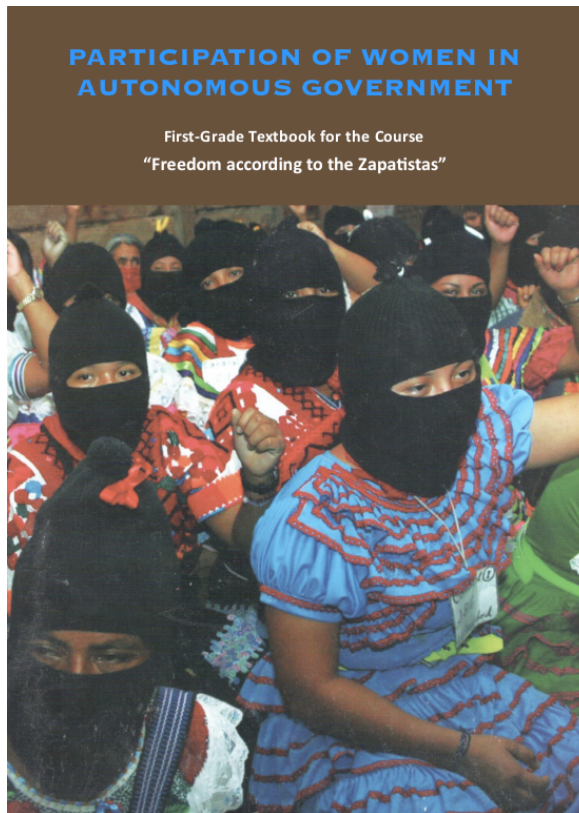


# Participation of Women in Autonomous Government

First-Grade Textbook for the Course “Freedom according to the Zapatistas”

Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional



2014

# Contents

<b>Caracol I: Mother of the Caracoles, Sea of Our Dreams</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
Eloísa (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ San Pedro Michoacán)	7
Questions . . . . .	9
<b>Difficulties with the Participation of Women in the Work</b>	<b>11</b>
Nabil (Member of the Autonomous Council. MAREZ Tierra y Libertad) . . . . .	11
Marisol (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ San Pedro de Michoacán) . . . . .	11
Questions . . . . .	14
<b>Caracol II: Resistance and Rebellion For Humanity</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>21</b>
Guadalupe (Education Promoter. Monterrey Region) . . . . .	21
<b>Participation of Women in the Junta de Buen Gobierno</b>	<b>22</b>
Leticia (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno) . . . . .	22
<b>Participation of Women in the Autonomous Municipalities</b>	<b>24</b>
Silvia (Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ Magdalena de la Paz) . . . . .	24
<b>Participation of the Compañeras in Other Positions</b>	<b>25</b>
Silvia (Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ Magdalena de la Paz) . . . . .	25
<b>Participation of Women in the Various Work Areas</b>	<b>26</b>
Verónica (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ San Andrés Sakam- chen de los Pobres) . . . . .	26
Questions . . . . .	27
<b>Exercise of the Revolutionary Women's Law</b>	<b>28</b>
Yolanda (Education Promoter. MAREZ Magdalena de la Paz) . . . . .	28
Guadalupe (Education Promoter. Monterrey Region) . . . . .	30
<b>Proposal for the Expansion of the Revolutionary Women's Law</b>	<b>32</b>
Claudia (Member of the Autonomous Council. MAREZ Magdalena de la Paz) . . . . .	32
Another Compañera . . . . .	34

Questions . . . . .	37
<b>Difficulties with the Participation of Women in the Work</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Caracol III: Resistance Toward A New Dawn</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>43</b>
Andrea (Health Coordinator. MAREZ Francisco Gómez) . . . . .	43
<b>Participation of Women in the Struggle and Autonomy</b>	<b>44</b>
Ana Yolanda (Education Promoter. MAREZ San Manuel) . . . . .	44
<b>Women's Rights</b>	<b>45</b>
Carolina (Education Coordinator. MAREZ Ricardo Flores Magón) . . . . .	45
Susana (Sexual and Reproductive Health Coordinator. MAREZ Francisco Gómez) . . .	45
Manuela (Education Trainer. Francisco Villa) . . . . .	45
Celina (Coordinator of the Three Areas. MAREZ San Manuel) . . . . .	46
María Luisa (Education Coordinator. MAREZ Francisco Gómez) . . . . .	46
Claudia (Coordinator of the Three Areas. MAREZ San Manuel) . . . . .	46
María (Coordinator of the Three Areas. MAREZ Francisco Villa) . . . . .	47
Andrea (Health Coordinator. MAREZ Francisco Gómez) . . . . .	47
Patricia (Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno) . . . . .	47
Ana Yolanda (Education Promoter. MAREZ San Manuel) . . . . .	48
Questions . . . . .	48
<b>Caracol IV: Whirlwind of Our Words</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>52</b>
Claudia (Support Base. MAREZ 17 de Noviembre) . . . . .	52
<b>Participation of the Compañeras in Autonomous Government</b>	<b>54</b>
Alejandra (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ Lucio Cabañas) .	54
<b>Work of the Compañeras in the Junta de Buen Gobierno</b>	<b>55</b>
Amelia (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ Lucio Cabañas) . . .	55
<b>Participation of the Compañeras in the MAREZ</b>	<b>57</b>
Andrea (Zone Commission. MAREZ Lucio Cabañas) . . . . .	57
Questions . . . . .	58
<b>Participation of Women as Local Authorities</b>	<b>60</b>
Verónica (MAREZ Comandanta Ramona) . . . . .	60
Questions . . . . .	60

<b>Participation of Women as Commission Delegates</b>	<b>62</b>
Alejandra (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ Lucio Cabañas) .	62
<b>How the Revolutionary Women's Law is Being Exercised</b>	<b>63</b>
Amelia (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ Lucio Cabañas) . . .	63
<b>Difficulties which the Compañeras Have Encountered in the Various Bodies of Autonomous Government</b>	<b>65</b>
Andrea (Zone Commission. MAREZ Lucio Cabañas) . . . . .	65
Another Compañera . . . . .	65
<b>Caracol V: Which Speaks for Everyone</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>73</b>
Ana (Education Trainer. MAREZ El Trabajo) . . . . .	73
<b>Participation of the Compañeras in the Various Levels of Autonomous Government and Work Areas</b>	<b>75</b>
Paulina (Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ La Paz) . . . . .	75
Ángeles (Education Coordinator in the Zone. MAREZ Vicente Guerrero) . . . . .	75
Rosalía (MAREZ Coordinator. MAREZ Rubén Jaramillo) . . . . .	75
Karina (Women's Commission. MAREZ El Trabajo) . . . . .	76
Dora (Women's Commission. MAREZ Acabalná) . . . . .	76
Alondra (Member of the Women's Commission. Jacinto Canek Region) . . . . .	76
Questions . . . . .	77
<b>Revolutionary Women's Law</b>	<b>78</b>
Valentina (Education Promoter) . . . . .	78
Ana (Education Trainer. MAREZ El Trabajo) . . . . .	79
Valentina (Education Promoter) . . . . .	81
Ana (Education Trainer. MAREZ El Trabajo) . . . . .	81
Valentina (Education Promoter) . . . . .	82
Ana (Education Trainer. MAREZ El Trabajo) . . . . .	84
<b>Difficulties and Obstacles which Women have Confronted in the Various Bodies of Autonomous Government</b>	<b>86</b>
Adamari (Member of the Autonomous Council. MAREZ Rubén Jaramillo) . . . . .	86
Ana (Education Trainer. MAREZ El Trabajo) . . . . .	86

**Caracol I: Mother of the Caracoles,  
Sea of Our Dreams**

La Realidad

# Introduction

## **Eloísa (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ San Pedro Michoacán)**

In our zone we as compañeras did not participate, our compañeras from earlier on did not have that idea that we as women can participate, we had the thought that we women were only good for the home or for taking care of the children, making food. Maybe it is from the same ignorance that there is in capitalism that it was what we had in our heads, but also we as women felt the fear of not being able to do things outside of the home and nor did we have that space on the part of the compañeras, we did not have that freedom to participate, to talk, as if it was thought that men were more than us.

When we were under the rule of our fathers they did not give us that freedom to go out well the machismo that was lived before was great. Maybe it was not because the compañeros wanted it to be like this, but because they had the idea that capitalism itself or the system itself put in our heads. Also the idea that the compañero is not used to doing jobs within the home, taking care of the children, washing the clothes, making the food, is what makes it difficult for the compañera to be able to leave to do her work, because for the compañero it seems difficult to take care of the children so that his compañera may leave.

Before, the compañeras lived under the rule of their fathers and since we have respect for our fathers, they said if their daughters could do the work or not, the women did not go where they wanted to do the work. If our fathers tell us, “you will not go,” sometimes we respect them, because we have in our heads that we should respect our fathers. There are times in which our fathers do not let us leave, they think that upon being taken from our houses we are not going to go to the work that corresponds to us, but we are going to do other things and then get involved in problems, the fathers think that they are going to have to fix our various problems that we have as women. Sometimes that also is the idea of our fathers or of the husbands of the compañeras who already have a partner.

But then, when our organization came, we began to see the various work areas that we have as an organization of the EZLN and we compañeras began to perform various jobs. In the beginning it was difficult for us, it was not easy, since we have in our heads that we as women cannot it was difficult for us to begin as compañeras.

In our zone in the beginning it began with the association of municipalities, since that time one compañera participated, there that compañera was representing, almost the majority was compañeros, but that compañera was confronting the work that belonged to her and that compañera is the same one who was a member of our Junta de Buen Gobierno, she was the first woman from our zone who occupied that position, she participated and was there for the same time that the compañeros were there in that period of the Junta de Buen Gobierno, she finished her work. Maybe the compañera felt alone but there were more of us compañeras who still did

not have the courage to participate, maybe because we felt that we did not have the ability as compañeras or because we did not have that courage to participate, to talk, to decide, to state opinions, that is what seems difficult for us as compañeras.

In other periods of our Junta there were already more of us compañeras who worked there. But also there are compañeras who they choose for a position and are there, but being in the work sometimes it seems difficult and they think that they are not going to be able, they feel unable to do that work, that is why on some occasions they leave the work thrown-out and go. It also occurs that we name young compañeras, but we were discussing a little that putting young women in the work sometimes as young people they do not make themselves responsible in our work. Sometimes being within the work the compañeras get married, if the compañera goes off with a compa sometimes he gives her the freedom for her to continue with her work and continue participating, but sometimes many of our compañeras have gone off with those who are not compañeros, they go off with the priistas or with other organizations and then they leave the work thrown-out, even if the compañera is already advanced, even if she already has that participation as a compañera.

That happens because as compañeras from the beginning we have not had any smaller position in our town, smaller ones, like being a representative of compañeras or directing collective work of compañeras within the town. So when they name us in the various higher bodies of government, like the municipality, the Junta de Buen Gobierno, it is difficult for us to perform that work because from our town we have not grasped that practice of participating. When they name us to a larger body to control a municipality or our zone, it is difficult for us to perform that type of work as women, sometimes from lack of ability or from not knowing how to read, write, that makes us unable to do the work well.

We have seen compañeras who have that desire to learn, to work within the various areas of government, those compañeras have taken their work forward. Although there are compañeras who do not know how to read, do not know how to write, but if the compañeras are willing to work the work does go forward. We have realized that the compañeras who enter into the work with low abilities once within the work we go along catching the rhythm of how to do the work within the office.

We say that there is not a book where we are guided on how to make autonomy in our government, there is not a book which directs us, we go along learning with the work. What is difficult for us as compañeras is learning to talk, to decide, to state opinions, and to propose new things so that they may take us on a new path. But we are not without the participation of the compañeras, in the various work areas in our zone, as well as in the various levels of government and in other areas like health and education, compañeras are participating per se. We already have compañeras in all the areas, although not at 100% but we have compañeras in the various areas.

We see that it is thanks to our organization of the EZLN, which has taken us along this new path, that we are at this moment participating as compañeras. Our organization made us as compañeras wake up, made our eyes wake up regarding where we were, that it was not good how we felt incapable of doing that work, that yes we can as compañeras. This made us as women begin to perform positions, we have seen that in no organization of the political parties nor in a religion has this step been taken like the one that we carry here in our organization.

It is like this that we have participated as compañeras, we already have compañeras in the various work areas, but that depends a great deal on each compañera because we do not all have the same ability to learn quickly in the work. There are some of us for whom it is difficult to



learn in the work and some who grasp more quickly how to do the work. There are many of us compañeras for whom it is difficult to begin in a job, it is difficult for us to grasp new paths as compañeras, since we are not used to it, it is difficult for us to learn, but that now depends a great deal on each compañera and it depends on the interest which each compañera has to do the work.

## Questions

*What did you do so that the compañeras participate in autonomous government, who motivates the participation of the compañeras in that zone?*

From our zone, from our Junta de Buen Gobierno, from our autonomous councils, municipal assemblies of compañeras and compañeros have been convened, zone assemblies have been convened and there compañeros and compañeras have participated; from there it begins, from our authorities which are representing us like the Junta de Buen Gobierno or municipal authorities, from there the local authorities are told to promote in their towns, going to the meetings of the municipality, of the zone, and we tell the compañeros, upon arriving to the town, to give space to the compañeras who are already authorities so that they first may begin to inform on what could be learned, what could be heard in the assembly, for it to motivate the rest of the compañeras to participate. But that begins from our local authorities of the various areas that we have there.

*Sometimes it happens that we are already in the position but we do not state an opinion. Do those female commissioner, agent authorities participate as it should be?*

There are some towns in which the compañeras do now participate together with the compañeros. Also in the towns meetings are done, sometimes they are exclusively meetings of compañeras, just us compañeras get together to organize collective work within the town, the compañeras promote the collective work, but also there are assemblies in which we meet together with the compañeros. Also within the town the compañeras now state opinions, but not 100% of the compañeras have that ability to participate, to state opinions, being together with the compañeros we go along learning and listening to what the compañeros propose, their opinions, so when it is our turn to participate we also take ideas from the compañeros.

*Do the compañeras also state opinions when you resolve problems?*

There are some towns in which the compañeras have defined some issues, where we have low participation a bit is in the autonomous councils, there are compañeras who still do not state opinions. As well in our Junta de Buen Gobierno there are compañeras who have given solution to the problems, we compañeras who sometimes have been responsible for leading a team within the Junta de Buen Gobierno have now arrived there. If an issue to resolve comes, for example from the justice area, not only the one who carries the justice area resolves it, the one who heads the team within the Junta de Buen Gobierno is the one who directs how to resolve it or how to give solution to that problem, but the rest participate. But yes there now are compañeras who can decide on those problems and can give them solution.

*With all sincerity, could you tell us how you are doing in the whole zone, in the towns where there are compañeras who are commissioners and agents. Are they now a majority? In those communities where there are compañeras who are authorities do they resolve what happens in a community or is it that it is still being learned?*

We have the representation of the compañeras now in the majority of the towns. The issue of defining our issues as authorities alone we still do not have in all the towns, we are clear in saying that it has not been done in all the towns, it is done together with the compañero authorities. When we have a problem we convene meetings of authorities among compañeros and compañeras, so that it is supported among all and so that in this way we may learn from what the compas do.

*Is that a plan of yours there in the whole zone?*

Yes, that has been said as a zone, that the compañeras who still do not know how to resolve be supported with the compañeros, and we have also said that as compañeros, that where the compañeras cannot resolve an issue also for that the compañero authorities are there, so that they support them.

*What difficulties have you had at the time of naming the compañeras in the towns and how do you resolve that difficulty? For example if the compañera does not accept for some reason?*

That in itself has happened to us in the naming of authorities, sometimes when we name the compañeras they say that they are not going to be able, for certain reasons sometimes the compañera does not accept doing the work, but we solve it with the rest of the compañeras who are in the town. There are compañeras who even if they do not know, we do not know how to read or write, speak, state opinions, but there are compañeras who do decide because they have seen other compañeras who participate, so they decide to take the work within the town. But yes it has happened to us that there are compañeras who have rejected the work and that is why the compañeras who already participate within the town have been told to motivate the compañeras who do not participate.

# **Difficulties with the Participation of Women in the Work**

## **Nabil (Member of the Autonomous Council. MAREZ Tierra y Libertad)**

1. Within the work that we have been realizing, in accordance with the passage of time, we were encountering difficulties which did not allow us to realize the work in the struggle. In some towns there was not or there is not the moral support that some or many of us, as women who have recently been participating or taking a position, need much more if we feel incapable of exercising the work that we are responsible for. Another difficulty is perhaps the fear of making a mistake in the work that we are responsible for performing, or the fear that the compañeros will make fun of our participation, when of course we all begin from below.
2. That perhaps there was not that courage to confront or to give solution to a problem, even if it is the smallest thing that happens in our work which we are exercising in the struggle. Perhaps because there was that will or that performance to develop our ability as women.
3. Having a large number of children, also that provoked us as women not dedicating a little more time to our work that corresponds to us in the Zapatista struggle. This difficulty was made large when in the family the compañero did not take the responsibility of caring for the children in the moment which the compañera left and went to realize the work.

## **Marisol (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ San Pedro de Michoacán)**

The fourth difficulty that we encountered as compañeras and which has been confronted a great deal in us is the problem of studies, not knowing how to read and write. Maybe it is because we did not have someone to teach us, especially the compañeras who were already grown-up in '94, when it began. Sometimes the position is given to that compañera and the first thing that she says to us is "I do not how to read or write." Maybe it is correct because before '94 there was not education for our parents.

But even with that problem there are those of us compañeras who are making the effort to participate. In the towns there are compañeras who do not know how to read or write but yes they get up the courage to take the position in the company of another compañera who does know, as they say her secretary, for her to write down and the compañera what little she is able to capture in her mind with that helps the one who wrote.

We have compañeras in the Council who also are like this, they are now participating and do not know how to read, but with the other compañera, or with the rest of the compas, she is supported and there is her participation. We cannot say that they are not doing the work because even if they do not fix the problems they alone participate in other work, for example, in our caracol, the female and male councilmembers take turns in the center, the compañeros arrive there, take turns on the radio, in other work which is needed in the center. The compañeras are participating.

Also in the Junta we have a compañera who not much, but yes the compañera is now advanced, she does not know how to read or write. We are still in the period of the Junta when it is her turn to enter, we pay attention to her, show her what we do, go along teaching her what little she is going to be able to learn, she even began to write her name alone.

She alone endeavors wanting to learn, because she said that she saw letters, saw books, and said that she wanted to know what it said there. So we told her, with other compañeras, "this is how you are going to do it, compañera, this is what it says." It is an experience that the compañera is learning in the work, she already has her spirits up with the help of the other compañeras, or in what we cannot teach her there is a compa there. We now tell the compa or the compañera:

"Ask your question to the compa," and that's what the compañera does.

Right now that compañera when we want to make a copy with the copy machine, says: "Are you going to make the copy?"

"Yes, compañera."

"Ah, I am going to start the motor."

And before in her house that compañera did not know how to start a motor, did not know how to fill a motor with gas, that compañera right now knows how to do it, since she says now that she is going to leave, that she began from nothing. I think that we can, the problem is for us to endeavor. Maybe on one hand it is very necessary to know how to read and write, but to have the courage to do the work we can exercise our work as women. Now that compañera is going to know many things, for her they are many things different from what was being done in her house, what she went to learn she did not know before in her house.

There is a town where the new authorities were named, the team that left already fulfilled their three years, in the team which left there are several compañeras and one of them does not know how to read and write but she is going to come to participate when it is time for her topic. She says that is not going to be difficult for her because she is learning and is supported by her children who know how to read and her husband, by their notes that they gave her, there what she is going to say is being recorded, because she is also living it in the town. It is like this how we are taking this step in the town. We are also seeing that we are not downhearted because we are rising up among some and others.

Another one of the difficulties that we confront sometimes is with the fathers, because sometimes the fathers lack trust in a woman, in that she is not going to do the work. Sometimes the husbands do not give us a chance to do the work, but with the talks and since it is always being demanded that there are compañeras in the work, well then they too go along understanding that it is necessary for compañeras to be doing the work.

That mistrust has to stop. How do we do it? In the zone assemblies, with the Junta and the CCRI too, it is always being demanded that there be participation of compañeras and that has to go as a task, when the compañeros or compañeras arrive to the town they tell us that we have to name compañeras for the areas or work where women are not participating.

For example, if there is a town where the *compañeras* are named, among men and women the female workers are named, but if the *compañeras* always say no, that they are not going to be able, then we look for another method so that they accept the position. We have made a meeting of pure *compañeras*, in one of them it happened that nobody wanted to take the position, we were looking for *compañeras* for the three areas and other positions, so we said it should be by list, how many women we are among girls and married women, we saw how many we are and it was named by list. There it was seen that sometimes forcing ourselves amongst us works, because when we named a midwife she said:

“I am not going to be able as a midwife, better I’ll be a healer.”

When we named her as a healer she said: “I am not going to be a healer, better an authority.”

When we told her, well, right now you are not going to pass but your turn is going to come later on. What did the *compañera* say?

“I want to be commission of the authority or commission of the person in-charge.”

Why did it happen like this? Because we ourselves are forcing ourselves to see that we do have to take a position. What goes along happening there is that among us we have to force ourselves a little, they are going to name us involuntarily, those of us who are volunteers are few.

We also sometimes have low spirits, we do not want to take positions because we know that maybe it is going to be alone. If they name me I know that I am going to go in the Junta but I feel alone because my town is not going to go with me and who knows if there are *compañeras* there. Sometimes there are towns which to resolve that coordinate it, they name two *compañeras* in a community and then the two go to do the work. But the two do not always have to leave, there are times that one of them stays, but since they were already guiding that *compañerita* because in the beginning she went with the other, she now has the spirits to stay alone.

It has happened on two occasions in the Junta which they named the *compañeras* by group, two *compañeras* are going to pass in the shift of one, the two always go to each shift, but one of them got married, right now the *compañera* continues participating, why? Because she already saw that within the team there is trust, among *compañeros* and *compañeras* they get trust upon being there in the work.

That is the other method that we have sought. There are also other towns that have been organized to accompany the *compañeras* who they name, for example if a *compañera* is named for the Council or the Junta, she is going to go to work but sometimes has to walk half an hour, one hour, two hours. How is she going to get there? The father, the mother, or the family are going to get tired, so the *compañeras* take turns to go leave her at her transportation or they go get her when the *compañera* is going to arrive; they go to drop her off, they give her company so that the *compañera* will go to do the work and not lose spirits.

The other difficulty that we the *compañeras* always have is with the various languages that are spoken in the zone. Sometimes there are *compañeras* who say that they do not understand when it is not their language, but always through the other *compañera* they have to translate what is being said. That is what is done, it is sought who is going to translate, because that is what they say sometimes, that they do not understand Spanish, but it is sought who translates it. Like this is how we are living the difficulties in our zone.

## Questions

*What is done when the compañeras reject the work due to the difficulties which are mentioned? What do you do so that the compañera is found?*

To resolve the difficulties various things have been done, for example in the number of children that they have as compañeras, in the 47 points of prevention that we have in health we have a family planning point. It has been explained to the compañeros and compañeras that it does not mean that they are not going to have children, but that within the couple they plan how many children they can take care of, as much the compañero as the compañera, so that she can go out to perform the work that corresponds to her as a compañera and the compañero can attend to the children who remain within the home. Also the compañeros have understood that as women we have that right and that space to participate, there are compañeros who remain inside the house to take care of their children and they give the compañera that opportunity or that space so that she can go out to do the work.

As compañeras in the fear of being mistaken, or in the moral support to the compañeras, in that it has been said as a zone, as municipalities, that the compañeros should also encourage us within the town when the authorities are going to be named. Sometimes the compañera says:

“No, it’s that I won’t be able. I don’t know how to write, I don’t know how to read. It’s that it is difficult for me to speak. What if it is not really how I am going to say?”

There we say to the compañeras and to the other compañeras who already participate, instead of them bringing in that idea that the compañera is not going to be able, that they should encourage them, raise up for that compañera the moral that yes she can do the work, encourage her, say to her:

“It’s that upon entering, perhaps per se you are going to do the work that corresponds to you? You are going to enter in order to learn. Begin there four, five months, you are going to grasp how to do the work, it is how you are going to go along participating.

That has been said as a zone, as a municipality, and within the towns, that they too should support us as compañeros and encourage us to participate. There are some of us compañeras who feel that we are not going to be able to participate or we are not going to be able to do the work, but within our zone there are compañeros who encourage us and tell us:

“Yes, compañera, you are going to be able, you are going to be able to do the work.”

Like this the compañeros begin to encourage us, it is how they as compañeros raise the moral for us, that yes we can as women.

*You said that the courage to confront problems is lacking, speaking from the local, municipal government, what are the problems that women have not been able to confront? What have you done to resolve that?*

In that difficulty we refer to that fact that as women, within our work we have compañeras, be it the Junta de Buen Gobierno, municipal councilwomen, local authorities, health promoters, education promoters, etcetera, those of us who have confronted various problems in our walk, due to a problem that we confront as compañeras, but there are those of us compañeras who have that courage to say, “what happened to me, why did I lose spirit from my work? There are compañeros and compañeras who help us to resolve our problem and we continue forward with our work.

But there are compañeras who feel bad, that is we already heard something about us that they are saying or we see something bad that we ran into in the path and we lose spirit, we do not

have that courage as compañeras to say, "What is it that happened to me? Why did I lose spirit? Those compañeras leave their work without knowing why they left their work thrown-out. We refer to that when we say that we do not have the courage to confront problems within the work that we have.

*When speaking at the Junta de Buen Gobierno level, that in some cases you have confronted and resolved justice problems, at any time have you come across a serious problem and how was it resolved?*

Yes we have fixed problems, unfortunately we were responsible with another compañera. When we passed as members of the Junta de Buen Gobierno we did come across a problem which at the beginning was being difficult for us to solve. It took us two days to solve that problem because we did not have that ability to begin to resolve it, but we did give solution to the problem although it took a while, it took us two days solving it. There were other cases that we came across, when there are compañeras who accompany us and have that idea on how to do it, on how to give it solution, we support each other among compañeras, but sometimes we come across a group of compañeras where only one is giving an opinion and the rest do not give an opinion on how to do it, so we ask for support from the compañeros who are within reach in those moments, who give us a hand in supporting us to find the solution.

Sometimes we are responsible for a difficult case, for example we were responsible for a case of attackers who they brought to us there tied up, bound those attackers, and they said that yes they attacked and that they are fuckers, and in that moment there were no more compañeras to give us an idea how to give solution to that type of problem. But being there within the Junta we began to see how to do it, we did not have an idea on how to give it solution, so we sought a compañero who was within reach so that he would support us with giving us an idea on how to do it. We were able to solve that problem with the compañero's support and in other types of problems, when there are us compañeras who do respond in giving an opinion in order to resolve, we have been able to solve the problems.

*You as compañeras who have already passed through as members of the Autonomous Council, of the Junta de Buen Gobierno, what have you done so that knowledge, idea, experience that you have of participating in those government bodies, is not lost? Has your experience been taken advantage of or gone to waste?*

Up to now the plain truth we have not organized as compañeras to transmit those experiences and ideas to the rest of the compañeras. We have not had that reach to share experience with the other compañeras, but they are already giving classes with the rest of the authorities, here we go along learning, maybe when we return we'll involve ourselves there to give an example to the other compañeras.

*How many compañeras are there as commissioners and agents in the whole zone?*

Almost the majority of the towns have compañeras participating but we do not have an exact statistic, but in the Council there has not been much participation of the women compañeras, it began to be promoted more when there was the law on participation with the Zapatista towns. We began to promote the participation of women at the local level, in the towns, municipalities, from that time, I do not remember the year when there was the encounter of the Zapatista peoples with the peoples of the world, it is where the participation of women began to be participated at the zone level, but it has not been fully achieved.

*One question, maybe the question is stupid but I am going to ask it. There in your various levels of autonomous government, have you not confronted problems with the compañeras, what we call "affair problems"? And if you have confronted them how you have resolved them.*

Yes cases like that have been fixed. A case came to us, almost when the two of us entered, we made an organization as a Junta and they left the two of us heading a team and a problem came to us of a compañera who went to complain to us because her husband was mistreating her. It is unbelievable and it was very awful for us, the compañera said "I want separation from my husband," but that ex-compa already had another wife. We were seeing how that problem is. We called the children of the first wife and of the second and there we began to see the arrangement, that is why it became a bit long for us. We viewed him as a huge fucker, because we thought that he only beat her, but no, that sickly old man hung the compañera up by her feet upside-down and he beat her there, the same together with two more of their children, and we had to see that arrangement.

How did we give it solution? The compañera asked for separation, so we did it dividing up the goods of the man. The goods passed to the first wife with the children because the man was offending, but we did not leave him at zero because the second wife also already had an older son, so we left a part for the other son, but not for the man. We divided up all his goods, it is how we gave it solution, we gave her right to that compañera who went to complain to us.

*What happens when the compañeras, as members of autonomous government, come to have a problem with a compañero from their same team? That in some places has been one of the causes which impedes the participation of the compañeras.*

That in itself I think happens anywhere. On one occasion it happened in our zone, what was done there, as we saw that it was not so serious, it was called to their attention. And in another case a compañero wanted to not show respect to the compañera, we punished the compa among ourselves, he remained away from his work the time of the punishment. He paid his punishment in the zone but outside of the office, he was not an authority for those days, and of course, it got his attention. He wanted to complete his work and he had to go back to retake it after his punishment. It is what has been done among us.

*As a Junta, did you leave those problems up in the air just like that or was there an initiative about what to do if those problems are presented in the future?*

It was given solution among us, but there was no other initiative, it was just made known to the zone, we have not planned something more about that. There are rules for the Junta but that point is not there.

*Is it that it should not be in the rules?*

It was not put in the rules because we thought among us that it was not going to happen, we entered as a team and with trust among all, we thought that we are compañeros and it was not thought if some day that is going to happen. We have to reinforce that rule more, now put that in and think about the problems which can happen, so that the day which they happen we already have something for resolving.

*Do those problems not cause loss-of-spirit for the future of the compañeras' participation?*

Sometimes yes because at the time which they hear it, our fathers or husbands say, "no, well that is what your are going to do," and they do not want the compañeras to participate. But of course once again we raise up participation with the very spirit of the compañeras, the one to whom it is passed continues forward and has to do her work. That problem was passed to the assembly for it to be aware and now in this way the compas are going to be cognizant that



everything has to be published at the moment which it happens. Yes it is seen that it is a difficulty but because of what was seen until now it has remained like that, we are always ahead.

*Has there been a town which does not have a female commissioner, agent?*

Due to what has been promoted they all have one per se, although there are little towns of one or two families the compañeras per se who participate. Where they are small, if they do not have a female commissioner they have an agent, it always has to have its female commissioner too, it is covered. And there are regions in which there is a family in the little towns, they have meet to name a female commissioner or their authority, because sometimes there is that there are two or three families and from there the health promoter has to come out, the education promoter, the authority, the local person in-charge, so they meet and there they name one who is going to carry the work.

*How do you do it in the towns which are far away, where there are one or two compañeros?*

Those have to meet where they see closest, that is what is said to them, that where they find closest is where they are going to meet, if the compa is just alone per se, he is responsible. In the zone we have an agreement that from 10 families and up one compañera and one compañero authority is obligatory. If it is a smaller family, the family is going to determine if it names a compañero or a compañera.

We have the example that per se the compañeras do the work, because there are compañeras and compañeros who are from a family in small towns or families of 10, and those compañeras go to the meeting of the municipality or the zone, the compañero no longer goes. In the municipality and zone the work which has to be realized as a zone takes place and at the end we as authorities become aware of the work that is realized in that town, so they make it known to us that the compañera is going to do her work.

*As Zapatista compañeras who organized, what is it that you feel and how do you see yourselves in the face of other sisters who are not organized?*

The difference when we are already organized it is seen well that any work can be done. The work can be done when we the compañeras are already organized and when the compañeras are not organized they are each one on her path, there is not a work. When we are organized we then see the difference in which we live, we are seeing the difference that there is with those who are not organized, it is not the same. That is why we as Zapatistas, as Zapatista women, feel good because we have been able to pass all the difficulties that show up for us in the family, in the communities, and the other problems that go along showing up, for example them beating us, raping us, or coming drunk and killing us from so many blows, there is no longer that in our families.

Thanks to this participation we have been able to give ourselves the courage to confront that, we are going to say to our compañeros that it is not just for them to treat us like that. But with them, the compañeras who are not organized, it is not like that; with them those mistreatments continue, they do not have the word to say that no longer, "we no longer want it," there drug addiction continues, alcoholism continues, rape continues, we even hear that there is prostitution. That is already arriving to the communities and with us in the organization it is not like that, that is why we feel good because we already have that courage, we already have that idea that we can say enough is enough.

*Do the support base compañeras also pass on to be vigilance commission in the Caracol?*

No, because an agreement still has not been made in the zone, they have not passed through. The participation of the compañeras in the vigilance commission, in the towns, does not exist

due to lack of promotion. But a vigilance began, or support for vigilance in the towns, on behalf of the compañeros from the resistance nucleus, there participation of the compañeras does exist.

*You talked about how in the health area they are promoting family planning, how do the support base compañeras and compañeros take it? Because it appears that sometimes it is viewed poorly, on the one hand from what the church puts in us, we want to know if there have been misunderstandings or problems about family planning.*

In that we have not run into problems with the compañeras, it is something that has worked through the female health promoters in our towns, where there are not female promoters there are the male health promoters. A talk is given to the compañeras, to the compañeros, on this topic and until now we have not run into problems, it has not happened that the compañeras or the compas do not understand it or understand it in another form.

From the beginning it has been communicated clearly to the compañeros and compañeras, it was explained that they are not being prohibited from having children, but really they are being told to plan, that is why it called planning, for them to understand as compañeros that it is not like what the government does, but rather it is planning within the family. We have done that for them to understand as compañeras and compañeros.

*How are you doing with the Revolutionary Women's Law, has it been fulfilled or what is missing?*

With regard to the Revolutionary Women's Law, we have to be clear in that we have not met as compañeras to analyze about what we still need to fulfill from the revolutionary law. But in those times that we were working to come to present ourselves here, we realized that we do need to work more on what is the Revolutionary Women's Law, because there are points that we are doing even if it is at minimum, but there are points where we have not achieved completion.

So within the talk that we have as compañeras, we force ourselves to say that after all this that is being done we have to convene assemblies of municipal authorities, together with the local compañeras from the towns and supported with the regional representatives from our zone, to begin to see what we are missing and other tasks which were left for us as compañeras.

In this work that we are beginning to do we realized that there are many things as compañeras that we still need to do, that is why we left it in another time, when we return to our zone to begin to promote the work that remained pending.

# **Caracol II: Resistance and Rebellion For Humanity**

Oventik

# Introduction

## Guadalupe (Education Promoter. Monterrey Region)

We know that from the beginning women had a very important role in society, in the towns, in the tribes. Women did not live as we live now, they were respected, they were the most important for conservation in the family. They were respected because they give life just as now we respect mother earth who gives us life. In that time women had a very important role but over the course of history, with the arrival of private property, that was changing.

Women upon the arrival of private property were given as gifts, it passed to another level and what we call “patriarchy” arrived, with the plunder of women’s rights, with the plunder of the earth, it was with the arrival of private property that men began to command. We know that with this arrival of private property three great evils took place, which are the exploitation of all, men and women, but of women more, as women we also are exploited by this neoliberal system. We also know that with this came the oppression of men against women for being women and also we as women in this time suffered discrimination from being indigenous. So we have those three great evils, there are others but right now we are not talking about that.

We within the organization, with so much lack of rights as women, we saw it necessary to struggle for the equality of rights between men and women, it was like this how our Revolutionary Women’s Law was put forth. We know that we here in Zona Altos maybe we have not had great advances, they have been small advances, they are slow but we go along advancing. We have advanced with various levels, in the various areas in the various places where we are responsible for working. Before coming here we analyzed among men and women how we are in each one of the points in the Revolutionary Women’s Law, because it is very important in this analysis for not only women to participate, the men too need to participate, to listen to what we think, what we say.

We are talking about a revolutionary struggle and we do not make a revolutionary struggle with only men nor only with women, it is the task of all, it is the people’s task and as the people there are boys, girls, men, women, young people, adults, and elderly. We all have a place in this struggle and that is why we must participate in this analysis and in the tasks that we have pending.

# Participation of Women in the Junta de Buen Gobierno

## Leticia (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno)

When the Junta de Buen Gobierno was formed, in 2003, there were 14 members of the Junta who were pure *compañeros*, *compañeras* did not come who represented any one of the municipalities which were already formed. The first municipality that had women within its autonomous council was Magdalena de la Paz, but they were not integrated from the beginning of the work in the first Junta, it was in January 2005 when two *compañeras* began to participate. The rest of the autonomous municipalities did not have women in the positions, it took time for them to name *compañeras* for the Junta. So the need was seen for the other municipalities to name *compañeras*, like this the *compañeras* were integrated in various times, little by little the municipalities were naming them.

Since the *compañeras* began to have participation as members of the Junta realizing the tasks as members of the Junta has cost them much work, for example, speaking with the national and international visitors, attending to and resolving the problems which come from the various municipalities and regions in the zone. To resolve this problem it is necessary to help among all, *compañeros* and *compañeras*, as members of the Junta. It has been seen as a team in the Junta and there has been respect, the decision is made among all, solving problems together is sought, taking out proposals of agreement among men and women.

Something that we the *compañeras* feel is fear of not knowing how to do the work due to how difficult it is, because it is a commitment where they do not only come to sit down, more still when there is not general knowledge of the various work and lack of expression in the second language, but as our struggle demands so, it must be fulfilled. Since there were not very many women as members of the Junta it was very difficult for us when the work was being done, because as *compañeras* we are not used to realizing an activity together with the *compañeros* outside of our town. When it is worked in the Junta it is different from working in the municipality because the Council is there and the other *compañeros* and *compañeras* who realize the activities, but in the Junta the activities are realized equally among all.

The *compañeras* of the Junta fulfill various commissions, like education and health commissions, on various levels, and when there are meetings of each commission they go to the Junta where they must go. When there are problems in the areas they analyze among all, they take out proposals among men and women. It has been seen that there are *compañeras* and *compañeras* who come across a problem or who no longer want to continue with their commitment and then do not finish their position, this is the same for men and women. It has been seen that sometimes the *compañeras* have more spirit and will to fulfill their period in this commitment.

The daily work of the Junta includes many activities, such as the recording of the activities which are realized, the preparation of projects, keeping the record and management of resources,

learning to use computers, learning how to send and receive email, how to make reports, learning to orient and encourage the towns in a direct manner and also recording messages to transmit on the community radios, analyzing and reflecting on the problems and needs which come up in the towns. We have participated in some encounters with other organizations. These tasks are very important for our peoples and as women we are lacking a great deal to learn. To organize ourselves in the Junta there are coordinators but this does not mean that he or she is in charge of realizing the activities all alone, but rather this is to promote the realization of the work. When we receive the position they give us an explanation on how to do the work.

It has been seen that sometimes there are towns which choose their authorities for the Junta very young and with little experience, and when they confront big problems, although they do not know what to do or they feel that they do not know what to do, they seek the manner to help with resolving it. Sometimes even if they are already of age but they do not have that experience of how to resolve problems, if there is not a practice for resolving problems in their towns, in spite of it being difficult to learn, they seek the way. The towns now know that they cannot name very young people because they must name and choose compañeras who are older and with some experience.

One problem that there is in our towns is that the young women are more chosen and the married women are not, because the family does not allow them. There are times that as women we hide our problems and we do not say them because we have fear of being left, beaten, that is why we hide them. Even some compañeras still do not understand our freedom to take a position and we still discuss in order to take a commitment. The way how it has been resolved is that although the compañeras enter into the position without the ability to resolve the problems, once in the work they go along learning to do it little by little, in this way they give their word to the public and also their speeches. It is always important for them to have the experience to resolve problems from the community, in the region or municipality, so that then when they arrive to the Junta they have a bit of experience, this is to avoid the previously mentioned difficulties.

# Participation of Women in the Autonomous Municipalities

**Silvia (Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ Magdalena de la Paz)**

In the autonomous municipalities the compañeras also are taken into account, they are named by the whole municipality to carry out their position. The position that they carry out is of prefects, there also have been substitutes for the Council and also presidents of the Autonomous Council. If for some reason some compañera leaves the position the same community from where she came must replace for the compañera to finish the period and she cannot be replaced with a compañero well it must be covered the same with a compañera.

Some municipalities, depending on their plan, in each period they choose from 4 to 8 compañeras. When those compañeras are chosen per se they already know that two of the compañeras from each municipality are named for the Junta and others to cover their turn in the offices of the various autonomous municipalities which are in the Caracol. When the compañeras finish their shift in the Caracol there are moments in which they go to the municipality if it is necessary, like this they have participation and opinion in the various issues. This work arises, depending on each municipality.

In some municipalities there is little participation of compañeras in the autonomous councils and we how that in other periods we'll be able to integrate more compañeras. In the work of the compañeras in the municipalities many times the problem that we have encountered is the same, it is the fear of not being able to govern, of not knowing how to work. The compañeras are worried a great deal about being able to carry their positions well, but there is nothing more besides overcoming it with practice, like this they have gone on learning little by little with their participation.

With attendance to the meetings, there are times that they call them in the communities and the compañeras go, and if the compañeras are asked in the moment about their view they give their word, they make the effort, they give orientation and form part of the commissions in the various areas. As part of the work the compañeras also participate in reviewing the reports about the projects. As women learning more to resolve the problems that there are in our towns is still lacking, above all family problems, thefts, how to apply justice, among others. Making more meetings to resolve among all, there we are going to learn more.



# Participation of the Compañeras in Other Positions

## **Silvia (Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ Magdalena de la Paz)**

In our autonomous communities we women have not been named to participate in the position as agents or as autonomous commissioners. What is seen in some communities is that although they are not the very presidents of the autonomous commissary, but they have been named as members of the commissary in some autonomous municipalities. To be a commissioner she has to know how to resolve a land problem, see well who is right and the idea must be had on how to solve it, it is necessary to have a little bit of studies and like this obtain the experience and practice.

It is seen that there are problems when a compañera does not have studies and does not know how to resolve land problems, how to measure the land, how to do sketches, how to orient herself in the cardinal directions, and does not know how to resolve land problems, but earlier on our ancestors did per se know how to measure by rods, by armlengths, or with other measurements and they could orient themselves with the sun to make their sketches, like this they resolved land problems.

# Participation of Women in the Various Work Areas

## **Verónica (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ San Andrés Sakamchen de los Pobres)**

In the various areas some compañeras have been integrated who are making the effort to participate in the work and areas that we have in this zone, because it is seen that it is very important for there to be participation of women. In the health area there are compañeras who are participating as general coordinators in the zone, also there are coordinators in each one of the micro-clinics that there are in the various municipalities. In each community compañeras have participated who are doing their work in the health area and when it is their shift the compañeras are fulfilling, they are taking their positions and there the compañeras are participating.

Three compañeras' workshops were formed: midwives, healers, herbalists. This work began more than one year ago, it is there where the compañeras are participating, there they are realizing their activities. When it is their turn to come to receive their trainings, the compañeras come to receive the training, because it is the instruction of the command and the very situation which demands us to be receiving the training in these areas; there they plan their workshops and how they are going to learn about these areas. In these areas they have already had a bit of advance but they have had difficulties, some times it happens that the number of compañeras is decreased, sometimes they do not come I think from lack of conscience or of understanding that it is very important. But many of the compañeras are making an effort in these areas. When the compañeras come to receive the training, they are accompanied by the compañeros and compañeras of the CCRI, also from the regional representatives and the members of the Junta.

In the area of education the compañeras are also performing their positions as general coordinators in the zone and also secondary school coordinators, secondary school promoters, or trainers in the zone, subcoordinators of primary school promoters, language center promoters; these compañeras cover their positions from Monday do Friday, in that area they are fulfilling their work. They also realize activities that they do collectively with the compañeros when they have a work coordinator in the zone, there they are helping, when they make their plans about education nobody says that they do not know, that only men know, that only women know, nobody says this, everyone knows how to do something.

The agroecology area we are lacking participation in the general coordinator of the zone, because not a single compañera has been integrated into the general coordination. Where we see that there are coordinator compañeras is only in one center of the eight centers in this zone, also there are some promoters in some groups, there are three compañeras who are the development committee. In the work of center coordinators they are propelling the work to concentrate information on the center, they promote the training of the promoters, how to keep the work, shift spending, materials, and tools records.

In the communication area there is work in the community radios, there almost half of the personnel who is participating in each station are compañeras, also there are coordinators of this area. The women have their participation in the radios as hosts, they do editing and recording, they realize interviews, reports, or programs in the internet centers. There is a coordination but there are not compañeras in this position, there are compañeras only as the promoters who realize the work in the editing, in the use of the video camera. There are compañeras who are participating in each group or in each community, the compañeras are participating in the communication radios in each group.

Also there are other areas where women are participating, like in the commercialization area, where there are two women's cooperatives. One is "Por la dignidad" and the other is "Mujeres de la resistencia," in these cooperatives almost pure compañeras are participating. In these cooperatives that the compañeras have they are organizing to make directives or name representatives in the communities, when they go out to sell they are the compañeras themselves who go out to sell their work.

We see that there is a little bit of advance with our participation in these various tasks that we have, of course we do know that the participation of the compañeras is very much lacking, but in all the work areas the compañeras are making all their effort to work, to perform their position. Sometimes we do not have a good idea to do or how to carry the work, sometimes we are also lacking the conscience to fulfill these commitments, we are lacking that, but if they give us the political or moral support, on behalf of the compañeros, there we are going to be able to do the work a little.

## Questions

*Is the language center with the intention that you who speak Tzotzil or Tzeltal share that language or are they the languages of other brothers and sisters who come from other countries?*

The language center is not giving courses with the Zapatista compañeros, but rather is a school or center where the international compañeros can come, from other continents, there is the place where they can learn, be it Spanish or in Tzotzil, because in this zone Tzotzil is more spoken and a little bit of Tzeltal. Those compañeras who come, be it from the United States, be it from Europe or from wherever, can attend that school and it is there where the languages are shared a little, but we still only have one.

*Have there not been people who have cared about recovering the language of our regions?*

In order to recover, so that these languages like we have here in the zone are not lost, work is being done in education, for example, in the secondary school we have an area which is called Tzotzil, it is there where it is being learned how it is spoken, how it is written, because many times we do not even know so much as the history of how it came, where it came to, so there it is given and it is applied so that the language that we have is not lost.

*Of the cooperatives that you have as compañeras, where did you get the fund to start and if only the compañeras administer it or is it in conjunction supported with the compañeros?*

The cooperative began on its own in each community. When that cooperative began it began with pure compañeras but in the own effort of each community, it is not a support from the Junta de Buen Gobierno.

# Exercise of the Revolutionary Women's Law

## Yolanda (Education Promoter. MAREZ Magdalena de la Paz)

As is known per se, this women's law was made justly due to the situation that the compañeras lived, this is why the law began, because early on they suffered too much. We now have this law written, we have it in the five caracoles. This problem that we have is not only the compañeras' problem, it includes the compañeros too, because when a position is given to a compañera sometimes the compañeros do not let their wife or their daughter go out, it now depends, there are times that they do not give her the right, the freedom, that is why the problem includes men too.

This does not mean that it is only the men's fault, the problem includes the compañeras too. It is everyone's problem because there are times that although the man gives the right to his wife, but there are times that the compañera herself does not want to, she says, "I can't," or for various reasons does not participate. One is because sometimes the women have many children, there are times that it is a problem too, where we cannot perform a position, it does not leave us free. There are many reasons for why it is still discussed upon taking a position. As we say, it is everyone's fault, not only the women's or the men's, this problem is everyone's, so this law was justly made, and to come here, in our zone we analyze a little how we are doing point by point, we are going to say a little up to where we as women have been able to fulfill that law.

**First.** *Women, without regard for their race, religion, color, or political affiliation, have the right to participate in the revolutionary struggle in the place and rank which their will and ability determine.*

We say very clearly that the straight truth we have not totally fulfilled, we have fulfilled it a little bit, it has not been fulfilled 100%, but yes we have tried to fulfill, the compañeras are now taking positions in education, in health, the compañeras are now taking a position, as zone coordinators they already have a position, their area depends on them.

But we see that it is very important for us to study well what the law is because if we do not really understand what it tells us, we analyze a little in our zone that it could be that it arises the same as the history which has happened, that woman she is the giver of life so then latter it changed, if we misunderstand this law that we have as Zapatistas it could happen again.

When this law was made it is not because women want to command, it is not because women want to leave their husbands, their compañeros dominated, our law does not mean this. That is why it is necessary to study this law very well, because we do not want to make a construction to follow the same history that we have seen, that the compañeros who are machistas command, and if we misinterpret this it is going to happen the same, the compañeras command and the poor little compañeros, there they remain thrown-out too, but we do not want that.

What is wanted is something like a construction of humanity, it is what we are trying to change, another world is what is wanted. What we are doing is the struggle of everything, men and women, because it is not a struggle of women nor is it a struggle of men. When wishing to talk about a revolution it's that they go together, it goes for all among men and women, the struggle is made like this.

It cannot be that the *compañeros* say, “we are struggling here, we are making the revolution, and only the *compañeros* are performing all the positions and the *compañeras* there in the house, that is not a struggle for all. What is wanted is for it to be for all, among men and women, that is what is wanted. But we say clearly in this first point of the law, that we are carrying little by little, still a bit dizzy because the straight truth, as *compañeras*, still it seems very difficult for us to take a position, any position.

The revolutionary law is being applied in the secondary school, there the law is studied, then when the *compañeros* and *compañeras* leave they are going to know how the women’s law is, that she has her right but also has her obligation. Not only just right and right, without her obligation it is not just, it must have her right and obligation, women also have to do something.

**Second.** *Women have the right to work and receive a just wage.*

In the case of this point we still have not achieved it in this zone, I think that in all the five caracoles, still this is not being fulfilled because we have still not been able to achieve that there be a wage within the organization, there is not. This point is still not being fulfilled, unless there are *compañeras* who go out to another town, there we do know well how the situation is, when one goes out to the city we already know how it is, it is not necessary for us to tell, each one of us already knows it.

**Third.** *Women have the right to decide the number of children that they can have and care for.*

We see still that it is not being fulfilled much, we are fulfilling it a little, there are some families who already decide how many they can take care of, how many they can have. In these points we are advancing a little, a little is still lacking, there are women who have a ton of children still. But there are now some families who are understanding what the consequence is afterward, when the family is not taken care of, when the family has many children, the consequences are then able to be understood.

We have not given many meetings especially for the *compañeras*, but this conscience is achieved through politics, studying the law a little, there a little bit of conscience is acquired. They themselves are going to understand, women and men, what happens upon having many children. Here in the zone we do not have much land, so if we have many children where are those *compañeritos* going to go to live afterward. It is there where a little bit of conscience is required, it is through the politics that the regional representatives give us, the local representatives give us in each town, it still has not been achieved for the Junta, those from the CCRI to organize that work, we still have not done it like that.

**Fourth.** *Women have the right to participate in community matters and have a position if they are chosen freely and democratically.*

Here we can say that it is already being fulfilled a little bit, because when a *compañera* comes out named within the town or the region, we have seen that they do accept their position. Although with great difficulty but there they go with their work, there are times that it is difficult for us to say that yes we are going to take the position, there are times that it is really difficult for us due to the bad custom that we have lived since more than 500 years ago, this is why it is very difficult for us when changing this situation. But we see the difference now, well thanks to the struggle they make us perform a position and what we think is that little by little we are going to go changing the situation and the reality as we lived it now as *compañeras* and *compañeros*. That we now are more or less carrying out, this is already being fulfilled a little bit in all the towns.

## Guadalupe (Education Promoter. Monterrey Region)

**Fifth.** *Women and their children have the right to primary care in their health and nutrition.*

In this point it is important for the couple to have a good agreement because only like this in the family can they give the right to the children and to the women. Above all the women who are feeding or who are awaiting their baby, it is important for them to be fed well, not that sometimes the women at the end are those who eat if food is left over or if not, well no. In the analysis that was done in the zone we saw that it is already being carried out a little bit in practice, that it is still not being fulfilled in its totality, it is part of the tasks still.

**Sixth.** *Women have the right to education.*

In this point something is being fulfilled but there are still some problems in the minority of the communities or families. It still comes to pass that the fathers do not give permission to their daughters, also at times the compañeras do not take their right, above all in the case of the young women who now can demand more, sometimes they do not take their right. In the case of the girls, when they are in their community, more is fulfilled because they attend the autonomous primary schools, the EPRAZ.

In the case of secondary school we see that for the young women it is a little more difficult because they have to travel to the Caracol, the secondary school is there. It is more difficult because they come from very far- away places and sometimes the fathers do not give them permission to stay there for multiple days while the classes last. Also it has been seen that some compañeras who are arriving to the school, to the secondary school above all, sometimes get married and leave their studies, sometimes some compañeros have the agreement for them to continue, but other times they do not come to a good agreement and the compañera leaves affected and the struggle leaves affected when they stop studying.

There was also a process with regard to the right to education which has to do with the formation of the adult compañeras. One time a plan was made so that the adult compañeras could be made literate and it was done, but maybe due to a lack of conscience it was not given follow-up, it was stopped because the compañeras no longer attended, now it is important for that which was begun to be retaken because the compañeras also have the right to prepare themselves, to have studies to be able to carry out their work and their commitments.

**Seventh.** *Women have the right to choose their partner and to not be obligated by force to enter into marriage.*

It is known that before the decision was not made by the women if they wanted to get married or who they wanted to get married to, they did not have a voice, their word was not taken into account, nothing, it was a bad custom. The compañeras were exchanged for booze, for animals, for money, and even though they were girls, maybe even 10 years-old, they married them obligatorily with whom the fathers decided. This a few years ago began to change, now the majority of the fathers ask their daughters if they want to get married or who they want to get married to, that is why we say that it has advanced in this point. Although still sometimes, it happens very little but it still happens, they get married at 13 or 14 years-old, and we say that it still is not their moment well it is necessary for the compañera to advance in her study, still it is the time of her preparation.

We see that with the change of life in the organization now it happens that many young men, many young women, are concentrated in various tasks, in various areas, and we cannot avoid them meeting each other, talking, spending time together. It is good if they talk but if it is then

going to be for a relationship it is said here for them to have their parents' permission and for them not to take up the bad customs of the cities where the couple just like that gets together without respect for their fathers, for their mothers, or that they go off with someone who is already married, that is seen poorly here in the zone, I think that in the whole organization.

**Eighth.** *No woman will be beaten or physically mistreated by family members or by strangers. The crimes of attempted rape or rape will be punished severely.*

This point here in the zone we say that it has not been completely fulfilled because physical violence is not the only thing that takes place, there are other types of mistreatment. Sometimes there are physical blows and there are times that there are not physical blows but we find that these problems of mistreatment still happen to and affect any one of our work levels. We say that sometimes there have been rape attempts, but not by the compañeros, but rather because the compañeras cannot go around alone and have to go accompanied because sometimes on the road there are rape attempts, here in the zone what has been known is that those who do that are not compas, we have found that these rape attempts and even rapes have taken place by the party- members.

We also see that in this point it has changed because the compañeros now respect the compañeras, although there is a minority which still does not give good respect to the compañeras. Sometimes it has happened, when there has been mistreatment and the compañera complains, it comes to be known, it has been punished even with a week of jail, it has been necessary to advise so that the compañero learns to respect the compañeras and like this it has been corrected.

**Ninth.** *Women will be able to occupy positions of leadership in the organization and have military ranks in the revolutionary armed forces.*

This point we say that it is being carried out because there are compañeras integrated in all the leadership positions. There are local, regional representatives, committee members, in all the positions and also there are compañeras occupying various military ranks. The compañeras have taken their right depending on their will and their ability.

**Tenth.** *Women will have all the rights and obligations which the revolutionary laws and regulations indicate.*

Here in our zone we have made the effort to fulfill our rights and obligations as our revolutionary law that we women have says, although we still are missing a great deal, we do not say that it is completely fulfilled or that we have already advanced so much, we are lacking, these 10 points have served for us to improve our participation in any place where we are, in various realms and for the men to respect us a little more.

Just as the tenth point of our law says that we women have all the rights and obligations but we realize that still there are many points that are not well specified, that are not well clarified in our revolutionary law, in the points that we already have known. That is why as a zone we saw that it is necessary to know and be familiar with what has been proposed in the year 1996, this did not come out as a proposal of the Junta but it was born from this zone and it is the proposal for the expansion of our Revolutionary Women's Law.

# **Proposal for the Expansion of the Revolutionary Women's Law**

**Claudia (Member of the Autonomous Council. MAREZ Magdalena de la Paz)**

1. Women have the right to be respected within family life and within the community.
2. Women have the same right as men within the community and the municipality.
3. Women have the right to express their feelings because as women by nature we have our own feelings and we are more sensitive.
4. Married women have the right to use family planning methods, be it artificial or natural, that they decide or wish, in mutual agreement with their husband.
5. Women have the right to participate in meetings and decision-making together with men, to discuss and make plans without anyone impeding them or criticizing them. They have the right to train themselves, to have spaces and mechanisms to be heard in the community and municipal assemblies, and to have positions in all the cultural and social fields.
6. Women have the right to prepare themselves in all levels which are necessary for their political, economic, social, and cultural development.
7. The Revolutionary Women's Law strictly prohibits the planting and consumption of drugs, marijuana, poppy, cocaine, etcetera, in our towns because we women are those who most suffer the consequences.
8. The sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages is strictly prohibited in our towns and communities, because we are the ones who suffer blows, mistreatment, poverty, and misery as a consequence of this vice.
9. Women and their children will have equal right as men to nutrition, clothing, the spending and management of the family's economic resource.
10. Women have the right to rest when they really need it, be it because they feel tired or sick, or because they wish to realize other activities that they need to.
11. Women have the right to verbally defend themselves when they are offended or attacked with words by their family or outside persons.



12. Women have the right to defend themselves when they are attacked or assaulted physically by family members or outside persons, and they have the right to punish the aggressors according to the rules and statutes of the organization.
13. The ability and the work of women will have the same value as the work of men, that is why there must not be difference in the just wage nor in the price of their products.
14. Women have the right to demand that the bad customs which affect their physical and emotional health be changed. Those who discriminate, make fun of, or abuse women will be punished.
15. Married men and married women, whatever their ceremony has been, remain prohibited by the Revolutionary Women's Law from abandoning their wife or husband without reason or foundation, to get together with another woman or with another man when there has not been a formal divorce.
16. It remains prohibited by the Revolutionary Women's Law for a man to have two wives, because in this way the wife's feelings are hurt, her right is violated, her dignity as a wife and as a woman are hurt.
17. The Revolutionary Women's Law retakes and considers valid the indigenous society norm that it is prohibited and is undue for a member of the community to have romantic relations outside of the norms of the community and of the town. It is to say, that it is not permitted for men and women to have relations if they are not married, because that brings as a consequence the destruction of the family and bad example before society.
18. No woman will be able to receive mistreatment, insult, or blows by her husband only for not having male children.
19. Women have the right to hold, to inherit, and to work the land.
20. Women have the right to receive credit, to promote and direct productive projects.
21. When separations take place in marriages the land and all the family's goods must be divided up in equal parts among the husband and the wife and among the children.
22. Women have the right to punish men who sell and drink alcoholic beverages and any other type of drugs.
23. Women have the right to diversion and to go out to get to know other places in the state, in the country, and in the world.
24. Women have the right to be supported by their husbands when they go to do work for the organization. When a woman goes to meetings, the man must care for and feed the children, and attend to the home.
25. Women have the right to handle all development plans.
26. Women have the right to organize themselves in culture, as in poetry, songs, theater, dance, celebrations, etcetera.

27. Indigenous women have the right for their different ways of being to be recognized.
28. Widows, single mothers, and alone mothers have the right to be respected, considered, recognized as a family and supported by the community when they need it.
29. Women have the right to be informed of everything that is done in the community and receive all types of information to expand their knowledge more.
30. Women have the right to demand that prostitution be eradicated in the communities.
31. Women have the right to receive technical advice so that they may be able to realize their work better.
32. Women have the right to be respected by their husbands, to be allowed to participate in the various activities and be allowed to leave the community to do their work with the rest of the women.
33. Women have the right to be respected in their traditional, cultural practices and customs, languages, and have the right to use their traditional clothing.

The 10 points of the Revolutionary Women's Law were made before 1994, we analyze them in our zone how we are doing with the fulfillment of this law, we saw the advance where we have reached in practicing the revolutionary law, but a great deal is still lacking, so our great work that we have as men and women is to now practice what we are lacking, the women's law that we have, per se still we have not achieved fulfilling everything.

## **Another Compañera**

These 33 points were a proposal which came out since 1996, various points were expanded, but it has not been confirmed if they will remain like this. From these points it is understood that there are some which can in themselves be taken to practice but for others it is still lacking, when we made them we based ourselves on how things were in those years, it was different, things were something else when we made this, it may be that now it has changed a bit but yes there are things which are still lacking.

When this expansion was proposed there was not a Junta, there were no autonomous councils, but it is our work as women, as the CCRI of that zone and we saw that the expansion of the law is lacking, that is why these 33 points were made.

But how was this done? We proposed it in an assembly of the five zones, we convened it, representatives of the five Aguascalientes came, I think that they still were not Aguascalientes in that time. The women came, we presented the proposal, we told them to carry it, to go to the towns, to discuss, analyze, remove, expand everything that the women from other zones want, other zones sent responses, some were in agreement, others no, that is why this amplification is not in force, it has not been approved by the five zones, that is also why it is not being used here in Zona Altos. It simply remained in the air, there is not a concrete response, it was not approved or it could be that we no longer moved it afterward.

As a Junta, as autonomous governments, not many things have been made to promote the participation of women, as a committee, some women from the CCRI, we have not been able

to do much either but since we integrated ourselves in this work, since '95 when we integrated ourselves, we have some work with the compañeras.

We have done meetings and have formed representatives of women but everything has not been achieved as it should be, in the beginning the women did enter but within a few months it no longer existed. Why? Well they have many reasons it appears, but pure excuses sometimes, other times it happens that we name pure girls and they get married, even if it is with a compa, and they leave their commitment thrown-out and no longer continue, then the town no longer names again. It is said to the towns that they must name another representative, or a local representative, that they must name the relief for the one who left their commitment, but the community says:

"No, it'll stay just like that," the women themselves say. "If this girl, this compañera, could not do it, what are we going to be able to do? Better to not," is the response that the women have given, although there have been attempts to form persons in-charge or representative of women in various regions.

We also as the CCRI have gone out to the regions to gather the support base women, we have done it two times no more, go out to the communities, but as if there was no response here in the zone. Why did it happen in this way? Speaking in politics there are no more compañeras, there has been but they leave their commitment, the ones we have are few.

Speaking of the participation of women in autonomous government and in the Junta de Buen Gobierno we are going to say what is real, we cannot lie that here we the women are advancing a great deal, that there are many authorities, here there are not even female agents, nor commissioners, we do not know if there are in a municipality, it could be that there are but we do not know it. Why? Who knows, we do not see where the problem is, so as women who are in the CCRI we ourselves have said, "where is the problem? Why can't the compañeras be raised up? And to date we have not found a response.

One problem that there is in the municipalities is that, for example, if a compañera comes to be a council-member, or representative, or Junta de Buen Gobierno, what happens is that she encounters a problem, sometimes that which we call "affair problems" occur. That affair problem which is said, is a problem of the man and the woman. If a compañera makes that mistake sometimes the compañera cannot endure, when she is already involved in that problem she cannot endure, she leaves her work thrown-out and then the people, her father or brother, whoever it may be, say that she can no longer continue because she made that mistake.

We ask ourselves why. Why can women not continue their work when they make that mistake and why do the compas, even if they get involved in a problem of that type, continue their work? Why is there that difference? Who knows, once again we have not found an answer, but with the town it is the problem which they see as very great when that happens. It has happened in some municipalities, above all in the Junta de Buen Gobierno, this problem has happened and the people say:

"No longer, I am not going to send my wife, I am no longer going to send my daughter because there she is going to encounter that problem," it is said that no.

That is the mistake, it is like that per se, even if it is explained well but the people, the town, as they are not able to understand that and it is the problem that there is here in Los Altos de Chiapas. There has been a Junta de Buen Gobierno which left its work thrown-out due to committing that failure and it has not been possible to name again because now nobody wants to accept the position due to that same problem. One makes the mistake and we all pay, that is it.

But per se here in Zona Los Altos there is no motivation, there is no interest, it appears, in the compañeras themselves, in the compañeros also. We cannot deny that the compañeros have supported us morally, but not all, sometimes it does not matter who it is, from head to toe, there has not been that moral support. We have known it since we have begun to work like this as women, that we have tried to do some work with the compañeros, but what we have found in the compañeros of the various positions, it does not matter who it is, but we find that instead of helping us as if our work has no value, they even say:

“It’s that it is women’s work, it is a thing for women,” say the compañeros.

What do we think about that? As women we feel bad, I do not know how to say it but we have felt in our own flesh how it is. We hope that it has not happened in other zones, if it has not happened then what a good thing, it is what our compañeros here in Los Altos need to know, if it has not happened in other caracoles, what a good thing, it is an example because here that has happened, it does not matter who it is. That is why a woman, we say it clearly once again, although she comes to be Junta de Buen Gobierno, comes to be a member of the Autonomous Council, comes to be a local or regional person in-charge, CCRI, but at the time to do the work, the time to resolve a problem, the time to make an opinion, to decide, truly we the women here in Los Altos battle a great deal.

“What do you say?” say the compas, sometimes they ask us and nothing, we do not speak at all.

“Why?” I do not know why, but at times, for example a problem which we are going to resolve, we do not say because simply if we say as if we fuck things up more. Some compas even say, “It is not good what that compañera said, it is not like that.” It is there where that has been stuck into our head, I cannot find the way to say how to explain it but it is what there is here, I am going to say, it is the moment to say what is real, what is true, nor can we make things up.

Here many things are lacking, but yes we have done something in politics. Over several years we see that there were not women’s representatives, there were not local persons in-charge, there were not regional representatives, so we ask ourselves what to do as women. What happened to us just like that, we are going to invent something, we thought about doing a March 8<sup>th</sup> meeting, convening the women but asking them to name their persons in-charge. We proposed it in the command, because always anything that we do we propose it, we said to the command if we can do a celebration on March 8<sup>th</sup> and they did support us, they told us to do the celebration but not only that, but also the compañeras from other caracoles had to come. Our idea was that in Zona Altos the women name their persons in-charge of each group, we did achieve that a little, because there were regions that did not even have a local person in-charge, we did achieve it, but once again it is dropping.

The women who have come to have a position as Junta de Buen Gobierno, as a member of the Autonomous Council, are named among men and women, they make an assembly, the women are not apart, but rather the Autonomous Councilmember who goes to look for their relief convenes men and women, young women, young men, they choose together their authority, not the women apart, but it is still lacking, even if it is explained to the compañeras as if sometimes they do not understand.

The three health areas which were made, a healers area was made, herbalists, and midwives, is of pure compañeras; that is not our initiative but rather a proposal of the General Command, and we liked it because we saw that it is a space which can be opened to women for them to be able to participate. That is why we like that idea which they proposed to us, but we said clearly

from the beginning that if the compañeros do not support us, if they continue saying as they have said, that work is not going to be able to get done.

We said that, even some leaders know that it was like that, that we said what there was. It has now been more than a year since those were formed, and we have now seen the difference a bit, we have no longer heard from the compañeros, “that is a women’s thing, we are not going to support.” No, it is now a little different, but there are many things, speaking of the compañeras’ participation, yes there are many things which are still lacking, we have the Revolutionary Women’s Law, but not only is it written there, our work that we have to do is begin to practice what we have still not reached.

## Questions

*In the meetings that you do as municipalities or a zone, do the compañeras participate? How do you do it, if there are no female authority agents or commissioners, how is it that the information arrives?*

Speaking of the organization it’s that the work here is something different. In our zone there are the local and regional men representatives, they meet, we give the information that there is to them and they take it to their region. The regional representatives gather their local persons in-charge, there is a little bit of men and women, they give the information to them and the local representatives take it to their towns, they take it to each town. But for the most part, we say it straight and clear, the ones who come to take the information are compañeros.

*In the revolutionary law it says that the compañeras have the right to choose their compañero, what happens when a compañera falls in love with a compa and they go off fleeing? Do the people have a law about this?*

In our law it says that we can choose our partner, we are talking about the girls, the young women. What we said in the expansion that cannot be is when they want to go off with a man or a woman who is married, but also there is not a law because in each community it is decided what to do if that happens, it is the responsibility of the autonomous judge and of the agents, men still because there are no women agents, it is their responsibility to resolve those cases because it is a social problem.

*In the revolutionary law expansion, as well as in the first 10 points, nothing appears, maybe because in this zone it is not seen, but in our zone there is a certain custom that has changed, it is no longer like before that the woman was forced to get married to the one who the father wants, that has almost disappeared there.*

*But there is a problem because in the moment in which the girl gets married to the guy, they guy’s father has to prepare himself with a certain quantity of money because the girl’s father, out of custom or I don’t know why, has to charge. There are towns that charge 2 thousand, there are towns which charge 5 thousand, 10 thousand pesos and we have come to know that in some towns up to 15 thousand pesos.*

*We consider that as a problem, because then there women are taken as a commodity or as an object, but it does not appear in the expansion of the revolutionary law. How do you feel as women with that arrangement?*

Here in Los Altos that also happens because when a girl who gets married the guy has to prepare I don’t know how much money, but sometimes the fathers exaggerate, as the girls now

have the right to choose their partner they pass over again, it is no longer how it should be and they leave fleeing, they say that one worse, she costs them more. That is a problem here also but it also has not been resolved what is going to be done, we have still not arrived, the judges also have not arrived to this.

# Difficulties with the Participation of Women in the Work

We have encountered various difficulties when we name the compañeras for a position, there are various reasons for which the women do not want to accept the position. In the communities, when we choose a compañera to be responsible in any area sometimes they do not want to accept.

“No, I don’t want to,” she says.

“But why?” we ask them.

“It’s that I don’t know how to read,” they say, they do not say it straight, they look for a pure pretext.

But that is not the problem, what we have seen is that if a woman is married she knows that there is no way to leave her child, it could be that it gives her pain to leave her husband because she knows that he does not know how to care for the animal, does not know how to cook his food, does not know how to make his tortilla, does not know many things. The woman knows that, I don’t know if it gives her pain, but one knows that they are not going to leave it, we have seen that there are men and women in a community and when it is said that there has to be compañeras in-charge, for them to name them, sometimes we see that the women as if they want to but the men say:

“No, it’s enough for it to be pure men, we’ll still leave the compañeras,” there are compañeras who like that.

“But it cannot remain like this, it’s that it is necessary for the compañeras to participate,” it is explained fully.

At the end a compañera leaves named, we say that said compañera is going to be a local representative, and she before saying anything only looks at her husband and the compa now has changed his face. She looks at her husband like this and then says, “no, it’s that I don’t know how to read,” but she is looking at her husband, it is because they do not let her, sometimes she accepts but as if she just remains like this. We have seen other cases when pure women come, for example, if the women’s cooperatives make their assembly, they name their leadership and the compañeras’ husband is not there.

“Well, it’s that you have to name the leadership. Who’s it going to be?” we ask.

“That compañera,” they say.

“You are going to be an authority or director,” they say to the compañera. “

But I don’t know what my husband is going to say. I don’t know what it is that he is going to say. It’s my husband, well he is the one who is going to say if I’m going to do it or not.”

Finally as if the compañeras force her to do the work, finally she accepts. That compañera returns, I think that she is going to get there to inform her husband that she encountered a position.

“No, you are not going to do it,” says the compa.

“Well, whatever you say because you are my husband,” says the compañera.

As if the woman due to being a woman is zero. But not always, other times the woman says, "I am going to do it." It's that there are two things, the woman still defends herself, but others no.

"No, you are not going to do it," says the compa.

"No, it's that yes I am going to do it. I am going to see up to where I can do it," says the compañera who defends herself.

"No, it's that you are not going to leave. If you leave think about it," he says, "because if not, I'll look for another woman."

"Well, what's there to do," she says and the compañera comes. "I am not going to be an authority, I am not going to be a director, because my husband won't let me."

That happens, I am not making a lie, since the woman does not want to be substituted by another woman because her husband has money, treats her well, I don't know why so many things and she does not want to leave her husband, so she no longer accepts the position. Although sometimes there are also cases where the compa does let her, but as he sees that his wife leaves, they leave him all alone in the house with the children, with the animal, everything that there is and he sees that he can't, they begin to have problems, the compa begins to say that he does not want it like this, that better for her to leave the commitment.

What is the true problem? One part is from the compañeros but the other part is from the women, because there have been cases also, when a compa's wife comes out named, he does support her but she does not want to.

"I don't want to, I am not going to do it," says the woman.

"Do it," says the compa. "Do it, there we are going to know how to help us."

"No, it's that I don't want to be."

Sometimes the woman herself does not want to, it is because she has in her head that she cannot, that she cannot walk alone. That is why there are various problems that we see which have impeded the participation of the compañeras, we see that what the law speaks of but there are still things that we have not come to how the participation of the compañeras should be. Here in Los Altos the participation is still little but there we are, little but it is what there is.

We say thanks to the organization where we are which has given that space where the woman can take a very important role, only we must work more. Speaking of Los Altos there is no support, no so much from our autonomous governments, from our Junta de Buen Gobierno, rather it is that there is not that motivation from the local representatives, from the regional representatives, from others, there is still not. We have not coordinated, we have not met, we have not decided what can be done. That is why sometimes in the assembly we say, "But until when is the participation of women going to be seen? How are we going to do it? What are we going to do so that it is made reality as our law says? Who is going to move it?" Nobody has answered me, nor have I myself found an answer, nor with our compañeras that we here, who knows who'll come to answer that.

It is the problem that there is in Los Altos, as if motivation is lacking a great deal, but we hope that in this encounter which is being done we realize how in other caracoles it is seen that there is motivation, as much from the autonomous governments as from the Junta de Buen Gobierno, there is coordination. We hope that we take that example, for us it is an example what they talked about that is being done in other zones.



# **Caracol III: Resistance Toward A New Dawn**

La Garrucha

# Introduction

## **Andrea (Health Coordinator. MAREZ Francisco Gómez)**

Before '94 the compañeras had suffered a great deal, there were humiliations, mistreatments, rapes, but that did not matter to the government, its work is just to destroy us as women, it does not care if it is that there is a woman who got sick or you ask for help or aid, it does not care about that, but we as women now we can no longer leave ourselves be, we have to continue forward. In those times there was suffering, there were many humiliations from what the evil government did and also the ranchers, they did not take women into account.

The ranchers had the compañeros like servants, the compañeras got up very early to work and the poor women kept working together with the men, there was a great deal of slavery, now we no longer want that, so it's that our participation as compañeras then appeared. In that time there was no participation, they had us like blind people, unable to speak. What we want right now is for our autonomy to function, we want ourselves as women to now participate, to no longer leave ourselves behind, we will continue forward so that the evil government sees that we no longer let ourselves be exploited like it did with our ancestors.

In the year 1994 it was known that there was our women's law, a good thing that there was the law, that we have now participated. Since that year political actions have gone out where it has been seen that the compañeras have already gone out, for example in the National Consultation the women too went out, they participated, I also presented myself in that time, I was 14 years-old and presented the National Consultation, I did not know how to participate nor speak, but I did do as much as I could. The women struggled, they already demonstrated, the government realized that the women no longer let themselves be, they continued. Now we want our autonomy to function, we have our rights as women, what we are going to do now is construct, make the work, it is now our obligation to continue forward.

We who now are present know who it was that made that revolutionary law, it was someone who struggled for that and someone who defended for us. Who was it who struggled for us the compañeras? Comandanta Ramona, she was the one who made that effort for us. She did not know how to read or write, nor speak in Spanish. And why did we as compañeras not make that effort? That compañera who made the effort is an example, she now is the example that we are going to continue further forward to make more work, to demonstrate what it is that we know in our organization.

# Participation of Women in the Struggle and Autonomy

## Ana Yolanda (Education Promoter. MAREZ San Manuel)

As compañeras we know well that in our Zapatista struggle the participation of women is also necessary, because in our struggle we are struggling among all. We are constructing our own autonomy, nobody comes to us to say how it is that we want to struggle, but we ourselves are going to construct it.

In our Tzeltal Jungle Zone the compañeras are participating a little the participation in some of the towns, we are not going to say that in all the towns the compañeras are participating, only in some because the majority of the women, as the compañeras from Caracol II already said, that we ourselves, the compañeras, feel that we are not worth anything, but that is not true, we also as women can participate the same as men, occupy positions and work too. We too have the same rights and worth to participate.

In our Caracol La Garrucha, the compañeras of some of the towns are occupying positions as health and education promoters, they also occupy positions as persons in-charge, agents, and commissioners; we know that in our zone women too have the right to work the land, to make collective work, like chicken raising, cattle- herding, and others more. In education some promoters are chosen, the majority are chosen, and some are volunteers who wish to participate as promoters; they give classes with the boys and girls, there they explain how women's rights are, how the Revolutionary Women's Law is. In this way the women participate in the towns.

Also in the municipalities the compañeras occupy positions as health coordinators, educational coordinators, and also there are two municipalities where there are radio-hosts, it is not in all the municipalities, there are only two municipalities where there are male and female radio-hosts, only in Ricardo Flores Magón and Francisco Gómez do women participate as radio-hosts. In the zone too women can participate in occupying a position as Junta de Buen Gobierno, they participate in information and vigilance.

Like this we are participating there, but the women who are participating in occupying positions are few, we are practicing participating, we do not know 100% well how to participate or share what we know, but rather now we are practicing. I do not have much experience to tell you or to explain to you how women are participating, but here I feel very contented because I am practicing a little. Thanks to our Zapatista struggle that we now have a space as women, there we now are able to participate.

# Women's Rights

## **Carolina (Education Coordinator. MAREZ Ricardo Flores Magón)**

**First.** *Women, without regard for their race, religion, color, or political affiliation, have the right to participate in the revolutionary struggle in the place and rank which their will and ability determine.*

We as compañeras have the freedom to participate in the revolutionary struggle, in the various work areas, because we have our right as women, that is why now we want there to be equality among men and women, we are in collective valuing and achieving our participation as compañeras. Not only the men participate but rather the women have the right to participate, be it in the zone, in the municipality, or in the town, according to our will and ability, that is why here we are participating as compañeras, it is important for the compañeras to participate because we have our right.

In this point we go along advancing little by little, some are already participating although not all, even if there now is one, two, or three women who are now doing it, little by little we go along advancing. There is another thing that we think as women, what the evil government says right now, it wants to cover our view, of us as Zapatistas, the government says that it is now fulfilling the women's law but what it is saying is not true. It says that there now is a female mayor, that there now is a female governor, that so what is it that we as Zapatistas want, but that is not what we want, we know that it is not fulfilling our laws, it is only a cheat so that we do not say anything, it is a way that it seeks for us women to drop out.

## **Susana (Sexual and Reproductive Health Coordinator. MAREZ Francisco Gómez)**

**Second.** *Women have the right to work and receive a just wage.*

We women have the same right as men to receive the same wage, because we are the same blood. That is what we want as women today in autonomy, but we still are not doing that because here there are no wages. But we know that outside of our places many women go out to work and they do not pay them well, their wages are very low, they pay the women less. In our autonomy what we want is for the government to understand our law that we have as women, for that to come to be fulfilled, for men and women to be equal, for us to no longer be paid less.

## **Manuela (Education Trainer. Francisco Villa)**

**Third.** *Women have the right to decide the number of children that they can have and care for.*

We women have the right to decide how to live in our homes and have the right to decide with our partner how many children we can have and care for. We have the right to not have anyone force us to have more or less children, to not have anyone force us to put the device in

ourselves if we do not want it, we have the right for our decisions and opinions to be respected. In our autonomy we want these rights that we have as women to be respected, because before the evil government put many bad ideas into our towns, it said that women are not worth anything, that they do not have the right to speak.

### **Celina (Coordinator of the Three Areas. MAREZ San Manuel)**

**Fourth.** *Women have the right to participate in community matters and have a position if they are chosen freely and democratically.*

As women we have the same right as men, we have the right to decide what position we can have in the communities, as agents and commissioners, health promoters, sexual-reproductive and three-area promoters, education promoters. We must give those positions importance, conscience, respect, and attention to be able to make a little advance in our organization.

### **María Luisa (Education Coordinator. MAREZ Francisco Gómez)**

**Fifth.** *Women and their children have the right to primary care in their health and nutrition.*

We as women from the home maintain health well, with our family we work to feed ourselves well, we work in the countryside, we plant our natural food like corn, beans, coffee, and others more, no one can say that we cannot work because we too have the right to work and participate as women equally with men, also men can help to see their children, make food, between the two we can do everything.

### **Claudia (Coordinator of the Three Areas. MAREZ San Manuel)**

**Sixth.** *Women have the right to education.*

We as women have the right to education, if we do not know how to read we can continue studying if we want, that is why there are our autonomous education promoters, so that they teach us, so that we continue forward. As women before we were not like that, with the evil governments we could not study because we did not have money, that is why until now we do not know how to speak in Spanish, nor read, nor write, but we are going to struggle up to where we can with our autonomy. Before our fathers did not give us the right to study, only the men could study, but now it is not like that, right now we can participate in various tasks and it is necessary to learn how to read so that in this way we can occupy positions.

We know well that our Revolutionary Women's Law says that we can have the right to education so that we too learn how to read and write, but not only that, also it is for us to learn to defend ourselves as women because we no longer want it to be like before when we were very exploited, we do not have good education as we now have. It is necessary for us to educate ourselves, to prepare ourselves, so that in this way no one is going to come any longer to cheat us or to exploit us as women. It is necessary to prepare ourselves, it is necessary for education to continue forward, so as women we continue forward also in education.

## **María (Coordinator of the Three Areas. MAREZ Francisco Villa)**

**Seventh.** *Women have the right to choose their partner and to not be obligated by force to enter into marriage.*

We as women have the right decide who our partner is and who we want to get married to, if the family forces us we cannot accept it, we choose with whom we want to be. We, women, it is no longer like before that the fathers and mothers forced us to get married with the one who they liked, they sold their daughters for booze but now we no longer want that, that is why we have this law.

## **Andrea (Health Coordinator. MAREZ Francisco Gómez)**

**Eighth.** *No woman will be beaten or physically mistreated by family members or by strangers. The crimes of attempted rape or rape will be punished severely.*

When we travel sometimes we come across accidents, sometimes the men do not behave well in the transportation where we travel, that is why we cannot go out. Sometimes the women do want to do the work in a position but due to those things the compañeras do not want to go out, some compañeras fear. Those from other organizations make fun of those of us who go out to fulfill a position, when they hear that we have a position they make fun of us, they say that what we are doing is not good for anything. There is where that problem is, but in those organizations the problems of rape, mistreatment, exist a great deal, all that exists in the other organizations, in contrast with us it is not like that because we are always explaining the women's law.

## **Patricia (Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno)**

**Ninth.** *Women will be able to occupy positions of leadership in the organization and have military ranks in the revolutionary armed forces.*

This point says that we women can receive a military position, but we can begin from the communities, for example, we can be militiawomen, corporals, or sergeants, like this the position that we are going to have little by little goes along being enlarged, according to the work that is decided to do. Like this we are going to have the advance up to where we can do and like this we are going to continue up to where we can.

We as women are participating also in various work areas, like in health. In health the majority of the compañeras are participating, there are various tasks, like that in sexual-reproductive health, general health, and the three areas of midwives, healers, and herbalism. In education they are participating as education coordinators and trainers, so that in this way our participation exists within our autonomy, because we know that we have the same rights to participate as the compañeros have.

Women can propose, think, and decide within an assembly when it is our turn as compañeras to participate, in our autonomy we know that the participation of the compañeras is necessary, our struggle is of men and women so that we do the work in collective.

Also in our towns we can participate as commissioners, agents, to be able to do the work all together as compañeras and in this way encourage the compañeras to participate because still the majority of the compañeras are not participating. Why? Because sometimes the fathers do not

let them do the work or simply because the compañeras do not want to do it. When a compañera decides to do a job she has all the right and the freedom to do it, if she has the will and conscience to do the work.

## **Ana Yolanda (Education Promoter. MAREZ San Manuel)**

**Tenth.** *Women will have all the rights and obligations which the revolutionary laws and regulations indicate.*

We know well that in our Zapatista struggle, as I already said a while ago, that not only do we say that we have the right, but rather also in our autonomous struggle we have the obligations so that how we want within our towns, how we are organizing in the towns may be reality.

We know that in the towns it is necessary to occupy positions, that there are many tasks to do to construct our struggle and our autonomy well, so as women not only do we say that we have the right, we also have to fulfill what we say, we also have to do the work as it should be. We already said that not only men have the right to occupy positions, but also we women have the right and we have to participate because we are constructing, among all, our struggle. It is necessary for us to participate among all.

## **Questions**

*How is the participation of the compañeras, how is the advance?*

Compañeras we still barely have it, we are about two or three percent of the compañeras, they do not much like taking the position, as it has been explained, when the compañeras are named they do not want to accept, however much you tell them to do it nobody wants to do it, only sometimes one in the Junta or one in the Council, that is what is happening there.

In the municipality is a rotation that the compañeras do, from each town they go passing, there are not compañeras who remain permanently as councilmembers, but rather it is a rotation that they do from each town and in this way they go along passing. There also are the commissioners but what happens is that still they do not have that idea on how the work can be done, more or less together with the men they have to form that work until they go along learning little by little, to say how they are going to go advancing.

*At the zone level, are the towns who have women authorities in the towns a majority or minority?*

The compañeras who are participating are still a minority, the majority cannot do it because various difficulties, sometimes when they name them they do not let them go out, they do not give them permission, as if the compañeros still have not understood well.

*Are the women participating yet in the Junta de Buen Gobierno or still not?*

Yes the compañeras are participating in the Junta. In each region two compañeras are named, in this way they go making the rotation when it is their turn for a shift. We do not say that they are many, that there are four, five, or six compañeras; no, sometimes there are two or one, but the compañeras are now participating.

*The compañeras who are in the Junta de Buen Gobierno or another compañera who has another position, have they at any time met or have they thought how to improve this participation of the compañeras from the town and in all the levels of government?*



Yes, they are now doing it, that is why they do the zone assembly, the agents get together, commissioners, everyone gets together. Then from there they go again to tell the communities to do the work that we are needing, they explain to them that it is very important to do the work. Before there was no one but now yes more or less they go along understanding, the compañeras now go along doing it. They always meet in the zone or in the municipalities, also in the communities, according to the report that the agent or commissioner carries.

*Is there someone in particular who is promoting the compañeras' work, be it the Junta, the CCRI, or someone else?*

The CCRI is the one who most gets us together, more than the commissioners, they are the ones who do it, they or the ones who give the information so that they do the work for the compañeras, the majority are men who work there. But also there is an agreement in the Francisco Gómez municipality to promote the participation of the compañeras. The agreement of the municipality so that the compañeras participate is for a rotation to be done, that agreement is already there, it failed from lack of communication toward the towns, but yes it is now being promoted.

## **Caracol IV: Whirlwind of Our Words**

Morelia

# Introduction

## **Claudia (Support Base. MAREZ 17 de Noviembre)**

We women very long before suffered from mistreatment and discrimination, inequality in the home, in the community. We always suffered and they told us that we were an object, that we were not good for anything, they taught us like this, our grandmothers only taught us to work in the home, in the country, to take care of children, the animals, and serve the husband. We never had the opportunity to go to school, that is why we do not know how to read or write, much less speak in Spanish. They told us that a women does not have the right to participate or to demand. We did not know how do defend ourselves nor did we know what a right is. Our grandmothers were educated like this by their bosses who were the ranchers.

Some of us now still have that idea of working alone in the home because in this way this suffering was being bound until where we are now. After December 1994 the autonomous municipalities were formed, it was there where we began to participate, to know how to do the work, thanks to our organization which gave us a space for participation as *compañeras*, but also thanks to our *compañeros*, to our fathers who then understood that we do have the right to do the work.

Although we do not know how to read, nor write, nor speak in Spanish, we go along learning little by little, it is an example which our Comandanta Ramona left us. She did not know how to read, nor write, nor speak in Spanish, but she was the first one who went out to participate outside of Chiapas, when she went to Mexico City, she said “never more a Mexico without us,” and the evil government copied what our comandanta said. When Vicente Fox was president according to him he also said it, but he said “never more a Mexico without you.” He said it to cheat the brothers and sisters, to those who still are being used, to be able to govern in the evil government.

We also have the example when the *compañeros* and *compañeras*, comandantes and comandantas, left in the March of the Color of the Earth. Comandanta Esther went who spoke in the place where only those who supposedly have studies and a tie enter. She entered, spoke, and said “here I am, an indigenous women and Zapatista.” That is one more step, an example, about our struggle of *compañeras*.

In the evil government we see that there are now more women making their campaign to govern and to cheat the communities, there are female police in the official municipal seats, but they go in to work for money. In the communities which are not Zapatista there are no female authorities like agents, commissioners, promoters, because they do not receive a wage, so they cannot do what we as Zapatista women do, what we work for our autonomy.

With our conscience we are struggling, but alone we cannot struggle, we always go together hand-in- hand with our *compañeros*. There was also a visit of the insurgent *compañeras* in each town, they gave us a talk about how to struggle together with *compañeros*, how to do the work.

Like this we were advancing our participation as women little by little, by means of discussions and examples.

# **Participation of the Compañeras in Autonomous Government**

**Alejandra (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno.  
MAREZ Lucio Cabañas)**

Some of us compañeras have different work processes in which we are chosen by the people, like honor and justice commission, commissioners, agents, and also in the municipal regions and in the zone, we also do service in the Junta de Buen Gobierno. In those spaces we have found participation, assuming the responsibilities for our work.

Now a team of support bases is being formed, we call it the vigilance commission, they are accompanying their delegates of the Junta de Buen Gobierno, to supervise if their work is functioning well, and if not, they are responsible for informing all their towns, they have to inform their towns if there are some difficulties or if the Junta de Buen Gobierno is not doing it work well.

In the autonomous municipalities we as compañeras also participate in different work areas, all the work that we realize is always in collective, together with the compañeros, where we discuss, propose, and agree on the plans which are needed. It is like this how our work in autonomy is functioning.

# **Work of the Compañeras in the Junta de Buen Gobierno**

## **Amelia (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ Lucio Cabañas)**

We women have participation within the Junta de Buen Gobierno, we are participating out of conscience and will, we were named by the people to do the work because the work is done in collective, although we do not have the sufficient ability to do the work but we do up to where our conscience allows us.

Within the Junta de Buen Gobierno we occupy various work areas, like health commission, education commission, production commission, videographer commission, and radio broadcaster commission. We also have occupied positions like financial secretaries and coordinators of the Junta de Buen Gobierno team. We have learned within these functions how to use computers, the telephone, how to receive and send information, internet, these things have been worked.

We realize that there we learn to handle those devices which before we had no familiarity with because we did not have the experience of how the functioning is. Within this work we learn and also develop our mind so that little by little we go along advancing in what is the work of the Junta de Buen Gobierno, but not alone, also with the support of the compañeros, there it is worked together, we do it among compañeras and compañeros, it is a way in which we also demonstrate the development of our work, of our autonomy.

We are working autonomy in collective. We have been named to support the commissions, to go out to visits and see the advance in the municipalities, regions, and towns, to see how autonomy is being developed.

Within the Junta we have been named as compañeras and compañeros to assume and support the commissions that we have, this is to do visits in the regions, in the municipalities, for how they are developing the work. For example, there is a commission in-charge of the education area, but as a Junta we also assume that position to support the commission, if it is responsible for confronting a problem or an educational necessity, the Junta is there to support that commission, so that we resolve it between the commission and the Junta. That is like this in all the areas that we have within the Junta de Buen Gobierno.

In these areas the participation is balanced between compañeras and compañeros, doing the effort where possible, we women practicing and exercising. There are some compañeras who do not know how to read or write, but we have the support of the compañeras who know how to read and write, we support each other a little to fulfill our participation in the Junta de Buen Gobierno and in the various areas that we occupy.

We have come across compañeras who do not know how to read or write, that is what makes many compañeras find it difficult to participate, so we as a Junta, in the period that I was there, coordinated and named a compañero who occupied himself giving classes to the compañeras,

because they also said that it was necessary for them to know something, learn to read and write even as little as their name. We worked and there were compañeras who did take importance and learn, even as little as knowing how to put their name but they did do it, and not only in that, also in addition and subtraction, that is the easiest in mathematics, they also learned something.



# Participation of the Compañeras in the MAREZ

## Andrea (Zone Commission. MAREZ Lucio Cabañas)

When the autonomous municipalities were formed each town was choosing its candidates for the work, the number of candidates depends on how many commissions the municipality needs. Once each town has its candidates, a municipal assembly is convened, each town takes its candidates to present them in the municipality. Being in the municipality assembly it goes along being seen what position each one of the compañeras is responsible for.

There are some compañeras who occupy the position as municipal councils, education commissions, production commissions, and health commissions. These commissions or these council members are the ones in-charge of promoting and seeing the needs which are presented in their municipality, depending what work is required in each work area, these health commissions, production commissions, together with the council members, make their reports every 6 months, there the commissions inform what is the advance that each work area has, for example, in production, what advances they have in the collectives of each region or of each town; also in education, what advances education has, the same in health.

These commissions make visits to each town or to each region, to see if the compañeras really are working, because the compañeras have collectives in some regions and some towns, but the greater part of collectives which they have are stores, that is, in the towns. To prove if the compañeras really are working, the commissions themselves have to do their visits to see how the advance of that work is, if there is advance or there is not advance, then seeing how each town or each region is they give their reports, they inform how many collectives there are, how the advance is, if it is advancing or not, also they make the expense report. The visits also serve to enliven the compañeras a bit, because if not as if they do not have that spirit to continue with the position that they have, however when a compañera or the compañeros who come to the town to see the compañeras, as if the compañeras bring themselves to assume that responsibility which each one has depending on the position that she has.

The compañeras do not have collectives in each municipality, almost the majority of their collectives are in the towns, each one of the collectives has its representatives, its commissions. The collectives are created because we saw that it is a very important need for the compañeras, because sometimes when they have municipal meetings they pitch in for the fare, when sometimes we do not have money there is no way for how to find that resource for the fare, since we see that it is a very important need of the compañeras so work begins to be done in the collectives, what they produce depending how the weather is in each town and in each region, for example, in cold lands coffee cannot be planted because there it does not give.

Depending on what it is that can be produced in each town the collectives are made so that they are helped with the fare expenses when they have municipal meetings, or depending on what

necessity there is within the collective itself or within the town. Also the collective work serves to push the participation of the compañeras because there they work together, there it is seen they are more or less learning the participation, collectivism is very good for the compañeras, so that to learn to exchange the ideas or the knowledge that each one of them has.

## Questions

*How is the participation of the compañeras at the zone level? Are they participating in all the towns?*

Up to right now we are seeing that the compañeras are participating more or less, although not at 100%, but there they go. The number of compañeros who participate depends on the place, because in the whole zone where we are there are small towns and there are big towns; in the small towns there is only one women's representative, depending on the number of members in a family or on the number of residents in a small town. In the large towns more women's authorities are name. As compañeras of course the majority is participating because it is what is being promoted, that there be participation and yes, although little by little but there is participation of the compañeras and it is seen that it goes along advancing.

*Do they have compañeras who are local authorities?*

Yes, they have local authority compañeras in the majority of the towns. In our zone there are municipalities with large towns, there are new population centers, there are large communities, but also there are regions where there are places with few compañeros, they have just 2, 3, or 4 compañeras who live in a spot. There in the spot they name only one representative because there are few compas and a female commissioner or agent cannot go out, they only have one female representative, but in the new population centers there are compañeras who are commissioners and agents. When a municipal meeting is done where there are more compañeras, the agents and the commissioners arrive, from the spots only representatives arrive. When there is going to be a meeting in the zone the representative has to go, even if they are small towns but they have to arrive, as if participation is going equally.

*Does the Junta realize the visits to the towns or who visits?*

Sometimes yes, but also depending on the work, for example in production also visits are made in the zone. The zone commissions go out to the visits in each municipality, they go to the regions. If it is from the municipality then the municipal commissions go out to each town to see how the work is, the commissions go together with the councils.

*That visit which they do is pure compañeras or do they go together with the compas?*

It is together with the compas, but also the compañeras go directly to see the compañeras' collectives.

*What is the work or the role which the compañeras perform honor and justice commission?*

In the municipality we take turns, two councilmembers, two honor and justice a man and woman. If a compañera has a problem, for example if it is a rape, what she is going to tell she has to discuss it with the honor and justice compañera so that she does not have difficulty discussing it with a compa. The honor and justice compañera coordinates with the honor and justice men to resolve the problem.

*Does women's participation exist in all the work areas, like education, health, and others?*

Yes, there is participation of women in all the areas. It is the same as the compas, for example in the zone there are health commissions, if 4 health commissions are named they have to be two compañeros and two compañeras, the position is the same which they occupy there.

*Have you confronted the problem of upon naming there are compañeras who do not want to accept the work?*

Yes, we have encountered those difficulties, there are some compañeras who are not conscious of assuming that responsibility, but it depends on the town how it is going to sanction that.

*How many female compañeras are members of the Municipal Council and of the Junta? We want to know how many compañeras participate there as authorities.*

The municipalities have 12 council members, so there are 6 compas and 6 compañeras, they are like this in the three municipalities. At the zone level there are 60 councilmembers, that is there are 30 female councilmembers and 30 male councilmembers. The 60 compañeros and compañeras are divided into 5 shifts, each shift is composed of 12 compas, where 6 compañeras and 6 compañeros enter. It is balanced among compañeras and compañeros, in total there are 30 compañeras who are members of the Junta. They are especially for the Junta de Buen Gobierno, the 60 who pass through in the Junta de Buen Gobierno, besides the municipal councilmembers who are those who are in the municipality, seeing the municipalities.

*You said that in the three levels of government there are compañeras, has there been coordination in the three levels of government and how are they coordinated?*

In those three levels they are coordinated through the assemblies that they do in the zone. There the proposals come out or, depending on the work that is going to be realized in the municipalities, there they put themselves in agreement and each municipality is the one that carries the task of going to work in the towns. They are coordinated through the zone level among compañeras and compañeros.

# Participation of Women as Local Authorities

## Verónica (MAREZ Comandanta Ramona)

The compañeras participate as local authorities to see what is necessary to do in the town and if there is a problem among compañeras they also give their words, even if we do not know how to read or write but we do know how to state an opinion. They also participate in the collective work, there are compañeras who occupy education promoter commissions, health promoters, coordinators of collectives, vigilance councilmembers, commissioners and agents, among other work, depending on the needs of the people.

The general coordinators are those who have the obligation to promote and inform the expenses which are realized in the work that is done within the towns, also they have the responsibility to inform the advance of the collective work, together with the compañeros, in a general assembly. The agents are those who have to resolve problems which are presented in the women's group and also organize and enliven the women in the town.

## Questions

*When there is a problem with the compañeras, do pure compañeras resolve the problem or are they supported by the compas to resolve the problem?*

When there is a problem which is presented within our town, the authorities resolve together, among compañeras and compañeros.

*In the work which the women in the town realize what are the problems which are presented most and how are they resolved?*

The problem which has been presented in the work within the town is that sometimes there is no participation from all the compañeras. That is one of the problems, also conscience is lacking to do the work, but we as compañeras who are promoting that, we call it to their attention so that they too participate. But yes there are compañeras who at once do not want to, because they put the pretext that their children, their animals, or all the obstacles that were already said, but those who do not want to are the minority, from the majority there is participation.

Another problem which is presented is that when a compañera is in-charge of a collective work, is president, secretary, or treasurer of a collective work, sometimes when her account does not square up, since they turn-in a report, sometimes the compañeras get angry when we demand that they do their work well. Sometimes they leave their notebook thrown-out, well she goes off angry, because we demand clear reports from her and so the agent has to call it to her attention or resolve in a good way because the compañera cannot do like that. But if the same compañera does like that two times, if the compañera again throws the list, now it goes to the rules because each town has its rule for a sanction, there it is seen what is going to be done with the compañera.

In this way work is being done, the collective work of the compañeras has been going for a while now, like this the problems are being resolved. That is what we are confronting, but also there are compañeras who ask for permission due to sickness, there it is recognized, but when the compañera does not arrive in a collective work and it is not known why she did not arrive, it has to be discussed with all the compañeras if she is going to pay or is going to replace the day of work. Those are the problems which happen within the collective work.

*Who made the rule?*

The town, it is an internal rule of the town, men and women made it.

*In your zone has there not been that problem of the compañeras who are chosen and leave their positions? How do you resolve that?*

If a compañero or compañera leaves their work, it is the obligation of the town or of the municipality where they are from to name their relief. If it happens in the town, the towns too have to name their own authority, it has to name who replaces that compañero or compañera. Like this are the agreements that there are there, that the same municipality or the same town has to name their relief. Depending why they left the position it is seen if it is punished or not. If it is due to a sickness I believe that it is allowed, but if it is due to problems or due to other things, it is called to their attention, sometimes it is punished. If it is that a compañera who is fine abandoned her position, the compañera in good condition, only because she did not want to continue her position, there it is punished with 60 days of work, she comes to make food for the shift-members of the Junta.

*The position from where the compañera left never remains empty?*

No, because the town or the municipality from where the compañera came has to replace, they again name another woman to occupy that position.

# Participation of Women as Commission Delegates

**Alejandra (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno.  
MAREZ Lucio Cabañas)**

The persons responsible for each commission have the responsibility to develop the work putting the effort and the desire to take it forward. The work depends on the commission in the various areas which we are responsible for, in the Junta it is necessary to put the responsibility for the commissions in each area and promote the group in order to develop the topic. There, even if you do or don't know, you have to put the effort and desire to take that work forward, to develop it.

In each area the compañeras, together with the commissions which form the work team of the various areas, like the health commission in the zone, education commission in the zone, radio broadcasting commission, production commission in the three levels of government, local, municipal, and zone, also are responsible for promoting that the work, the tasks which corresponds to it, gets done.

In the Junta we have a responsibility for each work area, in health, education, production, what is done is promoting and being responsible for a job where it is seen if the commission of that area does not carry the work, or the work goes low, it is promoted to develop or to make the work better, the work in the various areas is going to be raised up, in all the commissions.

# How the Revolutionary Women's Law is Being Exercised

## **Amelia (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ Lucio Cabañas)**

We carry the advances which we have had in accordance we are doing it, on what we are fulfilling and what is not being fulfilled. As women that right is had without distinguishing how we are, we have known to respect differences, what happens is that there are compañeras who do not give ourselves the time to do the work. Also as women we have the right to do the work without there being a wage, but also we have the right for them to support us, for them to support us the same as the compañeras when they receive support in their personal work. There are couples or families in which there is equality, they have understood the right to decide how many children to have and care for. We have also seen that there are compañeras who still do not have that right to decide, but rather machismo still exists. In the participation of women we are promoting that there be participation making encounters of women in the towns, regions, or municipalities, promoting in the collective work.

Now there is already the right to medical treatment. We have in our towns our own promoters and health houses, we now have our herbalists, midwives, healers, who have received trainings. Also in some regions there are health clinics and there also are promoters. The collective gardening work has been promoted so that there is better nutrition.

As parents we have the right and the obligation to give education to our daughters. In the education point for women, we see that there still are generations who do not know how to read or write, that is why importance is being given to the education of our girls and boys, because they are the ones who must prepare themselves to one day come to be an authority of the people.

Speaking of customs, before they forced the daughters to get married, they did not have the right to decide for themselves, they were sold for money and in other occasions they paid in kind, they made a list of things, that was the custom before. But now it has been understood about the rights that we have, now our daughters are given that right for them to decide without being forced.

We also have things that are still not being fulfilled. Machismo exists, there are compañeras who receive mistreatment from the compañero, still there is fear of demanding rights because there is weakness. But there are compañeras who do have the bravery to defend their rights in the problems which are presented with the compañero, because the bad customs exist as it was before, like the jealousies.

But as women we have had positions of leadership in the work, in the areas within autonomy, like health, education, production. Yes there are compañeras who have already understood the work, although with the obstacles which are presented to us in the walk, but we have gone out to give our effort. Still there are compañeras who have not understood that clarity in the work,

they have not valued themselves about what is the right that we have as women. There are some of us compañeras who are clear on the work, rights, difficulties, and risks which are presented in the path, but we have helped and oriented each other among compañeras in work groups to fulfill the responsibilities which we must do.



# **Difficulties which the Compañeras Have Encountered in the Various Bodies of Autonomous Government**

## **Andrea (Zone Commission. MAREZ Lucio Cabañas)**

We have had many difficulties because at times we do not all know how to read, not all of us know how to write, there are some compañeras who still do not know how to speak in Spanish, it is very difficult for them. That is one of the difficulties that we have encountered in each work area.

We have had difficulties when at times we go out to do a job, for example in the zone. Sometimes we leave our houses early and sometimes we do not find transportation, sometimes we arrive late to where the work is done, but is not from wanting to but rather is from that difficulty that we have. Also sometimes there are some priistas, priista men, who lack respect for us as women. There have been many of those difficulties also, we have encountered drunks on the road, they begin to bother us, to say many things, there have also been those difficulties. Also we have risked ourselves, because it is a risk that we run as women, because it could be that there is someone who has bad intentions.

We have seen the difficulties in the compañeras who have little children, sometimes they go out to do the work, be it in the zone, in the municipality, or in the region, sometimes the children get sick there. It is a difficulty that we see, but if there is a child who gets sick the Junta is in-charge of seeing that they are given medical treatment, also if there is a compañera who gets sick within the work there has always been that treatment.

There are many difficulties, not only that, there are many, I think that in each caracol, or in each zone they also have those difficulties, but in spite of those difficulties that we have we are doing the work up to where we can, because if you come to have a difficulty and you just stay there, as if not, it is necessary to continue forward up to where we can.

## **Another Compañera**

We have always had the same difficulties, as the compañera from Oventik spoke, also there in our zone it is what happens to us. When there are compañeras named who come to do work in their shifts in the various work areas, sometimes we encounter problems. When they are found in those problems it does not remain only for the one who made the mistake, but rather sometimes we all pay, sometimes it is there where the dads, the husbands, and the moms, or the compañera take those problems and use it as a pretext to not accept the work.

"I am not going to send my daughter, this is going to happen to her, I do not like the idea of it happening like that to my daughter."

It is a difficulty because the moms, the dads, the husbands, as if they are not clear that we are working, in itself we are going to encounter mistakes in our paths, but that is not the fault of the work, nor of the organization, the person responsible is the person who does not know how to think, who does not know how to carry the responsibility for the work that their town has entrusted to them. From trying to do as if nothing is their responsibility, that is why sometimes we make those mistakes, without realizing that there as if we put an obstacle, that we cannot advance with that.

In a region of my zone the collective work of the *compañeras* was advancing, but when they confronted that problem as if just there the *compañeras* lost spirit, or they think that every time those problems happen, they did not take it as if it was an experience and that it cannot happen again. There the *compañeras*' conscience finished in the collective work, they abandoned the collective work and we had to go again with the *compañeras*, we had to come again to orient the *compañeras* who can do the collective work, but it now is difficult because they already have a bad idea, that all the work that we have does not work. But it is trying to go encouraging again, doing talks with the *compañeras*, that it should not be like that, the work has to advance.

We there sometimes do encounters in regions, in micro-centers or we do visits to other municipalities, because sometimes the *compañeras* cannot come because they are very far-away, sometimes we move ourselves to go visit the *compañeras*. The Committee moves to go visit other zones to enliven the *compañeras*, sometimes the *compañeras* understand their right.

Sometimes it happens that a *compañera* now understands that she has rights but she does not feel taken into account by her authorities when there are problems that happen in the work and they resolve it. Like this it happened in our zone, the authorities resolved the case of a *compañero* who made a mistake with a *compañera*, the *compañero* was married and the *compañera* single. I did not know how they arranged that problem, I found out later, when a clinic was inaugurated and I went to the party to accompany the *compañeros*, I did not know what it is that was happening, that *compañero*'s wife arrived and she began to demand.

"Where is my right? I do not know what is happening within the work where my *compañero* is. I have the right and with that where it remains. If you know why did you not tell me what is happening," she told me.

I told the *compañera* that I do not know about that problem and that I have to investigate well how it is, and the *compañera* began to demand that because what happened to her was very awful, I think that the *compañera* was right when she began to demand her right as a woman. Then later the *compañera* said:

"My husband told me that he has a punishment because he sold a car and he sent it with a logo and that is why my *compañero* received punishment. I know that he did not bring very many tortillas, I got his tortillas, I got his pozol, I passed in Altamirano still to sell some things so that I am going to leave my *compañero* his expense. I left him his pozol, his tortillas, and 200 pesos for his expense, but nobody told me why he is punished and it is the anger that I have now," says the *compañera*. "They tell me that I have the right and they do not respect my right, how can I remain quiet like this?"

Until now this problem has not been resolved, it is pending to go see the couple, still I have in-process going to visit even in their home to convince the *compañero*, the *compañera*, to arrange the problem. Then later the *compañero* got angry and said:

"I am not going to go in my shift but you also cannot go out to do this work," the *compañera* was named to come do this work, but the *compa* did not let her.

The compañera told me that she wants a visit, she wants me to go to her house to see that problem because her compañero does not let her go out because she demands her right. Those things happen, that there are still compañeros who have not understood it, still we have not understood our rights equally, what we want is for there to be equality among men and women and for us to understand a little now with our walk, for us to respect each other.

The failure that the Junta had there when they resolved it, it was the information with which they resolved that problem, there was the failure, but it happens like that. There are many compañeras who sometimes receive psychological blows, sometimes they scold us, sometimes they do not let us go out, sometimes the compañeros still cover that path of ours, but there are many of us women who still do not want to defend our right, as if we still do not have that strength to defend, to demand our right.

In a community there in my municipality it happened like this to a compañera, she has work in a collective store, she is a treasurer, when the other compañeras came for her, the secretary and the president came to do the accounts, the compañera says that she can't.

"No because I feel sick," she only sent her notebook where the account of the money is kept, where she has it stored.

She did not show up, years passed like this but without the compañera saying what it is that she feels. Then later, a day came which she said:

"I cannot come because my husband does not let me go out," they are accustomed in the town to the compañeras getting together in the afternoon to do the accounts. "I cannot because when I leave in the afternoon, when it gets dark, if I do not arrive quickly to my house my compañero thinks that out there I am going around doing other things," they begin to make rumors of things which happen within other towns and he then thinks that his compañera is doing like that.

One day the compañera came who was beaten, her face purple, and they asked her why she was like that.

"No, it's that I stepped on a hoe and I came here," said the compañera.

In that sense as if the compañera does not have the strength to defend herself, to go to an authority to say what is happening to her, what she feels, and the compa is happy because the compañera is denying everything that is happening. But I think that it is no longer the time, now is the time that we have value as women, that we have to defend ourselves so that like this too the compañeras and the compañeros correct themselves.

We do have rights but we are not going to pass over with our right, what if I am now going to order my compañero to do the things and I am only going to sit awaiting my food, that is no longer a right, as if we are commanding the compañeros. What we want is for there to be equality of rights, for our compañeros to understand us, for them to support us a bit, but we also support our compañeros, to go together walking, to seek the path where we are going to advance with our struggle.

But also there are compañeras, not only the compañeros, that when our husband goes off to do a job, the compa arrives content but sometimes we imagine bad things, we think that the compa I don't know what he is doing out there. Sometimes we are angry, sometimes we are not doing the pending work that the compa leaves, they are us compañeras' errors. Not only the compañeros do like this, also us, there are compañeros to whom it happens like this, it is where we do not advance.

When there is an assembly we see that there are many compañeros who come with their compañera, sometimes they go off in pairs, but the compañeros do not support their compañeras,

that is how I observe it. A compa arrives with his compañera, and she is there the whole day with the baby, and the compa is seated there, when the break arrives the compañero is there and the compañera goes off to wash the diaper, she carries their baby. How is it then?

As if we are not understanding, there is now change there, as if we have not understood, maybe the compa is ashamed to hug his little child because the child is malnourished, it is what happens, compañeros, sometimes when we leave them very small, the children grow malnourished; maybe he is ashamed to accompany his compañera because she did not have the time to brush her hair, to change, because the compañeras do not have time. But we also see compañeros, not all, but there are compañeros who now understand, when they are in the assembly and the compañera gets tired, there the compa too carries their child for a while, it looks beautiful, and the compañera feels good, she feels contented.

But many things happen, if we are going to observe in each town there are things which happen, for example, there is the number of children. When we talk about the Revolutionary Women's Law, we say that we women have the right to decide how many children we can have and take care of. If each while we have a baby, if every year a child is born, the child no longer is being bathed because we are not left with time to bathe them because sometimes, I don't know how to say it, there is a Cantinflas movie where their little children come out graded, like a little staircase, sometimes we are like that also. It is because of this that there is no longer space for the compañera to do the work, worse if the compañero does not know how to wash clothes, worse if the compañero does not know how to cook corn, does not know how to make tortillas, it is difficult.

"I can't compañeros, it's that my little children are very small. I want to do the work but I can't," say the compañeras.

There are many compañeras, sometimes I think that they are right when they say that, I understand it. Why do I understand it? Because I am a mother, that is why now I always orient the compañeras, right now there are health promoters who give a talk on how we can take care of ourselves so that we are not going to be destroyed too as mothers, we should leave the child from 5 to 6 years so that they can grow well and for the mother to take strength so that she can have another baby. When a 5-year old child remains, when you are going to have your other baby you are going to be content because the other already is well, because the other is already grown, but if every year you have a baby it is very different.

When they name the compañeras who have children as authorities, they come one time, two times, three times, and when the compañera arrives at her house she is not going to arrive to see her house clean, she comes just like in a pigpen because the children do a great deal of mischief. The compañera has to make tortillas so that she leaves it for her child, she has to get tortillas to take it where she is going, and we see that the little children are those who eat more; if you go four days to the meeting and you leave two baskets of tortillas it is not enough for the child, worse if they are very little they eat more, every while they eat; the youth eat less because they go out to work and carry their pozol, but the children no, it is very different. It is worse still if it is that the compa does not support per se, the compa arrives, the compañera just arrived, she is still cleaning their house, she is making their fire, food for the compa, and what if the compa arrives already angry.

"Give me my food quickly," he arrives to say to the compañera who just arrived from doing her work. What does the compañera feel there? She feels bad because she does not feel the moral support from her compañero, worse if the town is not organized. Right now we already see

it different because when the work began there were towns which organized to support their authorities, when children remained they gave them tortillas, there are towns which still do that, but there are towns where there is no organization, that do not care if the compañera went one week to the meeting, they do not care if the compañera has children, they do not support her, they do not contribute 5 meals each compañera for them to give it to the family of the compañera who is doing that work.

There the organization of us as women is lacking a great deal, it is there where we do not advance. I think that right now it can be organized because we are now pure Zapatistas, before when it was clandestine it could not be done because you cannot say where; now we can say if there is a delegate, a councilmember. We can be supported in that manner but an organization is needed, there are some towns that do it but not all, it is lacking to organize the towns so that in this way we can do the work well.

We tried a bit naming the compañeros with their partner, we are seeking the way for how to do so that the compañeras participate, but it did not advance because the work in the house remains abandoned, the chickens remain, the milpa, and there is the expense of bringing to the children. It did not work, we know well that if the compañero is going to cover their shift the compañera remains doing the work, it is like this that we are supported, that is why we have not succeeded, because if the two go there is no one to do their work.

Many things happen, but how can we change if the compañeros still do not know how to make tortillas, if the compañeros still do not know how to put their corn, if the compañeros still do not how to wash their clothes. How can we change those ideas, how can we improve? I always have discussed in my zone that education has to be within the house, we have to teach the boys to wash their clothes, the boys have to learn to get their food and wash their plate, the boys have to learn to work in the kitchen and the girls have to learn to work in the field.

If we are not going to do this, if we differentiate the boys from the girls, the change is never going to be, it is going to continue the same; what if the compa who remains is going to drink pure pozol because he does not want to make his food and the children are going to continue like this. It is another education that we have to put in the children's head, if we achieve educating our children like this, we are going to achieve the change, the boys are going to be able to learn to do things in the home. The compañeros must not depend on us, but we too also must not depend on the compañeros. When the compañeros go out we do the work, we go clean the milpa, we go bring the wood, all the work that remains pending we can do it, only cutting and felling we cannot do, I think that because we have never practiced, but other work we can do it.

I think that also when we do everything for the boys is when things do not change. If we have never gone out, if we always are in the house, if we are always at home, if we always serve them, they boys do not learn, it is there where another manner for how the work can be done does not enter into their head, I think that because of that. I observe the boys, sometimes if she is my family member I tell her:

"Why do you mill your son's pozol for him? He has his hand. You can wash his hand and he can mill his pozol, don't get him accustomed," I am always like that.

I have the experience, my compañero also does not know how to make his food, when he stays he drinks pozol, that is he has the idea still from his mom that they serve him food on the table. That has not left, we all still have it here. When I began to work the kids were very little, my children remained very small, as I said about the Cantinflas movie, they were like that because no one oriented me; I did orient myself afterward when the Morelia clinic was built, they oriented

me but then very late on, I already had three little boys and now they are men. Since I was not always in my house, I always went out to the meetings, to do other work in collective, I was not always at home and what the boys did was learn to cook alone because I was not always there, they were left abandoned, I only left them their tortillas ready. I went out and they remained with their little sister, that is why they now call the first child that I had “babysitter,” that’s what they call him because he took care of her, he raised his little sister.

I see now the difference of those kids, it is very different now. The wife of one of them is a health promoter, the day that his compañera leaves he goes to bring corn, goes to bring wood, or clean the site that he has in their house, but he does make tortillas, that is his wife arrives peacefully, she does not worry, she does not feel spiritless because she feels that support. I am taking the experience now from them, because I see it, it is now changing. When she is in the meeting her husband stays in the house, when the wife arrives the corn is already cooked, her coffee made. It is very different and I find it beautiful, that is why I try to share it here.

They learned because I am not always in my house, I think that is why, if it was that I am always in my house they never would have learned anything, there is never change in my family. I see it right now that it is good changing, until now I would like that when I am going to arrive from the meeting, I would like for the compa to do it like that, but no. It is that we cannot change it now because it is no longer possible, but the children can be taught well in the home. I think that we are going to do all this, I think that we have to pass more years so that we can change our whole situation, the bad ideas that we have. What we try to do is equality of right among women and men but we are lacking many things, we are still lacking many things to do so that we can put it in the compañeros’, the compañeras’ head that the home is the best education. We are the teachers within our home, if we achieve teaching our children, educating them in another form, it is going to be different; but if we are not going to be good teachers, we are going to continue the same.

# **Caracol V: Which Speaks for Everyone**

Roberto Barrios



# Introduction

## Ana (Education Trainer. MAREZ El Trabajo)

Many years before, equality existed among men and women because there was not one who was more important than the other. Little by little inequality began with the division of labor, when men were those who went out to the country to cultivate their food, they went hunting to complete the feeding of the families and the women remained in the home to dedicate themselves to domestic work, as well as also thread-spinning, weaving of clothing, and the preparation of kitchen utensils, like pots, cups, and earthenware plates.

Later on another division of labor emerged with those who began to dedicate themselves to cattle herding; cattle began to serve as a form of money, they used it to exchange their products. With time this activity turned into the most important, more still when it the bourgeoisie began to emerge which dedicated itself to buying and selling to accumulate profits. The men were those who dedicated themselves to all that work, that is why the men are those who command in the family, because he alone acquired for the family's expenses and the work of women was not recognized as important, that is why they were left as the lesser ones, as weak, incapable of doing work.

The custom was like that, the way of living that the Spanish brought when they came to conquer our peoples, the monks were those who educated us and instructed us in their customs and knowledge. From there they taught us that the women had to serve the men and pay attention to him in every moment when he gives orders, and that women must cover their heads with a veil when they go to church and that they must not fix their gaze anywhere, that they have to have their head bent. It was considered that women were those who made men sin, that is why the church did not allow women to go to school, much less occupy positions. We the indigenous peoples took the way how the Spanish treated their women as our culture, for that reason in the communities inequality began to emerge between men and women which continues until now.

That is why before women were not allowed to go to school and if a girl went out to study it was seen poorly by the people in the communities. The girls were not allowed to play with the boys or touch their toys, one of the things that moms did was to instruct their daughters that they have to serve food to their brothers, so that later on she could live well with her husband and not receive mistreatment, because it was believed that one of the reasons for mistreatment of women is that they did not learn to serve their husband and pay attention to him in everything that the man indicates.

The only work that women were to do was in the kitchen and raising their children. The single girls did not have the freedom to go out nor walk in the community nor in the city, they had to be closed-up in their house, and when they got married they were exchanged for alcohol and other merchandise, without the woman giving her word if she is in agreement or not, because she did not have the right to choose her partner. When they were then married they could not go out alone nor speak with other people, much less other men. Mistreatment toward women by their

husbands existed and no one applied justice, men who drunk booze realized those mistreatments more. Women had to live their whole lives like this with suffering and abuse.

But also our grandfathers and grandmothers had their good customs which they continue practicing up to now, that is why there was not much worrying when there were sicknesses, because they knew medicinal plants and knew much about how to care for health. They did not worry about lack of money because they cultivated all that they needed for eating, that is why the women of before were strong, workers, because they produced their own clothing, lime, although they did not know their right but they could go forward.

# **Participation of the Compañeras in the Various Levels of Autonomous Government and Work Areas**

## **Paulina (Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ La Paz)**

*Junta de Buen Gobierno:* The delegates of the Junta de Buen Gobierno are named in each municipality, they exercise the same role that the compañero delegates realize because they are a collective which proposes and analyzes, it works in common, there is not a specific role which they realize as women. What we see in this is that the participation of the compañeras is very little for various motives, one of the problems is that they do not know how to read or write, but they are not the greatest difficulties, because there are some compañeras who learned to exercise their position because they know how to think even if they do not know how to read and write.

## **Ángeles (Education Coordinator in the Zone. MAREZ Vicente Guerrero)**

*Education:* In Zona Norte we have promoters who are participating in education giving classes. We also have 21 zone coordinators but among them only three female coordinators participate, we also have trainers but only three compañeras participate as trainers, that is to say, there is not equal participation. The role of the zone coordinators is to gather reports every 3 months to see how the advance of education is going, also there we see how many compañeras we have as promoters and how many male promoters. Another one of the things is that we are in-charge of seeing how many communities have education and how many communities still do not have education.

## **Rosalía (MAREZ Coordinator. MAREZ Rubén Jaramillo)**

*MAREZ Coordination:* The commitment as a coordinator is to give workshops in the municipalities and raise up education reports, also the education commission is notified to do meetings in the municipality when it is necessary. Every three months we gather the reports and raise up the evaluation every six months. When we do meetings and notify the education commission it is not because we are sending ourselves, first the education commission is notified and also the Autonomous Council accompanies us.

## **Karina (Women's Commission. MAREZ El Trabajo)**

*Women's Commission at the Municipal Level:* The work in this commission is attending the meetings which the zone convenes to see the productive projects, convene meetings with the local representatives in each town, turn-in a narrative and financial report, visit the towns to see the advances of the collective work, bring the work proposals from the towns, attend the meetings with the Junta de Buen Gobierno in coordination with Enlace Civil to review the work of each MAREZ, and to see the advances of the activities contemplated within the projects. The responsibility in this work is having seriousness and commitment because it is necessary to supervise the fulfillment of the work, present proposals to the towns, to the Junta de Buen Gobierno, evaluate how the collective work is going, justify the expenses through notes and invoices.

## **Dora (Women's Commission. MAREZ Acabalná)**

*Participation in the MAREZ Meetings:* In the municipalities there are compañeras who exercise positions as education substitutes, treasurers and secretaries of the women's commission, health commission, development committees secretaries, secretary and treasurer of the Council, justice substitute, civil registry secretary, president of the women's collective. In total there are 15 compañeras who have a position with the various MAREZ and three municipalities where there is no participation from the compañeras but they are committed to pushing for the participation of the compañeras.

There are compañeras who have taken positions like autonomous council in MAREZ La Dignidad, and compañeras from MAREZ Benito Juárez who have had a position as a council substitute and have been an example that women can exercise important positions. In the municipalities there also are compañeras who exercise positions as political leaders of the organization, as regional persons in-charge, additionally in the communities there are also compañeras who do not have positions, but although they are not authorities they do exercise an important role in the struggle.

At the local level, in the various communities which make up the Zona Norte, the compañeras participate in various positions like commissioner, municipal agent, president of collective work, secretary of collective work, treasurer, vigilance council secretary, collective work, education committee, also there are compañeras who exercise positions as health and education promoters. In the three areas (herbalism, midwives, and healers) it was tried but there was not personnel to teach. The roles that compañeras exercise in the various levels and positions are organizing the compañeras, convening meetings, preparing reports, and finding a solution when a problem is presented among them, according to the seriousness of the problem they must invite the women's commission from the municipality, supervise the collective work so that corruption and loss of resources do not exist.

## **Alondra (Member of the Women's Commission. Jacinto Canek Region)**

*Herbalism Coordination:* The work which the herbalism coordination realizes in some municipalities is to convene meetings, realize workshops with the promoters, make work plans to pre-

pare medicine, see the needs of this work, see the materials which are needed, make a report for the Junta de Buen Gobierno, and participate in the zone meetings. The herbalism work has been realized in some municipalities, I think that they are just four municipalities. When the coordinator needs to make medicine she does it in the zone, they prepare the medicine there.

This is what there is also in our work as women, because it is a necessity that we also have to help our compañeras. Herbalism medicine has given a very good result, I do not know very much about the medicine that is in the pharmacy but herbalism yes, it helps a great deal because it is cheap. We know that the government has raised the prices of pharmacy medicine a great deal, on the contrary that which we make is very cheap and has all its essence, it cures faster, we women, the poor, see the necessity to do this work because we do not have money to go with the doctors.

## Questions

*What was the problem in the three areas and how are you thinking about giving it a solution?*

In the zone it began to be worked with the compañeras in the three areas: herbalism, midwives, and healers. One time the healers workshop was realized because there is a male healer who is there in the zone, but then later the compañero did not want to share more, so there only was one workshop and that is why he did not continue, because there was no personnel who could give that workshop to healers. That is why the compañeras say that it was not tried but there is no personnel who can give that workshop.

*The compañera explained that there are civil registry secretaries, I want to know if in the zone there you already do the registries.*

Yes, there is a civil registry, there is a secretary who is part of the civil registry, member of the Council too. The judge of the civil registry is in the municipalities but not all the municipalities have it, there are municipalities which do, for example the Rubén Jaramillo municipality, there is a compañera who works as a secretary of the civil registry judge, I think that only there is a compañera participating. There are participations from other compañeras but it is in other work areas, other areas of authority which they have.

At the local level there is more participation from the compañeras, they have various work collectives, in a community sometimes they have 3 collectives, be it breadmaking, chicken, pigs, and each work has its authorities, has its directives, the compañeras work more at the local level, it is very little at municipal level and the zone level. The participation in the municipalities and the zone is little for various reasons, just the same they cannot leave their children or their house for so much time, also due to the distance, I think that is why they do not want to participate so much.

# Revolutionary Women's Law

## Valentina (Education Promoter)

In our zone we saw that this revolutionary law which was made in our struggle, in our organization, is helping us as women, because as women we are exercising a job in our municipality, in our communities, and in our zone; it came out in our reflection that this law is a support for us, because we see that before there was no participation of women in the communities, nor in the municipalities.

In our zone we have female authorities who are participating, not much but they do have their participation, in the Junta de Buen Gobierno we have the female delegates; we do not say that all the municipalities have their female delegates but at least there are one or two who do participate. There are compañeras who are women's commission, there we can say that women are participating, nine compañeras, in each municipality and in the regions too; in education we have promoters who work in Semillita, they work as local representatives in the communities.

We have health trainers; health promoters, not many but we do have promoters who already received their training, who are helping the towns and there are also others recently-named who still are going to take their training as health promoters. In the three areas there are midwives, not many but there are some; healers there are not many but we do have the participation of some compañeras; in herbalism is where there are more compañeras who are already carrying-out their work, they already received their training on how to make the medicines, on the plants which are utilized.

That work is where we have more compañeras participating, but also much is needing to be achieved because there are those who are not exercising their rights, or compañeras who are lacking decision. We think that in our zone more enlivening is lacking, we are still needing to unite, to meet among compañeros and compañeras, we must not leave aside the compañeras who are not participating. In our municipalities we remain in what is a task for us in our zone, it is necessary to seek how to carry the compañeras so that they participate; it is a task still, still it has not been said when it is done but yes it was settled that it is a task which has to be done. What we analyzed about the fulfillment of the Revolutionary Women's Law in our zone is the following:

**First.** *Women, without regard for their race, religion, color, or political affiliation, have the right to participate in the revolutionary struggle in the place and rank which their will and ability determine.*

About this point the compañeras mentioned that the work is being done, because the compañeras are participating in the struggle, we can not say that only the compañeros are struggling. We see that if the compañero goes to a job also the compañera is in agreement, it is there where we see that the women also are struggling, although they are not participating at 100% in what is authority but they are making opinions on what is how to carry out the struggle.

We have local and municipal authorities, which organize the collective work, for example in the communities we have collectives where the women work, they have their president, their

secretary, their treasurer, they are participating in the municipal and local work. Like how it is in the communities, in the municipalities, there are more presidents, secretaries, and treasurers in the local work because to do it they do not have to go out, so for them it is not difficult, simply it is looking for a date and doing the work, then finishing returning to their house.

Like this how we see, those of us compañeras who are participating are not many, we are few, but we have sought the manner how to continue struggling to not fall. What we do, the compañeras in our zone who are participating daily, for example the women who participate in education, it is there where more time is lost because they work full time and what we do there is put a work time. Rather we do not have time to go out to visit, simply it is putting when what time to do it, what time to eat, just as we are doing in this encounter, it is like this how we do in our house to be able to carry out the work or the practice in our struggle.

We analyze broadly what this means, or when this revolutionary women's law was written, we think, we analyze in what we are struggling. Here we understood that the name which we carry, Zapatista Army of National Liberation, so we got to thinking that maybe that is why it is written like that, "women, without regard for their race, religion, color, political affiliation, have the right to participate in the revolutionary struggle." We understood that this part goes directed for the compañeras in the various organizations which are struggling also in this capitalist society which dominates us here in our Mexican territory, we understood this part like that, I think that it very much referred to the people of Mexico.

## **Ana (Education Trainer. MAREZ El Trabajo)**

**Second.** *Women have the right to work and receive a just wage.*

In this point it is seen that we, the compañeras who are in the struggle, are not struggling for a wage, we are not working for a wage. What we want or what we are seeking is for the good of our people, for the good of our nation, for all the compañeras, girls, and elderly women. We see that a wage does not exist for us because we are in the struggle, as women who are in the organization we do not seek that but we are working.

We think that those who are worthy of having their wage are the women who work in the city, for example the workers, those who work serving their bosses, they are the ones who deserve receiving a just wage. If we realize now, if we send our mind to the city, if we send our looks toward the outside, they really are exploited, they give them a little wage which is not enough to eat, is not enough to dress, is not even enough to give a little bit to their sons or their daughters.

In our zone, in our Caracol, we discussed that as women, as compañeras we do not work in collective to receive a wage, we do it to take the work forward in the organization, so that we do not fall so easily. That is why we said that we are in our struggle, like this as compañeros and compañeras we must not even think that we are going to have a wage, for them to pay us in each work area, be it health, education, in the three areas, the healers, the midwives, they must not think that. We must not think about them paying us, what must be done in our zone is continue encouraging ourselves to carry our work forward, so that with that we can walk where the struggle that we are exercising takes us.

In our zone we also talked about family economy and about this point which says that we as women have the right to work and receive a just wage. Here we speak of the family, there many times the product of our work is sold when we get a good bit, what the compañeras said is that

many times it is man who spends everything, he alone spends the product of the work in the home.

We say that although we do not receive a wage but we see how from the family the economy is also distributed, how the sons, the daughters, work, participate, and how the living together is when the product of our work is already achieved, that is what the *compañeros* discussed there. In the Zona Norte there are cases where it is the man who spends everything, sometimes he also sells the wife's hen because he wants a resource; if he sells corn, beans, he no longer asks the wife what it is that he is going to buy.

"What is it that we are going to buy? The product of our work is already there, here is the money." Many times that agreement does not exist when there are expenses, but rather the one who decides more is the one who worked more, that is what happens also. Many times it's that we are going to work, and the work is distributed, what work the little boys do, what work the little girls do, what work the older daughters do, what work the sons do; how it is distributed in the family so that there is a good agreement and also that resource is able to be seen, when we talk about a just wage what we want is for all of us who participate in that work to distribute the resource collectively or for it to be decided in a team what it is going to be spent on and what is going to be bought.

We analyze that part although for the moment we do not have a wage, all of us who are working, those of us who are full-time, for example the education, health promoters, we do want a wage but for the moment there is none, we have to work, organize, coordinate too with our family or the rest of the *compañeras* to obtain a bit of recourse. We focus our analysis on that not only those of us who work talk about what it is to receive a just wage, for example the female workers, the employees, not only them but in another way see also from our autonomy, from our peoples, we too, that is what we think in this part.

Maybe the thing that is happening is one of the reasons that there is not much participation from the *compañeras* in our communities, there are good and bad customs, some are very stuck in our head and being large it is difficult for us to take out those bad customs that have our mind contaminated. So we see here that when we talk about a wage in the work, it is also necessary to talk about the *compañeras'* right to work, women have the right to work.

There are cases of *compañeras* in our communities, there are cases still in which the woman is the one who gets all the resources for the expenses in the home while the man does not worry; she does her sale, she looks for what she is going to sell, how she is going to find the resource, and sometimes the man no, he only expects from his wife, only expects from the *compañera* or only expects from the daughters.

There are cases which it happens like this, but there are also *compañeras* which they do the reverse, there are *compañeras* who do not do the work; while the *compañero* is doing his work the *compañera* is there in the house, visiting other houses or she passes the day watching TV and the time is passing, there is a need with the children in the house.

Maybe one of the reasons for why the *compañeras* do not want to participate is because they depend on their husband, perhaps that is why some do not denounce violence, mistreatment, the abuses that the *compañeras* confront, because they know that they are dependent on the husband, maybe that is why they do not denounce, they do not say anything that he does just like he does it. "If he leaves me where am I going to go, if I depend on the *compañero*, I depend on my husband." Perhaps that is one of the reasons for the little participation of the *compañeras*, because there still is not that equal participation in the work. Maybe it is one of the reasons that



they are not seen in plain view, there are problems, there are obstacles that we cannot see in plain view.

## **Valentina (Education Promoter)**

**Third.** *Women have the right to decide the number of children that they can have and care for.*

In our zone this point was discussed but we did not come out with any conclusion. The discussion among women and together with the compañeros was difficult, the problem that we saw was that in that moment not all the women from the towns and communities were present, those who were present were the compañeras who have positions, but the compañeras from other communities were not present, those who are working in collective, for example the youth who are studying, all were not present.

We settled that the couple is the one who decides, it was seen that the number of children not only the woman or the compañera is going to decide how many children she wants to have, but rather it is between the man and the woman, because if the woman is going to decide all alone it means that she does not take her husband's opinion. We saw that among the two the problem must be seen, because that is there which was mentioned in other caracoles, that someone one year has a baby, the next year comes the other, and then the other, but the ones who suffer there are the compañeras, we see that there are compañeras who get sick.

It was seen that it is better to be discussed among the couple, for it to be seen according to woman's life, it's that sometimes it is seen that the woman is sick, I think that the compañero is going to understand it if they begin to talk. It is what was seen in our zone, that it is better for them to discuss it between the two, a woman must not say, "I want this and this," and the man where does he remain? It was seen that it is better for them to discuss it within the couple, the woman cannot remain deciding all alone, her partner must participate but taking into account that the woman is sick, that she is the one who most sees the consequences of having many children.

We have health promoters who do a campaign of talking about sexual education with the women, there we still do not have any plan. It is not being done, it is not being promoted, it was just talked how it is going to remain. We still do not know how it remains, what was more or less already talked is that it is necessary to invite the promoter compañeras to see just how what is health or sexual education must remain.

## **Ana (Education Trainer. MAREZ El Trabajo)**

When this issue that women have the right to decide how many children they can have and care for was discussed, there were some compañeros who did not like this.

"Why am I going to decide? Why is she just going to decide how many children I am going to have? What God sends is what I am going to have."

That is what some compas told us in our discussion and sometimes they also told us: "How is it possible that they are going to talk about planning? How is it possible that they are going to prohibit having children? Where are the militiamen going to come from, where are the students going to come from?" say the compas.

They also talked about what is happening in the official government system that the compañeros who are not in the organization have, they see that in the preschool building the rooms are empty, there are few students with them because they are forced to plan. We in our zone had to talk clearly how the planning issue is, that it is not obligatory nor is having children prohibited, but rather it is planning just how many children we can have and how we can sustain our children. It is not planning with the things that the evil government does, we discussed that we have to see just how many children we are going to be able to educate, how many children we are going to be able to give money, how many children we are going to be able to give the inheritance that we have.

We see that right now the economic conditions are difficult, that right now things are ever more expensive. We had to talk all that with the compañeros and compañeras so that they go along grasping that conscience that it is not that we are prohibiting, rather it is for them to plan it well because what the compañeras already told does happen. There is a compañera who discussed her experience, how she had her children, that like a row she had her children and they grew like that, because she too told that she did not have that education, that information like now is being given. It is true as she says, while the one is there, the other is there, then the other, it is no longer possible to give love, affection to those creatures who are in a little pile, the little one is the one to whom they are going to give the most love, once he or she walks well now go away. It is what we discussed in our zone, how it is that they are going to plan just how many children, because sometimes the children ask their mother:

“Mom, what is that called? What is that? What is this called? How can I do this? Teach me to write, mom.

The mother no longer has time to attend to her child because there are several and that is why many times when we are grown the head is then like a stone, it no longer thinks, it no longer analyzes because from a young age no one incited us, no one helped us, no one guided us, no one taught us how it is that we have to grow, that is what we discussed there with the compas. It is a little to begin to give conscience to the youth because there also is that problem of them getting married very young, they get married at 15 years-old, 14 years-old, and they already have creatures there. A girl who is 15 or 16 years-old, I do not know how she educates her child, if she is then prepared to be a mother, and also the guy if he is then prepared to be a father, or only they decided to be together. It is what we discussed in our zone.

## **Valentina (Education Promoter)**

**Fourth.** *Women have the right to participate in community matters and have a position if they are chosen freely and democratically.*

We saw that this is being fulfilled in our zone because the compañeras are going to the meetings, there are compañeras who have positions and are taken into account in their opinions, when they participate their opinion is taken. But then it was also talked about how many times the women do not state an opinion because they do not want to or perhaps because they have not known their right.

It was seen that this point is being fulfilled little by little, although very few of us compañeras are participating, but we are participating, not all but we are fulfilling what are the positions. It was seen that we are not giving what is the work for nothing, but what is the participation of the

compañeras too, our committees, our regional representatives, our persons in-charge, they are giving us that spirit, they are enlivening us, they are not looking at us just like that, but rather they are giving us that spirit how we should continue, how we must go out with our work.

We saw that when we have a position the compañeras do look for the way how to continue forward, the only thing that makes it difficult is when they encounter a problem, for example when they get sick because they no longer go to the meetings. But as compañeras we are not all the same, we do not all think the same, we do not all state opinions, we do not all reflect, it is there where there is a problem, that there are just a few compañeras who remain in front and state opinions, they are the ones who are going out, they are the ones who have positions, and the ones who remain there are because they are afraid.

Why? Because maybe they have the idea of how they educated them, maybe she was not educated with her mom, with her dad, as was already talked that the girls were not sent to school, everything that is their right was prohibited, that is why they continue like this. But there in our zone they are giving us that spirit, it is lacking but we think that the compañeros are not responsible, in our zone we think that half the compañeros, half the women. More than ever a part of the compañeras do not accept even if they are encouraging us, as if we do not want to, we do not accept. That is what is seen, that the work is coming out.

**Fifth.** *Women and their children have the right to primary care in their health and nutrition.*

In this point we saw that some communities do have a health house, where there is a health house it is not difficult for the compañeras to have good health, rather it is not necessary for her to go to another place to seek treatment for her children. Women go with their promoters where there is a health house, it is there where what this point says is being done, although in some communities there are no houses but they go to other nearby communities where there are health houses.

In nutrition we saw that in our zone what is our nutrition is not far away, but rather the compañeros and compañeras must follow the custom of our grandparents, how they lived before, what they ate, how they were before, what they fed themselves with. It is what was seen in our zone, that we must not stop planting what is ours, chayote, yucca, squash, and everything else that there is in our community. If we do not do that, if we do not produce we are going to die of hunger, it is there where malnutrition comes in children because we do not eat what we have, as if we now want to change what is nutrition.

What is being carried out is that as compañeras we still consume what is chaya, we consume yerbamora, everything that there is in our place, everything that there is in our reach we still consume. More than ever it was discussed that we must not stop planting what is ours, that we must not leave it, that we must not do as the other women who are not in the organization who no longer plant, they only receive what the government gives, if we are going to do like what they are doing there is where bad nutrition comes. That planting is a custom for us, what is nutrition, they are customs of our grandfathers, grandmothers, ancestors, they did not buy. It was seen that planting our food must continue being carried out.

**Sixth.** *Women have the right to education.*

In our zone we talked about how before women did not enter into the school, the older compañeras were asked, they said that they did not go to school because their mothers or their fathers did not send them. They are not at fault if they did not learn how to read and to write, it came to be thought that the mothers are also not at fault, the capitalist's idea was being put into them, how history is that women are not worth anything, if a daughter comes to be born well she is

not worth anything. It was seen that the parents are not responsible, the fault is from this bad idea that they put into us.

Taking a little bit of history, the women who are now grown told that if a couple came to have a son, before it was said that if a boy comes to be born the mice become happy because they are going to make the milpa, they are the ones who are going to work, they are the ones who are going to fell the trees, to plant the corn, to make the milpa, and they say that supposedly if a girl comes to be born, the men do not take her into account seeing that it is a girl because she is not going to support them, she is not going to help them. According to what the story says the flowers liven up, they become happy because a girl is born and the mice become sad, they get angry. The compañeras who came to our zone told that.

We talked about education and how we are in the struggle, we are in the organization, we are in the struggle not because we are without education, in our struggle we have everything, we have education. It was discussed that the girls must be sent to school, not to the official school but to our little school that we are building, for example in the education of our zone we have the Semillita, it is there where we send our daughters who are small. It was also talked that we must not prohibit the girls' education, if we prohibit them they are not going to have the idea of the struggle, they are not going to follow the practice, it is necessary to study to continue with the work.

## **Ana (Education Trainer. MAREZ El Trabajo)**

**Seventh.** *Women have the right to choose their partner and to not be obligated by force to enter into marriage.*

In this point it was seen that in the present the compañeras decide who they want to get married to, but there are points of view from the elders, who believe that respect should exist like the custom from before, because there is sense in that the young women have not been able to exercise that right and they go off the path. The most important thing that we must take into account upon practicing this law about women's right is that it is necessary to exercise it thinking about the revolutionary struggle.

There the right to choose a partner was analyzed, but the compañeras said that the revolutionary law is good but knowing how to use it, for example, when there is a true right, here a grandfather advised us that there should exist respect for the custom from before, but many times what happens is that I now have the right I'm now getting married, I now can choose my partner, but there is an elder who told us:

"Now that I know that women have the right to choose their partner, but, what happens if my daughter falls in love with a drunk, an evildoer, a thief, a vagrant? Now what am I going to do, like that I am going to give it to my daughter? What do you tell me then?," says the grandfather.

That is why I make it known to you, to see if like this a response can come out some day. That is the questioning that a grandfather did, we could not give him a response because until now we do not know how to respond to him. Also many times when they have the right to choose their partner, young people, that respect no longer exists with their fathers, with their mother, so it is done just however they want. Knowing how to use it is good, it comes out good and it is what helps us to construct our future.

**Eighth.** *No woman will be beaten or physically mistreated by family members or by strangers. The crimes of attempted rape or rape will be punished severely.*

There are cases which still happen in our communities because that is the bad custom that there is in one's head, that it is contaminated, machismo exists still. "I am stronger and you have to respect me," those words still exist many times with our support base compañeros.

Those of us who have been authorities, who have passed a time doing work, maybe we are understanding all the talks that we receive, but there are compañeros who since the struggle began do not go out, the support base compañeros are there working, the information has to arrive to them, that is the task that remained there in the zone, that they have to share the idea that was discussed, it has to arrive to the communities.

We also saw that in our zone it is lacking for there to be immediate groups to see this, who are in-charge of resolving that problem, who are in-charge of seeing if this is happening to a compañera, who can immediately go with that group. This still remains pending, not as a plan, but rather as a proposal for what is still needing to be done.

**Ninth.** *Women will be able to occupy positions of leadership in the organization and have military ranks in the revolutionary armed forces.*

There in Zona Norte this is being done, as we said, we go slowly in participation. We have regional compañeras, the militiawomen compañeras participate, that is being fulfilled although slowly but yes we do go certain.

**Tenth.** *Women will have all the rights and obligations which the revolutionary laws and regulations indicate.*

While we are in the organization we continue being revolutionary, we continue being fighters, it is our commitment and our duty to fulfill this revolutionary law while we continue struggling; when someone has already gone, lost spirit, there they then leave this part.

# **Difficulties and Obstacles which Women have Confronted in the Various Bodies of Autonomous Government**

## **Adamari (Member of the Autonomous Council. MAREZ Rubén Jaramillo)**

The participation of the compañeras is very little because understanding the struggle is still lacking and from lack of knowing how to read and write, also from the lack of time which they have to realize whichever work in the organization since they dedicate all their time for the chores in the home, like preparing the food, sweeping, washing the dishes and clothes, feeding their animals, and upkeep of their husbands, more still if they have several small children. In addition the men who do not support the compañeras in the household work are still a majority; the jealousies and mistrust that their husbands have sometimes prevent the compañeras from taking a position, the same thing happens with the girls because the fathers lack trust in their daughters.

The fact that there is not much participation from the compañeras is also due to the distance of the place from which each one of the compañeras comes and the danger that they run in the path when they travel to the municipality or to the caracol. This is the case of the compañeras who have to travel on the Villahermosa- Palenque highway because there are immigration checkpoints which intimidate them asking them for their papers. It also happens that when the compañeras are young they accept their position and when they get married they abandon the work, the reason is because the man no longer lets them go out. In other cases it is because the compañeras themselves decide to abandon their work due to the weight of the work that there is in the home.

Some compañeras have taken the commitment and have positions like women's commissions, autonomous councilmembers, health and education commissions, etcetera, but it is still necessary to strengthen and achieve organizing the remaining compañeras in the towns. Political formation is lacking which they must receive so that there is equality of work among men and women, strengthening, giving impulse to, and reorganizing the collective work with the compañeras and compañeros in the communities so that participation is equal in the work areas and in the different levels of authorities. These are the difficulties and obstacles which the compañeras in the Zona Norte analyzed.

## **Ana (Education Trainer. MAREZ El Trabajo)**

These are some of the difficulties which the compañeras confront in Zona Norte, that is why sometimes they do not want to do the work, because Zona Norte is big, there are places which

are very far-away. There are some compañeras who have to travel far and travel alone, there are checkpoints and on the road they put the compañeras in danger, various times it happened to us when we travel, they say that we are Guatemalans, they say that we are Hondurans, we do not have papers. Many times with that fear as if the compañeras are startled and for the next day they do not want to go alone to the Caracol.

Also when the compañeras make the work, sometimes if they confront a problem as if they are startled, that is why many times they do not follow-through with the meetings, with their work. When they tell them to do work in their municipality they like that because it is close to them and they do not have to travel very far. But also there are compañeras who go out, authority compañeras, some who are already of age, here there are three compañeras who are women's commissions in the municipalities and have traveled alone many times.

Maybe we are tiring the compañeros because we are talking about the compañeras, maybe the compañeros are thinking, when is our law for the men too going to come out? Maybe some of you are thinking like that. What we are saying is what has happened there in Zona Norte, what the authority compañeras talked about, here all day just us compañeras were talking but let's not think that we are convincing the compañeros. It is not that, but rather it is urgent to see this, how we can solve these problems among all, because the work is not only the compañeras' but is for all, with the compañeros.

We are seeing there in our zone that the compañeras are not participating 100%, but we do more or less carry it there. One time many of us went to see the work that there is in each area, education, health, as if one time studying this revolutionary women's law was forgotten, they forgot to continue discussing the women's participation issue, that is why right now it demands that we ourselves begin to do, that we begin to participate. Of everything that we are seeing there in the zone right now we do not have a proposal on just how it is necessary to do it, but we do go little by little.

That is the word nothing more, the compañeros should not get angry because they do not have a revolutionary men's law. It is not that, compañeros, but rather here we want our work in autonomy to turn out well so that we walk together among men and women.

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