Development Bank, loans and aid from European, Japanese and US donors.

As with all social investment fund frameworks, the projects respond to an overarching objective to de-center and decentralize government functions by fostering local government and community engagement, are intended to be small, focused, demand led and responsive to local development needs.¹⁰ Social investment funds focus almost exclusively on small infrastructure projects and public works (Grosch, 1990; Estache, 1995; Estache and Sinha, 1995). The rationale for social investment funds across the world is largely distributional—their objective is to mitigate some of the costs of structural adjustment through small scale locally focused and locally implemented projects. In some cases the objective has been to generate temporary employment through public works (Datt and Ravallion, 1994), in others to compensate for existing deficits in infrastructure in poor rural communities (Jack, 2000).

Unfortunately, as is the case with most social investment funds, such projects typically suffer from a generalized lack of capacity building to ensure that the poorest communities can respond and that the most socially efficient projects are selected. In the case of the FISDL the majority of resources allocated to capacity building focus on the municipality through their Technical Assistance Program for Local Development (PATDEL), the Program for Monitoring Municipal Decentralization (PROMUDE) and the Program for Technical Assistance. Budgets and staff time for participatory project development are typically limited.¹¹ The poorest of the poor frequently lack the organizational and human capital resources to identify, propose, and implement small scale projects. Consequently, few such communities apply. Unless effort is expended on working with excluded or marginalized community groups—and in this case with transnational community groups in the home and host country—to undertake participatory community audits, develop and submit proposals, few proposals will be elicited from such communities.

The target for the FISDL transnational project investments is poor rural communities. To respond to decentralization objectives, the investments are frequently channeled through local government—privileging those projects with matched or partial co-financing from local government. Although these communities may be poor, they are frequently stratified. Pronounced hierarchies exist in all communities—and no less so in transnational communities. Fissures marked by class, race and gender, inequalities of wealth and resources, and systems of patronage and implied reciprocity, predominate in all

¹⁰ See Jack (2000) for a fuller analysis of the general characteristics of Social Investment Funds.

¹¹ The FISDL, has allocated US\$3.2 million to technical assistance for participatory local development through the program PATDEL which represents approximately 8 percent of the annual operating budget.

communities; these hierarchies or polyarchies mediate economic, social and political outcomes. Frequently, those who exercise voice and influence local decisions do not speak for all members of the community. As a result projects and their benefits are often highly selective and narrowly distributed. Substantial effort needs to be expended to ensure that project selection, design and implementation reflects broader processes of consensus building in the communities.

Participation, local engagement, and stakeholderhood are terms that are referenced frequently in discussions of social investment fund objectives and modes of project implementation (Jack, 2000; Grosh, 1995). Yet, repeatedly, these objectives are used in an instrumental fashion, to reduce project costs, meet expenditure targets, devolve operational responsibilities, and shift implementation onto communities and their NGO counterparts.¹² Similarly, where participation terminology is used by NGOs and community organizations it can also imply instrumentality and cost shifting. Furthermore, ensuring that “participation” does not reduce to offering platforms for local elites, is a delicate and difficult operation, requiring investments of funds, time and effort in broad-based consultations and consensus building activities. Social investment funds, municipalities and local NGOs and community groups rarely have these resources.¹³

Additionally, the FISDL does not have the technical expertise appropriate for participatory rural assessments and capacity-building. The overwhelming majority of staff comprises engineers and architects. The Local Development Advisors are not development practitioners with a social science background in participatory and inclusive processes. Even after attempts to redefine the job description for local development advisors, the majority of advisors hired have a background in engineering, architecture and construction. The advisors have little or no training in participatory development and time, resources and monitoring and evaluation instruments dictate little more than a superficial overview of the project reducing community participation to filling out a series of forms and monitoring construction inputs and deliveries.¹⁴

Partly in recognition of their limitations and partly with the express purpose of stimulating the development of local democracy, the participatory processes that are expected to underpin the selection of projects are being decentralized and are increasingly supposed to be conducted and orchestrated by the municipalities and the ADESCOs (FISDL, 2003:10). Yet little verification is undertaken to ensure that the design and implementation of projects emerged from and is sustained by an iterative participatory process.

The lack of FISDL and municipal expertise in participatory development is particularly worrisome given the limitations that poor rural communities face engaging their members in broad-based consultative processes. These difficulties may be magnified when

¹² See for example Schmidt (1996) and Siri (2002).

¹³ As a result participation is limited and instrumental and project benefits are neither maximized nor democratized (Hickey and Mohan, 2004).

¹⁴ A recent review of World Bank experience with social investment funds indicates that only 32 percent of social investment projects include community capacity building among their objectives and only 12 percent mentioned community empowerment (World Bank, 2001 cited in Siri 2002).

we consider transnational participation. Certainly, the primary challenge for all of the HTAs interviewed and accompanied was to involve their communities in their home towns. Table 1 provides a taxonomy of participation and communication and has been adapted from Paul (1987). The four HTAs that we accompanied, and the additional HTAs and umbrella groups that we observed and interviewed, pursued largely consultative practices in developing and implementing projects. Beneficiary involvement was actively sought, but the channels of communication relied disproportionately on family members and friends, and were for the most part informal and sporadic. Consultations were brief and narrow. The chief limitation was time and resources. Few members of the leadership could stimulate wide consultative and participatory processes to identify and rank priorities in their home town. Needs were assessed instinctively with some consultation with authority figures such as priests, pastors, the leadership of ADESCOs, and occasionally the mayor. The HTAs frequently relied upon these authority figures to mediate HTA and community expectations, to interpret needs and speak for the community. The leadership would verify the claims that these authority figures made with family members and friends, but largely used these authority figures as intermediaries or proxies in their home town communities.

“You know [what is needed]—because you come from these places. But, besides that, one gets in touch with the community and plans are made together. They call and say that such and such things are needed. What we learn of first, we do first, because it is more feasible.”
Woman, HTA member, Virginia.

“Counting on them over there; they tell us what they need. Someone goes to see if it is true and if it is necessary. Then we choose the requests that benefit the most needy.” Man, HTA member in Virginia.

“The priest visited the communities with _____, after the hurricane. They made the rounds that helped identify the needs. They took the things [aid] and went to work with the community. But that was decided by a collective vote here.” HTA member in the US.

There were certainly instances where collaborative modalities of project selection and implementation were pursued—but these relied heavily on outside resources: the presence of non governmental organizations and intermediaries facilitating communication and supporting the agency of community counterparts in the home town. The lack of community capacity and resources directed towards building community counterparts and extending the boundaries of largely philanthropic activities to include more developmental ones, limited the degree to which collaborative processes could be nurtured. These findings reflect those of Eekhoff (1994) in her earlier research in Los Angeles. Eekhoff develops a similar typology of hierarchical activities and collaborative activities and observes that there are few examples of collaborative activities in transnational projects (Eekhoff 1994:17).

Table 1. Taxonomy of Participation and Communication

Type	Definition
Vertical	Individuals initiate requests from the community to specific members of the leadership. The HTA selects the activities that they will support and informs intended beneficiaries about a potential project. Although beneficiaries may be invited to contribute labor and local resources, all information and authority emanate from the implementing organization in the US. The activities are largely project based and philanthropic. Communication is eventual and sporadic.
Consultative	Consultation distributes power and information from the top down – but the implementing agencies in the diaspora continue to set the agenda and employ local resources and inputs to achieve and refine this agenda. Communication is frequent and typically channeled through members of the leadership of the HTA and the community counterpart in the community of origin.
Collaborative	Information flows between the two (or more) organizations in the diaspora and in the community of origin reciprocally. Beneficiaries are encouraged to discuss needs, identify solutions and plan intended projects. The boundaries of the inquiry are defined and influenced by the diaspora organization—but project implementation and refinement is undertaken by the community of origin through the community organization.

Source: adapted from Paul (1987)

Coordination and Contracting in the Transnational Domain

The FISDL projects and those with transnational communities require local coordinating agents. In most scenarios, the local coordinating agent for the FISDL is the municipality. The municipality is typically delegated to coordinate the construction and completion of the project with no mandate for, or resources assigned to, ensuring community involvement. Communities that assume responsibility for project oversight often do so voluntarily and without an established mechanism to influence project implementation or correct for any errors or failures on the part of the contractor. The extent to which the community can influence outcomes depends very much on the receptivity of the municipality. For example, the Comité Pro Mejoramiento de El Chiquirín, has had a positive and collaborative relationship with the mayor of La Unión.¹⁵ As a result, members of the community counterpart and ADESCO in El Chiquirín were able to inform the mayor about the failure on the part of the contractor to meet their obligations constructing the school classroom additions, approved and co-financed by the FISDL, and laying pipes for sewage and the septic tank.

For the HTA, the choice of a local coordinating agent depends very much on how the HTA has evolved and the presence or absence of community organizations and bodies with which to work. Social capital is an essential component of their activities. HTAs draw extensively on their social capital, and reciprocal ties of trust through kinship, friendship, patronage connections to local leadership, political parties, and religious affiliations. These networks are essential platforms for the HTAs transnational activities and call into play solidarity, reciprocity, trust, and social control. If human and social capital is scarce, then in

¹⁵ This relationship has been aided by the fact that the leadership and the municipality are sympathetic to the same political party.

all likelihood the financial support the HTAs will be able to garner for their collective projects will also be limited. Moreover, HTAs with little human and social capital are less able to implement, monitor and accompany a project or to respond to the demands of project management placed upon them.

Emblematic of the critical role that trust and reciprocity play in implementing HTA projects, the committees we accompanied rely heavily on family members to coordinate and oversee the projects, and to channel information about their implementation to the leadership in Washington. Approximately half of respondents in the communities affirmed that family members of the HTA leadership in the home town bore the primary responsibility for supervising the projects once they had been set in motion. A further third of community counterpart respondents said that the local ADESCO performed this primary supervisory role. Other actors that occasionally oversee projects are mayors, pastors, priests and church representatives and non governmental organizations.

In the case of collaborations with the FISDL, infrastructure projects once approved, are put out to bid, and assigned to one or several businesses on a list of pre-approved contractors. To qualify as a potential contractor you must be registered with the FISDL, have rendered financial accounts that verify payment of taxes, and demonstrate compliance with certain governmental laws and regulations. Compliance, once initially qualified, is infrequently verified and a system of patronage and clientalism can develop which vitiates the objectives of open and transparent competition. Contractors can become elite insiders with knowledge of government contracting mechanisms, the timing of requests for proposals, and the complexities of submission procedures. There is little opportunity for the FISDL and the municipality to contract community services through local builders, and even less opportunity for transnational organizations to be directly contracted—as in the case of the Comunidad Unida de Chinameca.

These problems are not exclusive to the FISDL, but are an outgrowth of attempts to develop more transparent and accountable contracting mechanisms for all branches of the Salvadoran government. Unfortunately, the resultant bureaucracy and the lack of flexibility or ability to differentiate between small projects in remote rural areas and large infrastructure projects have created a complex web of rules that precludes community involvement.

Capture and Corruption in Transnational Projects

Decentralization of government functions has the potential to stimulate greater local ownership and strengthen local democracy. The 2004 World Development Report, *Making Services Work for the Poor*, highlights that “Too often, services fail poor people — in access, in quantity, in quality. But the fact that there are strong examples where services do work means governments and citizens can do better. How? By putting poor people at the center of service provision: by enabling them to monitor and discipline service providers, by amplifying their voice in policymaking, and by strengthening the incentives for providers to serve the poor.”

Empowering local residents and HTA counterparts to monitor and discipline service providers and contractors is complicated and requires creating mechanisms that devolve authority to local bodies to enforce sanctions and punish those who defraud the public or

capture rents. Similarly, devolving authority to local municipalities to perform contracting, oversee the delivery of services and enforce sanctions is equally complex. Local officials may benefit directly from capture by local and regional elites, receiving kickbacks and bribes from contractors and service providers. If local officials are not corrupt, they may not have sufficient bargaining power to oversee and enforce contract compliance.

The recent example of the use of inadequate and defective materials, skimming, kickbacks and diversion of funds by construction companies upgrading one of the dams on the river Lempa, highlights the problems of corruption and capture in infrastructure projects (Lemus and Grimaldi, 2004). ANDA, the National Aqueduct and Sewerage Administration, was in charge of contracting a construction company to make repairs and upgrade segments of the dam in the Río Lempa II project. ANDA invested a little under \$30 million in the repairs and upgrading. In addition to the accusations of skimming, kickbacks and the use of defective materials, ANDA is also accused of manipulating the requests for proposals to benefit particular companies.

Corruption in infrastructure projects can occur at various points of the project cycle, from selection and procurement through implementation: collusion among contractors, or between government officials, community beneficiaries and contractors; ghost deliveries that are paid for but never take place; the use of substandard materials at inflated prices; cost-padding and price fixing. Unless mechanisms are set in place to oversee and enforce compliance, infrastructure projects can present multiple opportunities for corruption and skimming for a wide range of rent-seekers.¹⁶

Transnational infrastructure projects may prove to be even more complicated to oversee and monitor—precisely because they involve multiple funders, with different purviews and objectives, and different degrees of leverage over the outcome, who are typically engaged in the project remotely. The FISDL and the HTAs are not physically present throughout the construction. Despite monitoring and evaluation mechanisms laid in place by the FISDL, agents for the social investment fund can only monitor sporadically. Similarly, the HTA is not present for much of the construction and must rely on friends, family members and community counterparts to oversee the implementation of the project. Typically, the community representatives have little voice in enforcement and, should they discover an example of corruption and skimming, may have insufficient power to demand compliance.

Another dimension of corruption is uncovered when project benefits are diverted or co-opted. The public/private good distinction inherent in small and local infrastructure investments such as potable water, drainage, and roads, is not mutually exclusive. Public goods have three inalienable characteristics. The first is that they are non-rivalrous: one person's consumption does not deprive others of using them. The second is that they are non-excludable: if one person consumes them it is impossible to restrict others from consuming them. The third is that they are non-rejectable: individuals cannot abstain from their consumption even if they wish to do so. Few public investments meet these strict criteria. In the case of small infrastructure, the distinction becomes even more blurred. The

¹⁶ Rent-seeking describes behavior that improves the welfare of an individual or group at the expense of the welfare of others.

investments have the potential to be co-opted; a road, drain or water pipe can be routed to benefit particular community elites and exclude or bypass others.

HTAs as well as local and national governments may be unable to discern the extent to which local elites shape or determine infrastructure investment. The vulnerability of these projects to capture depends very much upon the process by which the projects were chosen and implemented and the extent to which community groups can act as watchdogs to prevent any diversion of funds and benefits.

Interrogating The Purpose of State-HTA Collaboration

Several questions emerge from considering the complexities of state-HTA collaborations. What is their purpose? Why are these collaborations being undertaken or sought? Is it, as some of the HTA membership imagine, part of a neo-liberal agenda to minimize the role of government and shift costs of basic infrastructure development and maintenance onto the private sector? Have these collaborations become another means of co-financing investment in local infrastructure and privatizing public responsibility? Yet given the small amounts of funds generated to date through these collaborations in El Salvador, currently little more than 2 percent of all funds allocated to the investments come from HTAs, is this supposition really likely?

Do these collaborations have the potential to engender social and economic development? Left to their own devices, the HTAs and private voluntary organizations will undertake small, focused and highly philanthropic activities that are rarely intended to contribute to broader processes of development or to challenge structural impoverishment and exclusion. Furthermore, under the current rubric of state-HTA collaborations the engagement may do little more than retrieve and control power emerging in the diaspora—a dimension which may be of more strategic importance than the volumes of money raised.

This analysis notwithstanding, there are unintended potential benefits and spillovers of encouraging HTA activities that can contribute to broader goals of increasing citizen voice in the process of development and in advocacy efforts for migrants abroad. As Goldring (1998) observes “Transnational social fields, and places of origin in particular, represent a unique context in which transmigrants can make claims to social status and have their status and social capital valorized.” The re-design of the consulates in the late 1990s to attend to the needs of diaspora population reflects an incremental awareness of the Salvadoran state of the importance of migration as a means to secure a steady stream of remittances.¹⁷ But in the process of re-engineering their services to meet the needs of migrants abroad—the consulates, and exterior relations have begun to respond to calls from the diaspora to advocate for immigration regularization, the extension of Temporary Protected Status, the emission of national identity cards abroad, and even to sustain dialogues about voting abroad (Gammage, 2004; Salvadoreños en el Mundo, 2004). In

¹⁷ See for example the platform of the Directorate General of Attention for the Community Abroad which came into being under President Flores (1999-2004). The platform refers to the need to develop a state policy that offers consular activities and assistance to the diaspora population which is informed by a “spirit of service”. The principal goal of such a policy would be to “contribute to establishing an axis for development based on the potential of the Salvadoran community abroad, securing their social, economic and political ties” (DGACE, 2002:5).

January, 2005 the newly elected Salvadoran President, Tony Saca launched a campaign in Silver Spring, Virginia to remind Salvadorans to re-register for Temporary Protected Status (Sheridan, 2004a).¹⁸ Saca pledged to make a priority of winning immigrants a third extension of TPS since the earthquakes in 2001. He also fervently assured immigrants that the government wasn't only thinking of their money when it lobbied the Bush administration for the extension (*ibid*).

In general, the HTAs that exist in the U.S. serve multiple purposes. Their apparent focus may be philanthropic and charitable activities in their home towns, but their meta purpose is often to socialize, and solidify cultural values through events such as picnics, dances, and soccer games (Orozco, 2000; Alarcon 2000; Levitt 2001; Delgado Wise and Rodriguez, 2001). It is clear that Salvadoran HTAs in Greater Washington, D.C. also act as informal networks for mediating access to resources, obtaining employment and housing, sharing information about schools and child-care programs, and creating an extended community among disperse settlements in the US suburbs. As some of the HTAs become more established, they also begin to garner political influence in their home and host countries and pursue small-scale community development projects in their home towns (Guarnizo, 2003; Orozco, 2000; Levitt, 2001).

The HTAs provide an opportunity to discuss political and advocacy concerns and coalesce positions and platforms. HTAs and immigrant associations also provide opportunities for Salvadoran mayors to influence the use and disposition of funds raised in the United States and even to garner political capital in the diaspora. During the course of our accompaniment, CUC and the Comité El Tejar received requests for funds from the local mayors. HTAs and umbrella groups in Greater Washington DC have hosted events for political candidates and provided opportunities for mayors and party delegates from the FMLN, CDU and ARENA parties to meet with diaspora community members. HTAs in the United States have also organized in support of extending Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Salvadorans and to secure voting rights abroad. These activities are documented and observed through a transnational lens, with far reaching implications in the US and El Salvador. Departamento 15, in the Prensa Gráfica in El Salvador reported on the prominence of Salvadoran organizations organizing in support of TPS extensions (Aillón, 2004) and made information widely available about eligibility for TPS in the United States (Departamento 15, 2002).¹⁹

HTAs and members of the coalitions and umbrella groups attended a number of rallies and position meetings in Greater Washington DC during the course of our accompaniment. One such rally was to advocate for diaspora voting rights (Gammage, 2004). A number of prominent HTA members and leaders attended from more than 10 committees, along with key members in the Salvadoran Chamber of Commerce and other

¹⁸ This campaign continued previous initiatives by Francisco Flores in 2001 to lobby the United States government for an extension of TPS (Giralt, 2001).

¹⁹ Departamento 15 is a section of the Salvadoran newspaper the Prensa Gráfica devoted to news about Salvadorans abroad and their activities in the diaspora and the transnational sphere. <http://www.departamento15.com/> The name refers to the diaspora as the 15th territorial department in El Salvador, implying membership of the larger nation and polity.

immigrant rights organizations—including CARECEN. The meeting was covered by the local Latino and Salvadoran press and summaries appeared in the *Diario de Hoy* and the *Prensa Gráfica* in El Salvador. The meeting was called to announce a United States Salvadoran Chamber of Commerce delegation with CARECEN to El Salvador to meet with Ministry of Foreign Affairs and political parties to seek endorsement of their position advocating for diaspora voting rights. Participants at the meeting commented extensively on the new Vice Ministry for Salvadorans living abroad—an initiative set in place by the newly elected president, Tony Saca.

“It is of great importance that we continue working for the civic participation of Salvadoran’s abroad. We have taken this initiative tonight to begin in the metropolitan area of Washington, Maryland y Virginia. It is extremely important that we take advantage of this moment that the newly elected president of El Salvador has given us...It is for this reason that we are here to put our cards on the table and inform the president that we exist and that we are going to demand the right to vote abroad as Salvadorans.” Luis Felipe Romero, President of CUS and SAMD.

The right to vote abroad, and to exercise citizenship, was among the primary concerns of Salvadorans in the diaspora. There was a clear sense of quid pro quo: if we provide resources for our home towns, if we invest and save in El Salvador, we should have the right to vote abroad.

“It is important to note that there are 63 counties in the world which sanction the right to vote abroad, and we could be the 64th. Clearly this won’t happen overnight. We will only be able to get the right to vote if we use the media, and if we lobby each deputy in each department. But we should take into account that we have earned some respect, we have earned a space within the Salvadoran community from all the support that we have given. And now we are asking that they [the congress] legislate and approve a law allowing us to vote abroad. We know it won’t be easy, but we are hoping that the party that is currently in power remembers that we have given, and have given a lot, and that now it is a necessity that we be able to elect our government.” Francisco Castro, President of CUC.

The right to vote abroad was also the topic one of the best attended panels at the 2nd annual conference of *Salvadoreños en el Mundo*, in Washington DC in October 2004. Although conference attendance was sporadic, an estimated 500 Salvadoran community leaders, HTA members and affiliates, activists and representatives of Salvadoran ministries participated in the two day conference at George Washington University. Delegates and panelists came from California, El Salvador, New York, Massachusetts and Germany (Sheridan, 2004a). Tony Saca, the president of El Salvador, also attended the inauguration ceremony, underscoring the importance of this transnational event by telling Salvadorans that “Everything we do in El Salvador includes you. You are an essential reference.” Saca also reported in an interview with the *Washington Post*: “This is a really important theme. One fourth of our population lives abroad, 80 percent [of them] in the United States...”. He emphasized that his presence at the inauguration was because he wished “to hear their concerns, to hear about their desires and tell them about my work.” (Sheridan, 2004a: B1).

Despite obvious overtures to HTAs by the Salvadoran state and a recent November 2004 Presidential Forum hosted by the Exterior Relations Ministry in San Salvador, attended by over 400 participants, HTAs are not uncritically compliant and unquestioning of state

motives and objectives. A blizzard of announcements followed the forum, as HTAs defined their positions: many at pains to assert their continuing demands for diaspora citizenship; demanding the right to obtain national identity documents through Salvadoran consulates abroad; seeking a permanent counterpart fund for HTA investments; and requesting financial support and business visas for small transnational enterprises.²⁰ The terms of engagement and compromise are constantly being re-negotiated. But HTA members are not afraid to voice their opinions in El Salvador and in the diaspora. One example of this is that HTA members were also among those groups recently protesting Tony Saca, and the ruling ARENA party's signing of CAFTA, as he attended a National Press Club Conference in Washington DC in January 2005 (Departamento 15, 2005).

HTAs have the potential to provide a critical focus for Salvadorans in the diaspora to channel their energies and efforts to remain attached to their communities of origin, and to seek and advocate for immigrants' rights. For many HTA participants, the opportunity to be with co-ethnics, to share a common purpose, to validate and celebrate their culture, is central to their membership. The HTAs perform an important function of coalescing a community in the diaspora, forging and validating a shared diaspora identity, and cementing ties to the community of origin. They also provide a platform for advocacy and lobbying to seek political rights abroad and in the United States. These advocacy activities may become increasingly important in a post September 11 world, where immigrants' freedoms are being increasingly circumscribed and the powers of local police are being expanded to allow them the authority to enforce immigration laws (Sheridan, 2004b).

Courting the HTAs for development purposes may yield benefits to the state—but it can also yield benefits to the diaspora in terms of increased political and social leverage over the state. The extent to which such leverage affords migrants, HTAs in the US, and their home town communities, voice in Salvadoran political and economic processes has yet to be established. Whether this only empowers local elites in the diaspora and transnationally has yet to be fully examined. But while the outcomes remain contested there is still space for the exercise of voice and agency by individuals who have typically been excluded from these processes. Providing resources to the migrant associations so that they can be more democratic, open, and transparent, and can engage more effectively with NGO and state entities is likely to improve the welfare and wellbeing of those who have been typically excluded and marginalized.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The findings presented in this paper draw attention to significant challenges and shortcomings that affect state-HTA collaborations and may limit any potential gains and spillovers. Among these challenges are: insufficient home-town participation and inclusion in project design and implementation; the lack of leadership training and capacity building; coordination and contracting failures; and, co-optation and capture by local elites. These challenges reflect both the nature of the mechanism through which HTA-state collaboration is currently being funded and the complexities of undertaking participatory community development in highly unequal societies. While these problems are not unique to transnational development initiatives, they may be magnified in the transnational sphere.

²⁰ See for example *Salvadoreños en el Mundo*, 2004.

Notwithstanding, these challenges also present opportunities to refine and modify existing government programs as well as highlighting the need for institutional strengthening and capacity building to enable HTAs and their community counterparts to be full and co-equal partners in local development initiatives. This support is likely to be critical whether these transnational projects are undertaken in collaboration with the state or with NGOs and other private sector organizations.

Among the various recommendations that emerge from this, the need is to strengthen efforts to increase the technical capacity of local governments and HTAs and their counterparts,²¹ and deepen the mechanisms of participation and democratic accountability is essential if these shared transnational projects are to afford broader developmental benefits. Increasing information flows about HTA and municipal budgets, the selection of projects, contracting mechanisms and responsibilities, can increase transparency, foster wider local participation and improve the responsiveness of HTA and government projects to local needs.

1. The Role for Intermediaries. One of the roles that the research team played during the 18 months of accompaniment was to courier messages and goods, translate documents, write letters, disseminate meeting notes, and engage HTAs and their counterparts in collective and participatory inquiry about the needs and potential responses to these needs. The team shared proposals developed by the HTAs and the community counterparts, and channeled the responses and concerns raised to the different groups involved. The facilitation improved communications and broadened the network of individuals engaged at both ends of the transnational continuum.

It is clear from accompanying four HTAs that their members do travel to their communities of origin, but they do so infrequently and sporadically. Engaging NGOs and other intermediaries in El Salvador and the United States to facilitate communication, help community counterparts produce reports, disseminate financial records and provide an accounting of their activities, can ensure that these important tasks are undertaken.

Intermediaries may also be drawn upon to provide training and technical assistance for transnational projects and to pay particular attention to facilitating inclusive and participatory processes. For example, training the HTAs and their counterparts in gender sensitive participatory tools and facilitating a collective analysis of the gender specific constraints that affect men and women's full participation in projects is likely to improve project outcomes and ensure that projects better meet the needs of all members of the community.

The HTAs demonstrate a wide range of technical assistance needs to professionalize their activities, increase participation at home and in the host country, and ensure that they

²¹ For capacity building to be effective it must be demand-driven and tailored to the needs and abilities of the organizations involved to maximize their ability to use and appropriate the added capacity. Furthermore capacity building must transfer quality skills and knowledge. As Siri (2002: 11) observes "Grassroots groups cannot afford to receive inferior technical advice—poorly designed operations create long-term burdens for the intended beneficiaries, and project failures can have disastrous consequences for the poor."

are more accountable and responsive to their membership. The following provides a list of a few technical assistance needs encountered during the research project:

- Technical assistance for organizations seeking to send goods to their home towns and ensure that these goods pass through customs in a timely manner (donated medical equipment, computers, vehicles for ambulances, etc.);
- Translating legal documents for presentation in the home and host country—in particular transferring land titles and ensuring that organizational statutes are correctly filed with local and national government
- Facilitating the acquisition of 501c3 and non profit status in the United States;
- Facilitating legal registration and formalization of HTA counterparts in the community of origin;
- Training and technical assistance on how to undertake participatory audits and facilitate the greater integration of beneficiaries in project design and implementation;
- Training and technical assistance for record-keeping, budgeting and accounting. And end-of-year reports;
- Training and technical assistance to diversify fund raising beyond a narrow base of migrants in the United States;
- Training and technical assistance on how to work with central and local government in their home country;
- Training and technical assistance on how to develop and read contracts and monitor and evaluate work undertaken; and,
- Training and technical assistance on conflict transformation and consensus building in their home town communities and within their membership.

Strategic alliances with organizations with expertise in these areas should be encouraged to provide these services and contribute to strengthening HTAs and their counterparts' capacity in the United States and in their communities of origin.

2. Facilitating Transnational Communication. One of the chief difficulties that constrained transnational participation, and limited the extent to which home town communities could become involved in project identification and implementation was the lack of formalized communications mechanisms. Communication between the HTA and the home town beneficiaries was occasional, sporadic, and frequently occurred through family members and friends. Although various committees had community counterparts, decision-making was frequently centralized in the HTA in the US, and consultations, when they occurred, took place erratically.

This concern notwithstanding, the HTAs have fairly sophisticated mechanisms for communication in the US. Individual members have defined responsibilities to call other members, frequently there are phone-trees, and information about meetings and events flows fairly easily between members in the diaspora.

3. Facilitating Home Town Participation and Organization. If HTAs are to be brought into development activities, a concerted effort is required to foster strong and viable counterpart organizations or to support the ADESCOs and other home town community counterparts as they coordinate with HTAs in the United States. These organizations should

mirror the structure of the HTAs enabling homologues to communicate effectively and ensuring that accounting and project management procedures are similar. These counterpart organizations need to be trained in participatory development techniques to enable them to undertake rapid rural appraisals and community audits to guide the investment of HTA funds and increase the involvement of community members in the home towns.

4. Fostering Gender Equity and Women's Empowerment. HTAs, similar to other social and political entities composed of people asserting their particular agency, can be sites of contest and struggle— both internally and with respect to their external relations. In the meetings that we attended women were active participants and decision-makers. Three of the four committees that we accompanied had women in the leadership. Women members and leaders of HTAs expressed concerns and preferences that clearly shaped the projects selected and the fund-raising activities pursued.

Yet, despite the observed equality in these HTAs, and the repositioning of women members of the leadership in spheres of local influence, the inclusion of women as members of the beneficiary community in decision-making was less apparent. The lack of participation of women beneficiaries, owed less to gender-specific mechanisms of exclusion and marginalization, than to the nature of the communication between the HTA leadership and the beneficiary community. The HTAs maintained largely hierarchical relationships with their home communities. The migrants in the HTAs often exercised disproportionate influence over project identification and planning and in some cases implementation, whether they be men or women, while the non-migrants' role in the home community was limited primarily to oversight and logistics.

The HTA members surveyed declared that they were open to greater community participation and inclusion of beneficiaries. Efforts to foment greater community participation and beneficiary inclusion should pay particular attention to including women, old people and youth, as members of the beneficiary population who are frequently less able to exert influence over decision-making processes. State, bilateral and non-governmental organizations working with HTAs to promote social investment and transnational engagement in development initiatives should integrate strategies to increase beneficiary and women's participation in the design of projects and interventions. Additionally, development initiatives should incorporate training activities to promote individual and collective changes in attitudes towards women's inclusion, with the broader aim of supporting a culture of democracy and gender equality in decision-making bodies locally.

5. Conflict Resolution. Conflict is likely to occur in situations of scarcity when working with communities that are recently emerging from decades of civil conflict, where subtle cleavages, historical differences, and inequalities in access to and control over resources prevail. Strategies to deal with, defuse, and transform conflict should be an essential component of all development projects and activities.

Conflict can provide a powerful opportunity for learning, but this requires careful and appropriate facilitation. Where conflicts arise, they can emerge from embedded and entrenched differences that are inherent to the local context—these are the most difficult to mediate and transform. Conflict can also result from failures to observe appropriate

protocols, or to develop procedures that are sufficiently inclusive and participatory. The latter points to the need to develop new protocols and procedures and to pay attention to the process by which decisions are made and projects implemented in the home community.

When conflicts arose during the course of this research, their resolution depended acutely on the ability of individuals within the committees or counterpart organizations to diffuse and transform any animosity. Typically, conflicts arose over inadequate or mistimed communications, poor management of funds, and a lack of accountability mechanisms.

Institutionalizing more formal communications mechanisms and reporting could clearly reduce and diminish the potential for conflict in the selection, design and implementation of projects. State, bilateral and non governmental organizations working with HTAs may also need to address conflict directly by providing resources to community organizations to facilitate negotiation, support consensus based decision-making and train community representatives in conflict transformation techniques.

6. Power and Agency. Forming a diaspora community may be particularly important where individuals are dispersed in small pockets throughout the suburbs. For example, Salvadorans, more than any other ethnic group are dispersed throughout Greater Washington DC and occupy more than 62 distinct zip codes in the metropolitan area. These associations afford members a sense of national identity and also help to coalesce political power in the host country.

Although the outward purpose of many of the HTA activities is purely social and philanthropic, for some, the HTAs provide an opportunity to discuss political and advocacy concerns. Affording HTAs access to information about immigrants' political and economic rights in the diaspora and as Salvadoran migrants could galvanize these nascent activities and provide a point of entry into communities that have limited access to such information.

Conclusions

The small and highly focused nature of HTA investment does not reflect the entirety of the potential that such activities have to spur change, empower transnational communities, and influence local development outcomes. Many of the HTA projects have been successful and have contributed to upgrading infrastructure, and improving the wellbeing of community members in their home towns. Yet, HTAs by themselves cannot address structural poverty and exclusion, nor can they significantly improve outcomes through state-community collaborations if the processes are not radically altered. There is an urgent need for more capacity building, and resources dedicated to participatory project development, selection, monitoring and enforcement. Members of the transnational community need to be empowered through these processes, as do their community counterparts.

Among the pressing needs for change are revisions to current bidding and contracting processes, to facilitate community monitoring and enforcement of compliance in service delivery. The failure to fully clarify roles and responsibilities, publicize contracts and ensure that beneficiaries and contractors are fully aware of obligations can lead to

accusations that damage transparency and undermine accountability—eventually eroding trust.

The FISDL needs more resources to be dedicated to engendering community participation and investing in effective community based-state collaborations. In addition to engineers and architects, they need community promoters with participatory development backgrounds—to ensure that community groups have the expertise required to identify and select projects, develop budgets, read and monitor contracts. The FISDL should not be required to compensate for failures in an education system that undercapitalizes rural areas. However, they can build human and social capital through their projects.

NGOs and other bilateral and multilateral organizations that embark on similar endeavors with HTAs and their home town counterparts should employ a comparable approach. These agencies should be explicit about the depth and scope of the participation required in transnational projects and clarify whether participation is to be used instrumentally, or objectively—as an end in itself. Resources need to be allocated to facilitate participation and to foster inclusive and accountable processes.

Finally, resources should be dedicated to strengthening transnational institutions and empowering local counterparts to participate effectively with HTAs and the state. The potential for democratizing and expanding participation in transnational space exists. Concerted efforts by donors, NGOs, researchers and activists can strengthen and democratize participation, reduce co-optation and ensure that traditional elites do not instrumentalize these processes.

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Annex 1. Table 1. Summary of Four Home Town Associations Activities

	Tejar	Tamarindo	Chiquirín	Chinameca
Community of Origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural • Primarily agriculture • High rates of poverty • Lack of infrastructure • No paved roads • Running water serves 50% of households • 30% outmigration • Population 700^a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural • Fishing community • Medium to high rates of poverty • Some infrastructure • Some paved roads • Running water available in almost all houses • 45% outmigration • Population 4,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural • Fishing village • Good infrastructure • Graded but unpaved road • Running water available in almost all houses • 50-60% outmigration • Population 1,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban • Good infrastructure • All main service roads paved and graded • Running water available in almost all houses (with a few notable exceptions) • 40 % outmigration • Population 24,000
HTA Organizational structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-based • Elected leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended family and kinship network • Elected leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended family and community based network • Elected leadership • Leadership are also members of other umbrella organizations (CUS, SAMD, CLC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community based • Elected leadership • Leadership are also members of other umbrella organizations(CUS, SAMD, CLC)
Length of existence	3 years	1 year (as a formal organization with elected leadership)	8 years	12 years
Average annual budget	\$2,000	\$1,000	\$10,000	\$20,000
Types of projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School books, uniforms. • Targeted assistance to particular families to help with medical expenses and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Musical instruments for the local school • School books and uniforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FISDL projects to build a community center, add two classrooms and pave sections of the road. • Individual projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build houses for those displaced by recent natural disasters (hurricane Mitch and the earthquakes), the

	Tejar	Tamarindo	Chiquirín	Chinameca
	housing repairs.		to repair cemetery.	poor and elderly. • Provide resources to the Red Cross
Community of origin counterpart	Sporadic engagement with individual family members, key community members, church committees and the local community organizations (ADESCO)	Community counterpart in El Tamarindo	Community organization (ADESCO)	Family members and the Committee for the local Saints Day Festival (Comité del Barrio Festejo de Dolores)
Membership and association with other networks and umbrella groups	CUS SAMD	--	CUS SAMD CLC	CUS SAMD CLC
Relationship with other NGOs in the United States	PADF El Rescate	PADF	PADF	PADF CARECEN
Relationship with other NGOs in El Salvador	--	CEASDES FUNDATAMARINDO		CONFRAS CARECEN
Ideological framework	Philanthropic and faith based	Philanthropic	Philanthropic	Philanthropic (Some development focus)

Notes: ^a population estimates are based on COMURES data and research conducted by CEASDES at each site
<http://www.comures.org.sv/comures/html/agremiados/poblacion.html#launion>