

# ***WEAVING TIES OF FRIENDSHIP, TRUST AND COMMITMENT TO BUILD DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN PERU <sup>1</sup>***

## ***A CASE STUDY OF A PROGRAM TO TRAIN COMMUNITY LEADERS IN HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY, AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION***

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### ***BACKGROUND***

Starting in the early 1980's and well into the 1990s Peru was rocked by violence: from terrorists (the Shining Path, the MRTA), from narco-traffickers, and from the Peruvian military responding to the terrorists and narco-traffickers. This violence, during a fourteen year period (between 1980 and 1994), left 25,000 Peruvians dead and thousands of innocent Peruvians imprisoned under suspicion of being terrorists. Over 6,000 people disappeared and hundreds of thousands of families were displaced. The social fabric in areas where terrorism was at its peak was disrupted as community leaders (mayors, teachers, heads of women's clubs) were systematically murdered. At the same time the Peruvian economy suffered a decline that had no equal in the rest of Latin America. In 1989 the minimum wage in Peru purchased 23% of what the Peruvian minimum wage could purchase in 1980.

Most affected by the decline in the economy and the violence were Peru's poor—individuals from the highlands and the jungles as well as those living in marginal areas of Lima, Peru's capital. These individuals, many with low levels of education, did not know what their rights were, how to defend them, or where to go when they were violated. Frustrated by their declining purchasing power, many internalized the after math of the violence and their economic frustration within their families. While there are no hard data to support this, a common belief is that—as a result of economic decline and the violence from terrorism—family violence (men beating and otherwise abusing their wives; parents beating and otherwise abusing their children) has increased.

1985 was a very important year for Peru as it was during this year that civil society organized to fight the violence. The National Coordinator for Human Rights—a coalition of over 50 NGOs supporting the rights of Peruvians--was formed to repudiate violence “from wherever it might come”. Also in 1985 the Peruvian Institute for Education in Human Rights and Peace (IPEDEHP), an active member of the National Coordinator for Human Rights, was born. Both organizations are highly respected by those in the human rights community within and outside of Peru for what they have done over the past decade to defend the rights of Peruvian citizens. Today, 13 years later, both organizations are still vigorously defending the rights of Peruvian citizens as outlined in the International Declaration of Human Rights, the Peruvian Constitution and other Peruvian laws.

### ***IPEDEHP: THE PERUVIAN INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEACE***

IPEDEHP is composed of a group of educators, with backgrounds working in the Ministry of Education and in popular education, who met through their common interest in human rights as members of Amnesty International in the early 1980s. All have been strongly influenced by the principles of Paolo Freire, a world renown educator whose populist approach to education has a strong empowerment focus. In addition, many have been students of the Peruvian theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez, who is best known

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<sup>1</sup> This is a summary of a complete text that has been prepared in Spanish and English. For further information on how to receive the full report, either in paper or electronic form, please contact: [mbern362@aol.com](mailto:mbern362@aol.com) or [ipedhp@amauta.rcp.net.pe](mailto:ipedhp@amauta.rcp.net.pe)

as the father of Liberation Theology, a movement within the Catholic church that has declared an “option for the poor”.

For its first ten years IPEDEHP focused on teachers who had been particularly affected by the violence. Recognizing that the teachers were themselves key targets of the violence (both on the part of the terrorists and the military), IPEDEHP began its training with games and other activities that helped teachers, in a neutral atmosphere, to deal with the trauma they were experiencing. Through this entree, that focused on the affective, IPEDEHP was then able to persuade teachers of the importance of building into their classrooms an atmosphere that respects core rights (dignity, respect, equality) and emphasizes the basic principles of democracy.

IPEDEHP remains a small group of seven professionals, most of whom were founders of the organization. IPEDEHP staff share a clear vision, a common set of values, and are clear on their roles and responsibilities. They are constantly critiquing their own processes, building on and learning from both their successes and their errors, and adapting the contents of their training programs in human rights and democracy to reflect changing times in Peru.

From its beginnings, IPEDEHP has maintained four elements of its strategy as constants:

- The conviction that it is fundamental, if one is training in human rights, to value the person and his/her dignity as a human being. The themes of respect, dignity, equality, and self-esteem permeate all of its publications and the training programs it has carried out since it began operations in 1985.
- The conviction that, in order to value one’s self and value others, it is important to establish contact with one’s own feelings, aspirations, and fears. The games and dynamics, which have been perfected over the years, put a great deal of emphasis on the affective. During the training courses there are many opportunities to return to memories of one’s childhood, to share how one felt when confronted with personal experiences of violence or abuse.
- The conviction that working in human rights has to be done in collaboration with others because the practice of human rights has to do with collective destinies. To be effective in this sensitive area it is indispensable to affiliate one’s self with others, be it delivering training programs in human rights in one’s community or organizing to carry out activities at the community level in defense of human rights.
- The need to become involved in existing social movements and, in so doing, help to build a more solid social fabric among other civil society institutions. In the words of one of IPEDEHP’s founders: *“We have always linked up with others at the local level. We give and we receive, parting from the reality and the needs of the situation we are in. We work in coordination with local institutions. We never work alone. Our interest is not in strengthening ourselves. Instead we strive to strengthen local groups and social movements.”*

A year after it was established (in 1986) IPEDEHP and three other human rights organizations in Peru took the lead in establishing a Peruvian Human Rights Education Network which, 12 years later, remains active. The network, which IPEDEHP continues to nurture, is made up of 70 organizations that work in human rights education throughout Peru. The Peruvian Human Rights Education Network incorporates most of the members of the National Coordinator on Human Rights and is known as its educational arm.

To date IPEDEHP has trained over 13,000 teachers in human rights and democracy. It has also established a cadre of 250 human rights promoters, themselves teachers, who have provided training to thousands more teachers in human rights and democracy. It enjoys, both within and outside of Peru, the

reputation of being a serious organization that provides excellent training, actively networks with other groups, and that reaches out to others to share its methodologies and materials.

### ***IPEDEHP'S TRAINING PROGRAM FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS***

In 1996 IPEDEHP, building on its decade of experience providing training in human rights and democracy to teachers, extended its program to community leaders. With financing from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Peru it designed a course in human rights, democracy, and citizen participation entitled: “*You Have Rights: Know Them, Defend Them, Promote Them*”. Over a three day period participants are introduced to basic concepts of human rights, democracy, citizen participation and interactive training methodologies that they can take back to their communities to apply what they have learned at the course in the way they consider most appropriate. Following the course, IPEDEHP—in close coordination with local members of the Peruvian Human Rights Education Network (also members of the Human Rights Coordinator) who are responsible for identifying leaders in their regions to attend the course—provides active follow up consisting of periodic evaluation meetings where course graduates are provided with additional skills.

While IPEDEHP takes the lead and does the actual training, its two partners -- the National Coordinator on Human Rights and the recently established Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman established by the Peruvian Congress in 1996 – also play a key role. Their presence at the course motivates the participants; familiarizes them with the services they provide; legitimizes their actions once they return to their communities; and encourages them to tap on the services both organizations provide when they return to their communities.

As of August, 1998, 897 community leaders from 11 Departments of Peru (mountains, jungle, coast) have participated in this training program. As can be seen below, participants vary widely: from a lawyer with a masters degree who was already actively involved in defending human rights when she came to the course, to teachers, to campesino leaders (women and men) who live in isolated areas, have less than a primary education and knew little or nothing about their rights before taking the course.

#### ***EXAMPLES OF SOME OF THE COMMUNITY LEADERS THAT HAVE TAKEN THE TRAINING***

- ***An Aymara women with five years of education*** from a small town near the border of Bolivia who leads a women’s artisan group; before the training course she had no knowledge of human rights.
- ***A secondary school teacher from Arequipa***; before the training course he had little knowledge of human rights.
- ***A Shipivo man from the jungle with incomplete university education*** who has a daily radio program oriented toward the Shipivo community; he had just returned from a 15 day course in human rights sponsored by the Interamerican Institute on Human Rights in Costa Rica.
- ***A lawyer from Arequipa*** with a masters degree who has worked for many years in human rights.
- ***A municipal government official from a small city in the jungle who is a retired elementary school teacher***. Before the course he knew nothing about human rights.

## ***SPECIAL FEATURES OF IPEDEHP'S PROGRAM TO TRAIN COMMUNITY LEADERS***

There are several features of IPEDEHP's training program for community leaders in human rights, democracy, and citizen participation that make it stand out as a very effective program that is worth replicating outside of Peru:

- ***All learning is built upon and closely linked to the participants' daily lives.*** The training uses as a point of departure the premise that all participants come with a rich and diverse background of knowledge and experiences that must be tapped upon throughout the course. While attending the course participants acquire knowledge of human rights and democracy by sharing their own experiences. It is only after building their own concepts based on their collective experiences that they are introduced to the theory behind these concepts and what the official legal instruments (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Peruvian Constitution, etc.) have to say about human rights. Upon completing the course they return to their communities to apply what they have learned in accord with the needs and realities of their communities.
- ***The practice of human rights and democracy begins from within.*** Participants begin by examining themselves—the extent to which they are being democratic in their households and communities, they extent to which they are upholding basic human rights. It is only after they have looked at themselves in a mirror that they can begin to look outside to see how democracy and rights are being practiced in their own communities and in Peru in general.
- ***IPEDEHP's training program is highly interactive.*** Learning takes place through action. Participants are constantly involved in group dynamics, they play human rights and democracy games, there are role plays and songs and small group discussions. There is hardly a moment during the three day course and follow-up sessions when participants are sitting listening to the trainers give them a lecture.
- ***The course involves more than just a one shot training experience.*** Long before the course is delivered in a given area of the country, IPEDEHP enters into an agreement with counterpart organizations at the community level (most are members of the National Coordinator on Human Rights and/or the Peruvian Network for Education in Human Rights and Peace) to identify leaders in their communities and motivate them to replicate what they have learned after receiving the training. Representatives of the counterpart organizations attend the IPEDEHP training course with the community leaders.

Following the course, IPEDEHP—in close coordination with their counterparts organizations--provides active follow up for community leaders consisting of a one day session three months after the initial training, annual meetings at the departmental level with each group trained, an annual national meeting in Lima for representatives from the departmental level, and a bulletin issued every two months. These mechanisms serve as an important networking device. They also provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on their successes and challenges and to receive new information on human rights and democracy as well as interactive training methodologies. As a Peruvian priest who has been affiliated with IPEDEHP since it's inception described it, *“The three day course is the spark that ignites the motor. The gasoline (follow-up) is added once the car gets on the road.”*

- ***Community leaders leave the course with a practical and easy to use tool kit of materials to guide the application of what they learned in the course once they return to their communities.*** This tool kit consists of human rights and democracy games; an easy to use methodological guide; a summary of the principals underlying the training methodology used; and a set of easy to read guidelines on

what each of the rights are, what the International Declaration on Human Rights, the Peruvian Constitution and other Peruvian laws have to say about these rights, and what should be done when they are violated. Course graduates, regardless of location and education level, report that they are able to replicate the three day training course in their communities. Individuals involved in mass media find the materials of great assistance in designing and delivering radio and television programs focusing on human rights and democracy.

- ***Everybody gets something out of the training course.*** Some acquire, for the first time, knowledge of what their rights are--as spelled out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Peruvian Constitution and other Peruvian and international laws-- and what democracy is; while for others the course provides an opportunity to update their existing concepts on human rights and democracy. Everybody acquires skills in applying interactive training methodologies that make them more effective multipliers when they return to their communities. New friendships are made, often with people that the leaders would never otherwise have had an opportunity to meet.

Three characteristics make the IPEDEHP training methodology particularly appropriate to be used in societies that have gone through or are experiencing violence:

- ***It provides a comprehensive program of education-action which touches on the meaning of life of a number of the participants, integrating basic values (dignity, respect, equality, self-esteem) within the context of their daily lives.*** For a number of the participants who have lived in areas affected by violence, particularly women, the training course may be the first time in their lives that they have been treated with dignity and respect, as co-equals. The atmosphere created at the course permits participants to express their feelings, to reconnect with submerged values, gain meaning in their lives (indeed, many refer to the course as having given them a “sentido de la vida”, the meaning of life). Successfully taking action to defend their rights as well as the rights of others (and being recognized by members of their communities for doing so), helps them to further strengthen their identity and self-esteem.
- ***It promotes the expression and development of the affective.*** A key conviction underlying the training methodology is that the affective is fundamental for educating in human rights and democracy. It is only possible to learn values if the training methodologies take into account the participant’s feelings. The expression of sentiments cannot be obligatory. Trainees express sentiments only when it is agreeable for them to do so. Trainees must be helped to understand their sentiments. It is also important to speak positively of sentiments.

The course offers participants with “safe” space in which they are encouraged to remember and speak of the impact of earlier periods of violence on them, their families, and their communities. The course atmosphere also makes it possible to speak openly, and free of possible future consequences, in a group (often made up of others who have gone through similar experiences) about challenges that they are currently facing such as: increases in family violence, abuses on the part of the military which continue in some zones in Peru. For some, this may be their first opportunity to express these feelings.

- ***It builds networks of friendship, trust and commitment among a diverse group of individuals..*** Through the training lawyers, teachers, municipal employees, policemen, and community leaders (whose education ranges from a masters degree to less than three years of primary school) who--in many cases would never have had a chance to meet and interact--learn together in an open and supportive atmosphere that practices all of the fundamental principles of democracy and human rights. In so doing, they break down stereotypes and barriers of mistrust and begin to build friendships. During the course, and in the extensive follow-up subsequent to the course, every effort is made to strengthen the friendships and bonds of trust that have been forged at the course through

establishing networks—among course graduates who work in the same communities, graduates at the regional level, as well as at the national level.

## ***A STUDY TO IDENTIFY THE IMPACT OF IPEDEHP'S PROGRAM TO TRAIN COMMUNITY LEADERS***

### ***Rationale for carrying out the study***

In August of 1997, during a visit to Lima where I gave a presentation on the evaluation of civic education programs at a conference on civic education (I had visited IPEDEHP and seen some of their materials during a trip to Lima six months before in February of 1997), I approached the President of IPEDEHP and offered to do a case study of their program. I had three motivations for making this offer:

- (1) As a psychologist who has worked in Latin America and Africa in the area of human resources development for over 20 years, I felt I had a great deal to learn from IPEDEHP. In particular, I was intrigued with the way IPEDEHP deliberately emphasizes the affective in its training.
- (2) I wanted to try out a methodology for assessing the impact of a program such as IPEDEHP's that focused on leadership and empowerment that, to my knowledge, had not been applied before;
- (3) Finally, and as a person deeply committed to development and to disseminating good practices, I wanted to write up the IPEDEHP case in order to share the lessons learned from the IPEDEHP approach with the broader international community.

In the case of the latter, I was very clear up front with IPEDEHP that the case study would have to be balanced. If I found major constraints in the program I would be compelled to share them with the broader international community as part of the lessons learned from the IPEDEHP experience.

IPEDEHP eagerly took me up on my offer. As with many NGOs working at the grass roots level, their energies have been focused on “doing” with little time left for recording their experience. USAID/Peru, which was financing the community leaders program<sup>2</sup> and under a great deal of pressure from USAID headquarters to show the impact of its programs in the field, happily agreed to finance my travel expenses to and from Peru, my travel and living expenses while in Peru, as well as funding for the printing and dissemination of the case study. I donated my time to carry out the field study.

### ***Study methodology***

I used two complementary approaches to collect the field data for this study:

- During the month of May, 1998 and then again in September, 1998, I traveled to three regions of Peru<sup>3</sup> where I interviewed 20 of the nearly 900 community leaders that have been trained under this program, their spouses and children (where available), and from 3-4 individuals in the community who had been affected by the community leader after he/she received the training.<sup>4</sup> In selecting the

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<sup>2</sup> IPEDEHP, since it was established in 1985 has received financing from 10 donors, mostly from Europe, to carry out its teacher training programs. This financing for the community leaders program was the first financing it had sought and received from the U.S. government.

<sup>3</sup> The highlands that had been affected by the terrorism of the Shining Path and the military, the jungles that had been affected by the terrorism of the Tupac Amaru guerrilla movement, narco-traffickers, and the military, and a region that had not been affected by the violence.

<sup>4</sup> A total of approximately 100 interviews.

sample and in doing the subsequent data analysis I used three variables: gender, geographic location (highlands, jungle, areas that did and did not experience violence), and size of community (from 5,000-8,000 to 500,000). I also collected, and used in the analysis, data on: age, education level, occupation.

The field study methodology consisted of an open-ended protocol in which I focused on three topics: (1) what the community leaders (and the people who they, in turn, trained when they returned to their communities) thought of the training program; (2) what they had done with what they learned once they returned to their communities; and (3) the impact of the program on the community leaders themselves, their families and people who they influenced upon returning to their communities after having been trained. During the interviews I attempted to record verbatim the rich testimonies that I received.

In order to do the analysis, I grouped the testimonies around key interview themes (e.g. views on the training received, personal impact), coded the data and came up with frequencies of occurrence of phenomena that emerged in the data (for example, in the case of personal impact: frequency with which people mentioned a change in tolerance and humility, self-esteem, new knowledge). In summarizing the findings I complemented the frequencies with the rich testimonies that were used as a basis for coding the frequencies.

- At the end of May, 1998 (after collecting data on 16 of the 20 community leaders) I attended as a participant the three day course that the community leaders received. My principal reason for attending the course as a participant (I had originally planned to attend as an observer) was that I wanted to see if I experienced the same impacts that I heard repeatedly as I carried out the interviews, especially with women.

In addition, I spent time observing IPEDEHP staff during their daily work during what turned out to be four trips to Peru over a 10 month period. I also interviewed 45 people within the human rights and human rights education communities within and outside of Peru that knew IPEDEHP in order to get a sense of their image of IPEDEHP. Finally, after I finished the write up of the case study, I submitted a draft to thirty one individuals within and outside of Peru (including several of the community leaders who participated in the study) for their review. Their comments and suggestions were excellent and I incorporated most into the rewrite of the study which was published in February of 1999 and distributed internationally.

### ***Study Findings***

#### ***1. What the community leaders thought of the training and how they applied it upon returning to their communities***

The field study confirmed what IPEDEHP and USAID already knew: that the community leaders were very positive about the course they received from IPEDEHP.

- 15 of the 20 community leaders that I interviewed spoke of the participatory methodologies. In particular, they loved the games and the dynamics which were, for the most part, new to them;
- 11 were particularly impressed with the heterogeneity of the group; and the opportunity it afforded them to learn from others who came from different backgrounds;
- 12 spoke very highly of the trainers: their credibility, their ability to relate to the community leaders, to make each person believe they were valued.

**WHAT THREE COMMUNITY LEADERS HAD TO SAY ABOUT THE TRAINING THEY RECEIVED FROM IPEDEHP**

- **A single Aymara women from a small town near the border of Bolivia who reached fifth grade:** *“They came from different places. I was the only one wearing a pollera. There was a lawyer, an engineer, others. I was uncomfortable at the beginning, but as the workshop continued I lost my fear. I like the variety of people at the workshop. It’s necessary to enter into an area that is not yours to lose fear, to be a leader. There were people from other institutions, other languages. It was interesting to be with Quechua people. We could exchange experiences.”*
- **A sociologist who is a teacher in a secondary school in a large city:** *“The workshop was a novelty. It made us participate directly, form our own concepts. The teachers weren’t the only ones that talked. We all talked. A heterogeneous and dynamic group. I could see the common people, see that they understood what democracy is. It made us become more sensitive to others.”*
- **A young man, himself formerly a child laborer, working in a “comedor” for child laborers:** *“Before I went to training courses to listen, as an observer. In the IPEDEHP course the experience was totally different. We danced, we learned playing games, we sang. You don’t want to sleep or go to the bathroom...Every day I got up earlier in order to go to the course. I met people of such high quality at the course: mayors and aldermen. We spoke about the country’s problems and we came up with solutions. When I see that there are others that are concerned I have hope that our country can change.”*

The study also confirmed something else that IPEDEHP and USAID already knew: the strong multiplier effect after the training.

- Soon after returning to their communities all 20 community leaders began to train others in human rights, democracy, and citizen participation using the interactive methodologies they learned at the course.
- Eight had organized/participated in radio and television programs that promote human rights.
- Twelve had organized and carried out human rights and democracy marches and campaigns.
- Six, who lived in communities where there was no place for the populace to go to have their rights defended, had established human rights committees and 4 were in the process of starting human rights committees.
- Two were counseling people in jail on their rights.
- Five wanted to start a shelter in their community for battered women and children.
- All were giving informal counsel to their friends and neighbors on what their rights are and how to defend them.

What came as a surprise to IPEDEHP, the National Human Rights Coordinator, the Human Rights Ombudsman’s office and USAID was:

- That the first thing that most of the community leaders did upon returning to their communities was to play the human rights and democracy games they learned at the course with their families (11 of 13 cases). This resulted in a rich multiplier effect: through their younger children (many of whom shared their new found knowledge in human rights and democracy with their classmates in school and their playmates) and through their spouses and older children (several of whom sharing their new knowledge on human rights and democracy with others in their work places).
- The strong commitment on the part of the community leaders to continuing sharing with others what they learned over time: those who had attended one of IPEDEHP’s first training courses for

community leaders two years before were still actively sharing what they learned with others in their communities and counseling them on their rights.

***SOME EXAMPLES OF WHAT THE COMMUNITY LEADERS WHO PARTICIPATED  
IN THE STUDY HAVE DONE WITH THEIR TRAINING***

- ***A lawyer who heads a DEMUNA (municipal office that attends the needs of children, adolescents, and women) in a large city who took the course a year ago:***
  - played the human rights and democracy games with her children
  - has done eight complete replicas of the course;
  - participates in a weekly radio program on human rights;
  - has organized and participated in several human rights campaigns;
  - has given many short talks on human rights;
  - started a "School for Parents" where human rights was a key theme.
- ***Two housewives (one with 5 years of primary education, the other complete secondary education) from a small city who took the course two years ago*** work on a voluntary basis full time disseminating what they learned and have gained respect in their community for their efforts. They:
  - played the human rights and democracy games with their families
  - trained 45 human rights promoters in their community;
  - established a Human Rights Committee that attends 15 cases/day three days a week;
  - visited communities to listen to their complaints and counsel them on their rights;
  - visited prisoners in jail to counsel them on their rights;
  - have been sought out by town legal authorities to corroborate possible rights violations of the poor;
  - give short presentations on human rights;
  - appear in radio and TV programs to raise human rights issues;
  - are, at the request of the director and teachers at their children's elementary school, training them on human rights;
  - want to open a shelter for battered women and children.

***2. Impact of the training program on the community leaders, their families, and people whose lives they affected upon returning to their communities***

What also came as a big surprise to all four actors as well as myself was the strong personal impacts of the training on a number of the community leaders, their families, and the individuals who they, in turn, affected upon returning to their communities.

Among the personal impacts that I was able to detect through the interviews:

- Especially among female leaders: an increase in tolerance and self-esteem (11 of 20 cases - 9 of 11 women, 2 of 9 men); for 5 of the 11 women I interviewed, the IPEDEHP course was a turning point in their lives.

In the words of a community leader with secondary education living in the jungle, before attending the training course she knew nothing about human rights: *"My life changed completely. In my home I learned to value myself as a woman. My self-esteem went up. I learned how to maintain equality in my house. I was able to achieve better dialogue with my husband. The Maria (fictitious name) of before tended to be angry, was proud, impatient, wanted to do more than her husband, was machista with her children, did not have her self-esteem well placed. The Maria of today has overcome machismo and pride, she is more patient with her children and her husband, she thinks more of her children's future, she understands that it is thanks to the efforts of her husband that she can work as a volunteer in human rights. Many people admire us, even*

*though we are humble they respect us because they know we concern ourselves with other people's problems. When you don't have your self-esteem well placed you grow up in fear, you cannot face problems. Acquiring self-esteem one can dialogue with others. Without self-esteem we are not capable of dialoging, listening. I have learned to like myself."*

- Five of the community leaders (4 women, 1 man) reported that, as a result of the training, they improved their communication with family members and that they were more tolerant and understanding toward them.

In the words of a woman with five years of primary education who, before attending the training professed to know nothing about human rights: "*The Rosa (fictitious name) of yesterday was egotistical, authoritarian with her children, 'machista'. I thought I was the only person that existed. I never valued my husband. Today I am another person. I have confidence with my husband and children as if we were brothers and sisters. We are all equal.*"

- All of the community leaders put what they learned at the training course into practice defending their own rights.

One of three examples given by a woman from a rural area in the highlands, who has five years of primary education and who, before the course, knew nothing about her rights. "*The course helped me a great deal in gaining custody of my daughter. Before I didn't know what the law said. After taking the course, I knew how to ask the right questions. One day after the course the father of my daughter came to take her away. I said 'What law permits you to take away my daughter?' I went to a lawyer. The lawyer said that children have the right to their nationality. He also said that single mothers have the right to be respected. The same for their daughters. He did not charge me for the consultation. The lawyer asked me, 'How do you know your rights? Are you studying law?' I felt like I knew everything. I won custody of my daughter."*

- The net effect of being able to successfully apply what they learned at the training course (be it giving multiplier courses, organizing and carrying out radio and television programs and marches, forming human rights committees) was an increase in their stature as leaders in their communities.

In the words of the same woman: "*Many women come to me for advice. They think I know everything. 'I don't know anything', I tell them. 'I receive advice from Puno'. I now feel stronger as a leader.*"

- Of particular interest (and this came up repeatedly in the interviews) was a decrease in physical violence: a number of the women who receive training reported that they now did not permit their husbands to beat them; several volunteered that they had learned not to beat their children but instead how important it was to treat them as equals.

Five women that I interviewed informed me that the training course provided them with an opportunity to learn their own rights as women. Several admitted that, before the training course, they didn't know that they had the same rights as their husbands. Upon returning from the training course, some told me that they began to openly demand their right to be treated equal. They didn't tolerate any more physical abuse. They left their houses to give training courses and to attend meetings on human rights and democracy, something that they had never done before. They insisted that their husbands participate in household chores, again something they had never done before. Some of the same women indicated that, as a result of the training, they realized they were treating their husbands in a "machistic" fashion.

- These findings with the leaders (increased knowledge of rights; less physical abuse from spouses and towards children, increases in self-esteem among women) also emerged in the interviews with individuals who had received training from the community leaders.

**TESTIMONIES OF INDIVIDUALS TRAINED BY THE SOCIAL LEADERS REGARDING THE TRAINING THEY RECEIVED AND ITS IMPACT ON THEM**

- An illiterate quechua women from the highlands who has been abandoned by her husband:

*“My husband used to hit me. He didn’t bring me food. Now he doesn’t hit me. He came to hit me but I said no.”*

- The president of a women’s club in the jungle with incomplete secondary education who, after receiving training from the social leaders, became a member of the Human Rights Committee in her community:

*“It was something new. Before we didn’t know anything about our rights. We suffered personal and social abuses. The course dynamics helped us to relate to one another. We became closer, we trust one another. At the end I felt different, more motivated. I felt more protected as I knew how to defend my rights. I told my husband about what I had learned in the course and he didn’t like it. At the beginning he didn’t want me to go to the Human Rights Committee meetings, but I didn’t stop going. I always speak of our rights. Little by little he is changing. We no longer abuse our children. We speak to them as equals.”*

- An indigenous woman from the jungle with five years of primary education:

*“I learned to defend my rights with my husband. I have been abused by my husband. Now I hardly experience either physical or psychological abuse. When there is communication there is understanding. Before I did not know that my children had rights. I know now that I must counsel them. Before I did not counsel them. As a woman, I now know that we can’t do anything if we sit back. We have to leave our houses.”*

Since I had neither the time nor the resources to do a more in depth study regarding impacts at the community level, I had to limit myself to reports from leaders and others in the communities that I interviewed regarding their perceptions of changes in the community as a result of the work that the IPEDEHP trained community leaders had done in their communities. Given the importance of this theme, I highly recommend a specific study focusing on this topic.

Listed below are some impressions regarding community impacts based on opinions that I received from community leaders and others I interviewed in their communities:

- People more conscious of their rights.
- People know where they can go to be assisted when their rights are violated.
- More women defending their rights.
- Fewer cases of violence against women.
- Innocent people released from jail.
- Reduction in complaints among students of being poorly treated by their professors.
- Development of the ability, with success, to confront local authorities who were violating their rights.
- Establishment of good relations with local authorities, increasing possibilities for cooperation in people’s defense when there are rights violations.

Regarding the last bullet, a District Attorney of a town in the jungle where two community leaders trained by IPEDEHP established a Human Rights Committee observed the following about the two community leaders:

*“They play an important role. They are the linkage between people of a low level of culture and ourselves. The community leaders identify with them, they get out to their small communities. These ladies, in a totally disinterested fashion, bring the concerns of these individuals to our attention. They do not abandon unjust cases. They tell the truth. It is very helpful to have them as allies.”*

### **CHALLENGES FACED BY IPEDEHP THAT OTHER GROUPS SIMILAR TO IPEDEHP WILL FACE**

Working in an area as sensitive as educating in human rights is not easy. When IPEDEHP was established, educating in human rights was seen by some sectors--within the Peruvian government, the military and civil society--as something that supported the terrorists. The terrorists saw education in human rights as threatening to their philosophy. They accused human rights educators of being the “pillows of the government” or “agents of the American imperialists”. At that time the challenge for IPEDEHP and similar groups was to walk the thin line of defending human rights in the midst of accusations from both sides.

While there has been progress over the years, working in human rights education in Peru still engenders fear and suspicion. As happened with IPEDEHP in its early years, some of the community leaders--when they return to their communities and start applying what they learned at the course--run into suspicion and opposition from local authorities. While most are able to overcome the fears of local authorities and, in many instances, gain them as their allies, some continue to encounter difficulties with local authorities.

Added to the above are other challenges, among them:

- Total dependency on the part of IPEDEHP of outside sources of financing which, if this funding were to disappear, would threaten the future existence of IPEDEHP and other groups like it.
- The need to follow-up on/provide more in-depth information to the community leaders after they take the course and apply what they have learned in their communities. This requires financial resources and constant attention.
- On the part of the community leaders, the constant struggle to obtain resources locally (funding for local travel, funding for course materials, etc.) in order to carry out their multiplier activities. In some instances community leaders are successful in obtaining donations from local businesses as well as assistance from the counterpart that selects them. Others are not as fortunate and, as a result, are limited in what they can do.
- More and more community leaders trained by IPEDEHP are engaging in activities that go well beyond training (such as establishing Human Rights Committees and shelters). IPEDEHP, as a training institution, is not set up (other than with training) to help them implement these activities.
- Increasing demand for training from IPEDEHP from a variety of sectors, which IPEDEHP is not currently equipped to meet and which, if met, would take IPEDEHP away from its principal focus of providing services to poor people who are least apt to know what their rights are and how to defend them.
- IPEDEHP is constantly evaluating its training process and using this information to update its programs. However, like other human rights education groups worldwide, IPEDEHP is not set up, on an ongoing basis, to assess the impact of its training programs as part of its ongoing monitoring function.

- IPEDEHP has some important decisions to take about its future. Should it dedicate its efforts primarily to doing training or should it evolve toward becoming an institution that primarily designs and pilots new materials and approaches which are implemented by other institutions?

***WHY SUPPORT IN PERU AND ELSEWHERE PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE TRAINING IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY THAT APPLY STRATEGIES AND METHODOLOGIES SIMILAR TO THOSE OF IPEDEHP?***

The field data show that clearly there is something happening as a result of the IPEDEHP experience that is having an impact on a number of the people who attend the course and that this, in turn, is impacting on the lives of others who they interact with after attending the course—be they family members or members of their communities. Since it is not a comparative study it does not attempt to compare IPEDEHP’s approach and methodology with those of other programs that provide training in human rights and democracy.

The question, therefore, becomes: Why support in Peru and elsewhere programs that provide training in human rights and democracy that apply strategies and methodologies similar to those of IPEDEHP?

Several answers to this question are provided below:

- ***The IPEDEHP program engenders a sustained commitment and, in so doing, assures a strong multiplier effect.*** As is referred to previously, for a number of the participants, particularly the women, the training course may be the first time in their lives that they have been treated with dignity and respect, as co-equals. This—combined with the information they obtain at the course on human rights and democracy, the interactive methodologies, and the practical and easy to apply tool kit that they take with them—creates, among many of the participants, a strong commitment to apply what they have learned at the IPEDEHP training program in training others and carrying out other activities once they return to their communities. And not just once but over and over again.
- ***The approach followed by IPEDEHP is an effective means of building democracy by strengthening social capital:*** One of the strengths of the way IPEDEHP operates is that it builds and nurtures networks of friendship, trust and commitment among and between individuals as well as among and between organizations. IPEDEHP “gives” (by sharing its training materials and methodologies with individuals and organizations in these networks) and IPEDEHP “receives” (support from members of these networks in identifying community leaders and accompanying them after they return from the IPEDEHP training course). It is these networks of trust that are identified by Robert Putnam (“*Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*”) and Francis Fukuyama (“*Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*”) as being fundamental to building social capital, which in turn is a critical basis for building democracies.
- ***IPEDEHP’s methodology is particularly valuable in societies that have been through or are going through major conflict.*** IPEDEHP incorporates an affective element into its training which for some participants can be quite therapeutic. The interactive activities (games, dynamics, role plays) permit participants to relive the impact of violence on themselves, their families and their communities. The atmosphere created in the course also permits participants to speak openly about the impacts of violence that is currently taking place in their communities. In addition (as mentioned above), the IPEDEHP methodology helps to rebuild trust networks that have often been severely damaged as a result of violence.

- ***IPEDEHP's methodology is also critical in a society such as Peru where the government violates the rights of citizens through its legal system*** . IPEDEHP training encourages reflection. It encourages participants to adopt a critical attitude and, in doing so, to express what they think. This is particularly critical in the Peru of today where human rights violations continue but on a more subtle plane. The government has passed a number of laws and legislation which compromise the rights of Peruvian citizens without going through an open consultation process. As I was told by a prominent political scientist in Peru, it is precisely the type of training that organizations like IPEDEHP provide that is key for today's context. Through the training people are educated on what their rights are. This training also gives them the tools they need to demand that their rights be taken into consideration.
- ***IPEDEHP's approach provides an excellent example of paving the way for reform by starting at the bases***. Experience is showing that reform is apt to be more lasting if it starts at the bases rather than being imposed from above. A particular strength of the way IPEDEHP works is that it helps forge linkages between PVOs and community groups and the state. Workshop participants include community leaders, representatives of NGOs, representatives of municipalities and other state entities located in the zone where the training is being offered. Little by little a fabric is being woven in Peru composed of people with the same ideals who are organizing to claim their rights—be they from the police, the military, municipal authorities, or the national government.
- ***Finally, and particularly empowering, the type of training/education that IPEDEHP offers is the vital link between lack of knowledge of one's rights and one's ability to defend one's rights***. Through the training provided by institutions such as IPEDEHP, people learn what their rights are--as spelled out in international instruments (the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Children's Rights Convention, etc.), the Peruvian Constitution and local laws--and where to go when they are violated. They not only replicate the training course they received but they go the next step: forming human rights committees, defending their own rights, giving people advice on how to defend their rights, promoting rights through the mass media. For individuals who have themselves just been through major traumas as a result of war or violence, the ability to take action to avoid future violation of their own rights and the ability to help others deal with rights violations can be an important part of the healing process.

In the words of the legal advisor in one of the Vicarages in Puno: *“Legal defense is a consequence of the education in human rights that a person has received. If the education level is low, people have low self-esteem and don't go to institutions for help. Education is fundamental. It permits people to help us in defending their rights. If people didn't know their rights and that we exist we couldn't work.”*

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