



PSYDEH'S WORK IS NECESSARY

Local citizens need our work. 83% of women surveyed state that they NEED training on economic, tech and leadership skills, including how to collaborate to make sustainable impact.¹

Mexico needs our program. Poverty rates and inequality are high and increasing due to climate change and the global pandemic, despite a rising social development budget. It would take 120 years to reduce the gap between the poorest and the richest in Mexico.² National development programs need to improve.

The global debate on how to reduce inequality and to defeat poverty necessitates our on-the-ground approach.³ William Easterly, a development economist, argues that the data is clear: successful, sustainable transformation of communities must be ground-up (community-led), forward thinking, and oriented around economic and political rights.⁴

Easterly's "Free Development" requires free individuals exercising such rights freely. This leads to a successful problem-solving system that encourages broad community involvement and consistent, respectful engagement between citizens and government.⁵

There is a nascent move towards community-led development (and philanthropy),⁶ yet top-down development implemented by "outside experts" remains the dominant development theory.⁷ These efforts are based on an illusion: inequality is a technical problem amenable to technical solutions best implemented by outside actors.

Technical problems of the marginalized like food insecurity, illiteracy, or inadequate access to potable water are real. They demand attention from those on the ground as well as national and international experts. But they are only symptoms.

The root cause of gender, social and economic inequality between the rich and poor, in democratic Mexico (and other democracies) is something different. It is a systemic imbalance in power due in large part to a citizenry unaware of their agency, their potential human development reality, their civic responsibilities, and their inherent abilities—as individuals and in rights-based, solidarity-oriented collaborations.⁸

The Brazilian thinker-educator Paolo Freire and Mexican storyteller Emma Godoy show us with their work that "whoever teaches learns, and whoever learns teaches." USA activist Ella Baker

¹ See PSYDEH women staff and partners explaining as much in this 2022-2023 impact [video](#) and this [video](#).

² Viri Ríos, "[De un lado | del otro](#)", El País, 2023; Leticia Merino Perez, as reported by UNAM "[Cerrar brecha entre ricos y pobres en México llevaría 120 años](#)", 2019.

³ Nicholas Eberstadt, "[Our Miserable 21st Century](#)", Commentary, 2017.

⁴ Howard French, "[Spare the advice](#)", NY Times, 2014.; see also David Kinley, "[Human rights can help fix the economy. Here's how](#)", World Economic Forum, 2018.

⁵ Mandy McAnally, "[Community-driven solutions to crises are key to lasting change](#)", Devex, September 2015.

⁶ Alison Carlman, "[10 Things we've learned about community-led philanthropy](#)", Global Giving, 2020.

⁷ Richard P. Wells Viesca, "[Mexico Facing the Future](#)", The Wilson Center, 2020.

⁸ See [research](#) by Oxfam with support from London School of Economics AFSEE's COVID-19 Rapid Response [Fund](#).



agrees, “[o]ppressed people, whatever their level of formal education, have the ability to understand and interpret the world around them, to see the world for what it is, and move to transform it.”

This is especially true for women. “Participation is not only a role for men, but also for women, especially with their wisdom, which can be very useful [for community development],” says Mexican Indigenous activist and healer María de Jesús “Marichuy” Patricio Martínez. PSYDEH agrees and walks with Adrienne Maree Brown in going further: we believe in focusing on process and small-scale modeling of the systems we want to see in the world, building strong community-based relationships, and trusting that the right strategies will emerge as solutions to specific local needs.⁹

Tom Nichols, Professor Emeritus of National Security Affairs, U.S. Naval War College, writes “[i]n the absence of informed citizens ... more knowledgeable administrative and intellectual elites do in fact take over the daily direction of the state and society.”¹⁰

Faced with the harsh realities of marginalization, it is not surprising that vulnerable women (and men) struggle to organize themselves and each other around their specific rights. It is also not surprising that in facing this struggle, the state or foreign actors step in to fill the void often without transparency, local accountability or sustainable development as goals.

Despite deep inherent knowledge of community and place, marginalized citizens struggle to create solutions to their problems or, as important, lobby government and the private sector to help them create the generative environment in which political and social systems work on their behalf.

History, Easterly states, is clear: “the cause of [these problems] is the unchecked power of the state ... the absence of political and economic rights, the absence of a free political and economic system” where informed citizens negotiate with the government on smart solutions to problems.

Easterly suggests therefore that development actors and citizens need, now, to get ideas on freedom-promotion right before taking more ill-conceived action.¹¹ Nichols expands on this by reminding experts to remember who they serve. “[They] need to remember, always, that they are the servants of a democratic society and a republican government. Their citizen masters, however, must equip themselves not just with education but also with the kind of civic virtue that keeps them involved in the running of their own country.”

University of Michigan’s Philosophy Department chair and expert on ethics and economics Elizabeth Anderson agrees¹² on the importance of real-time collaboration between citizens, government, and the private sector. “We shouldn’t commit ourselves to an ideal [political economic] system . . . We must solve [inequality] problems collaboratively, in the moment, using society’s ears and eyes and the best tools we can find.”¹³

⁹ See adrienne marie brown, “[principles of emergent processes in facilitation](#)”, 2013 ; see also “[Es el tiempo de la gente: María de Jesús Patricio Martínez](#)”, Cultural Survival, 2017.

¹⁰ Tom Nicholls, “[How America lost faith in expertise](#)” Foreign Affairs, 2017.

¹¹ Willam Easterly, “[Response to reviewers on “The Tyranny of Experts”](#)”, 2015

¹² Elizabeth Anderson, [Value in ethics and economics](#), Harvard University Press; Reprint edition (August 11, 1995)

¹³ Nathan Heller, [The Philosopher Redefining Inequality](#), New Yorker, 2018.



For the reasons explored by Freire, Godoy, Baker, Marichuy, and Brown, PSYDEH creates space for marginalized people to own their power in creating their own freedom as they define it themselves. How? We facilitate the dialogue that Easterly and Nichols identify as necessary. And we strategically educate, organize and support women to decide how best to use technology (or other communication tools), to play their necessary role in the rights-based collaborative problem-solving Anderson suggests is critical.

One deep truth: women want to learn and work, despite myriad challenges to their efforts. They want to and do make smart demands of government.¹⁴ They want to use their economic and political rights to create short-and long-term solutions to problems, i.e., to drive their own economic development through technology.¹⁵

Our agency-and solidarity-building programming is designed to meet local women's demands. We strengthen leadership capacity, understanding of rights and civic virtues and networks of economic collectives. We provide access to the tools they need for maximum digital inclusion in the local, national, and global marketplaces. We accompany them in the difficult early and middle periods when challenges are the most daunting. Lastly, while an intentionally slow process, we now know that our model, designed to scale countrywide and across the globe, produces sustainable engagement and results. Our ambitious work seeks to offer not only a way forward on achieving the UN 2030 Sustainable Development goals,¹⁶ but also what Brown calls "a road of paradigm shifting that seeks to salve both current social and economic injuries, but also prepare a sustainable method of being for seven generations to come."

¹⁴ PSYDEH women partners' [late-2022 declaration](#). These proclamations are stand alone documents as well as an annual update to the women's unprecedented regional development [agenda](#) organized into seven chapters, which itself is a distillation of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

¹⁵ See PSYDEH's short-term impact focused, direct service "[Cuando Amanece](#)" programming, the basis for 2022-2024 long-term-impact-oriented economic solidarity network "[Red Sierra Madre](#)" and digital inclusion solution "[Tec para Todos](#)" programming.

¹⁶ UN 2030 Sustainable Development [goals](#).