

An evaluation of Casa Comal in Guatemala 2004-2007

NORAD COLLECTED REVIEWS 22/2007

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Commissioned by the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Guatemala City and Humanistic Institute for Development Cooperation, HIVOS

Norad collected reviews

The report is presented in a series, compiled by Norad to disseminate and share analyses of development cooperation. The views and interpretations are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.

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ISBN 978-82-7548-246-2



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Guatemala, October 2007

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Resumen Ejecutivo

Profesionales independientes del sector audiovisual iniciaron en el año 1998 la aventura de constituir el Festival Ícaro de promoción de las artes audiovisuales. Al tomar auge el festival, en el año 2000 se constituye Casa Comal como organizador del festival y posteriormente asume otros proyectos de promoción artístico y cultural en el sector audiovisual. La Embajada Real de Noruega en Guatemala entró en 2001 como el principal donante de Casa Comal que en su primera etapa de existencia, además de continuar impulsando el Ícaro, ensaya de manera dispersa proyectos culturales variados. En 2003, HIVOS de Holanda se unió como otro donante internacional de importancia. A partir de una evaluación externa del 2004 y un proceso interno de reflexión, Casa Comal se concentró en tres grandes áreas: 1) el desarrollo anual de Festival Ícaro, 2) la producción audiovisual para el cine, televisión y radio; y 3) la escuela de formación audiovisual. La organización también ha implementado otras actividades complementarias que han sido importantes, pero, de menor envergadura como es el caso de la campaña VIH-SIDA, los talleres Arte Fácil, y la promoción de conciertos y actividades culturales de diversa índole.

A partir del año 2005, Casa Comal con el acompañamiento de la cooperación internacional, a través de la renovación de los convenios de cooperación financiera y técnica, emprende un proceso hacia la madurez institucional, con la concentración y consolidación de sus actividades vinculadas a la producción de cine. El Festival Ícaro se ha establecido como un evento de referencia para entusiastas de cine en toda la región y las producciones premiadas participan en la Muestra Itinerante en las demás capitales de los países de la región centroamericana. Por medio de casa Comal, Guatemala se ha convertido en un importante productor de largometrajes con 3 producciones en los últimos 5 años. Otros artistas talentosos también han aprovechado de la generosidad y apertura de Casa Comal para apoyar sus producciones con los recursos de la organización. La conformación de la escuela de formación en cine y televisión para Guatemala en colaboración con la Universidad de San Carlos y el IECTV de Cuba, funciona con 52 estudiantes como el único espacio de formación a bajo costo en la región.

La alta dependencia de los fondos externos para el desarrollo de los proyectos de Casa Comal, y la escasez de recursos e interés del gobierno guatemalteco por promover el arte audiovisual como industria cultural y medio de generación de identidad nacional, no ha contribuido a nacionalizar este proyecto. Actualmente se abren algunas ventanas que podrían constituirse como oportunidades futuras para Casa Comal y para otras organizaciones en el sector del arte audiovisual, una de estas es la asociación gremial AGACINE, cuyo objetivo principal es lograr en el corto plazo la aprobación de una ley de cine en Guatemala que en el mediano plazo de vida al instituto nacional de cine.

El balance general de esta evaluación es muy positivo, no obstante, se hace necesario que Casa Comal, concentre sus esfuerzos institucionales en el análisis de posibles escenarios y en el diseño de estrategias prioritarias de gestión financiera, de relacionamiento

institucional y concreción de vínculos regionales e internacionales para co-producir obras de mutuo beneficio e interés, y de esta manera iniciar aceleradamente un proceso de búsqueda de la sostenibilidad financiera, tema de mayor riesgo al momento del cierre de convenios con los actuales cooperantes.

Casa Comal a partir del año 2008 deberá realizar ajustes importantes a sus estrategias de funcionamiento, tratando de buscar la mejor forma de consolidar por separado los proyectos colectivos de formación, difusión y creación de los proyectos audiovisuales de autor, buscando prioritariamente que los últimos puedan ser “vendibles” y auto sostenibles, incursionando nuevos mercados y buscando negociaciones más equitativas y dinámicas que proporcionen beneficios y ganancias adecuadas a los servicios y productos de alta calidad que ofrecen.

Executive Summary

In 1998, independent professionals from the audio-visual sector began an adventure in the establishment of the ICARO Festival for the promotion of the audio-visual arts. By 2000 with the increasing enthusiasm for the festival, Casa Comal assumed the role as the festival's organizers and later acquired other projects that artistically and cultural promoted the audio-visual sector. The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Guatemala began their cooperation in 2001 as the principle donor of Casa Comal during the first stage of their existence, which included promoting the ICARO, carried out in a disperse manner with various cultural projects. In 2003, HIVOS of Netherlands joined in as an important additional donor. Since the 2004 external evaluation and an internal process of reflection, Casa Comal has concentrated in three dominant areas: 1) The annual development of the ICARO Festival, 2) the audio-visual production of film, television and radio; and 3) a school for audio-visual formation. The organization has also implemented other complementary activities that have also been important but less encompassing as in the case of the AIDS-HIV campaign, the Easy Art workshops, and the promotion of concerts and diverse types of cultural activities.

Starting from 2005, Casa Comal accompanied by the international cooperation, through renovation of financial and technical agreements and embarked on a process towards institutional maturity with concentration and consolidation of their activities related to film production. The ICARO Festival has been established as a reference point for film enthusiasts in the whole region and the awarded productions participate in the *Muestra Itinerante* in the majority of the region's capitals. Due to Casa Comal, Guatemala has been converted into a very important full-production feature film maker with three productions in five years. Other talents have been able to take advantage of Casa Comal's generosity and openness to increase productions. The conformation of the one and only film making and television school in the region in collaboration with the Universidad de San Carlos (USAC) is functioning with 54 students, is a merit for Guatemala.

The significant dependency on external funds for Casa Comal to develop projects and the scarcity of resources and interest of the Guatemalan government to promote the audio visual as a cultural industry and medium for the generation of a national identity, has not contributed to the nationalization of the project. Presently, new possibilities have opened that could become future opportunities for Casa Comal y for other organizations in the audio visual arte sector, one of them being the established professional association AGACINE, whose principle objective is to pass a cinema law in Guatemala.

The general balance in this evaluation has been very positive, without mentioning how necessary it is for Casa Comal to concentrate their institutional efforts on the analysis of possible scenarios and on the design of prioritized strategies of financial management, institutional relations and concretization of regional and international relation to co-produce products of mutual benefits and interest and in the way initiates an accelerated process for finding a financial sustainable solution, and at this moment the topic of closing agreements with actual partners.

Casa Comal, should from 2008 make important strategic and operative adjustments, in an effort to find a better way to consolidate separately the collective projects of training, publicity and creation of the author's audio visual projections, always prioritizing the search for ways to market their projects and become sustainable, breaking into new markets and looking for more reasonable and dynamic negotiations that Hill generate benefits and adequate profit from their services and high quality products that they offer.

1. Purpose of the Evaluation

Norway and HIVOS decided to undertake a joint external evaluation of Casa Comal with the general purpose of assessing the *effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact* of the institution and its activities in audiovisual production, the ICARO Film Festival, the university study in film and TV and the information campaign on HIV/AIDS. The role of Casa Comal as a societal actor in the cultural sector in Guatemala and the region shall also be assessed. Where relevant to achieve a global picture, the team should also include some insight into activities not directly covered by the two agreements, like the exchange program of the Norwegian Fredskorpset.

The evaluation shall generate recommendations regarding Casa Comal's activities (scope, content, functioning, funding) and give recommendations on HIVOS' and Norway's future involvement. The donors are especially interested in the assessment of the capacity of Casa Comal to achieve its goals with other sources of support and the long term sustainability of the institution.

2. Methodological comments

The current substantial areas of activities at Casa Comal can be considered in three categories: 1) film production, 2) the Ícaro Film Festival and 3) film education. These substantial areas as well as the institutional and administrative capacities of Casa Comal will be analyzed according to LFA and SWOT methodologies based on existing documents and interviews with stakeholders. The HIV/AIDS component will be referred to along with other cross-cutting issues like gender and ethnicity.

The evaluation will concentrate on the period following the last evaluation of late 2004. References will be made to the last evaluation when dealing with the period 2001-2004.

All available written material relevant to the project will be studied, including financial and audit reports. Major audiovisual productions will be viewed. The principal source of information will be interviews with stakeholders of the artistic community relating to Casa Comal, students and instructors at the film school, organizers and beneficiaries of the Ícaro Festival, film makers and others who can value the quality of Casa Comal productions, representatives from government, universities and the donor community. Written interviews and telephone interviews will be made with stakeholders and informants who are presently not in Guatemala.

The outset of the evaluation is based upon a meeting with the two co-directors and the establishment of an agreed agenda and identification of stakeholders. After the completion of the interviews, viewing and reading of material, focus group meetings and reception of written inputs, a final meeting will be held with the co-directors to confront these with the findings and solicit their inputs before presenting preliminary report and de-briefing with the donors which have requested the evaluation. The evaluators will include work sessions during the 14 days period for analysis and identification of additional information sources.

3. Background and Context

Following the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996, Guatemala made an important step towards reopening the reduced space for expression and publicity of artistic expressions from a variety of expressions. Among the sectors taking advantage of this change is the audiovisual art where timid initiatives among professionals and young enthusiasts achieved common platforms for creative art in the country. Similarly, the end of the relative international isolation made it possible for cooperation from the industrialized countries to prosper. Although the cultural sector has not been an important beneficiary of this international cooperation, the artist communities saw new opportunities in international support since the Guatemalan state gave very little attention to culture and art, which had also not been of any importance in the peace negotiations.

A group of film enthusiasts organized in 1998 together with the Rafael Landívar University the first *Festival Ícaro a la Creación Audiovisual* as a very successful effort to document and make accessible to the public a large number of documentary and testimonial film productions made in Guatemala during the time of the armed conflict. The festival revealed a large number of contributions and the interest in film and video production, and subsequently organized also a festival the two following years, with increased participation. In 2000, the event became too big as an ad hoc activity, and the organizers of the festival founded Casa Comal to stimulate audiovisual creativity among young Guatemalans and blow new life into film and video production during a period not dominated by armed conflict. The purpose of Casa Comal was based on the spirit of the Peace Accords of 1996, using arts and communications to contribute to the construction of a new multicultural, democratic and peaceful culture.

Casa Comal found a very important financial support during the first year of its existence with the interest taken by staff of the Norwegian Embassy in the creative proposal to contribute to a new peace culture. The first cooperation agreement was established in March of 2001. The Norwegian Embassy does not have clear guidelines for its cultural cooperation, and what some embassy staff has regarded as procedures not corresponding to the norms, others see these as opportunities for innovating cooperation. Despite the difference of opinion about the way the cooperation was initiated, there is a broad consensus among involved embassy staff that the results and impact deserve admiration.

Casa Comal as a cultural centre provided a wide array of activities and became a meeting point for artistic and cultural expressions, especially within the urban youth culture. The physical expression of Casa Comal was a house in Zone 10 of the capital with social spaces for performing music, art exhibition, photo workshop and other creative activities, as well as a bar. Parties and other informal gatherings were also considered as cultural activities. The co-directors of Casa Comal have received formal cineaste training in Cuba, and in 2002, major efforts were dedicated to the production of the first Guatemalan feature film in 12 years, *La casa de enfrente*. The production of the film provided experience for several young Guatemalans interesting in the art form, and the film received recognition at various international festivals. The production of the film also indicated the preferred direction of Casa Comal's cultural interests.

The additional cultural activities at Casa Comal were outreach programs to children and youth, combining expressive art with promoting a peace culture and cooperation through workshops and activities at schools. Emphasis was also put on audiovisual production in these workshops. There was not a very coherent planning of these activities and the efforts to approach the Ministry of Education to lobby for creative art as part of curriculum has not been successful. Following an external evaluation in 2004, many of the accompanying art activities for youth and children were phased out to concentrate on film production, film education and the Icaro Film Festival. Casa Comal has produced two additional films, *Las cruces. Poblado próximo* in 2006 and *V.I.P. La otra casa* in 2007 and

is now producing a television series of cultural documentaries. Since 2006, Casa Comal offers a diploma study in cinematographic production and audiovisual techniques in cooperation with the San Carlos University. Since 2002, Casa Comal has an agreement with the Norwegian Peace Corps (Fredskorpset) to foment south-south cooperation in cinematographic production with Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión de San Antonio de los Baños in Cuba.

During the period 2001-2004, Casa Comal enjoyed a very close follow-up on the part of the Norwegian Embassy and felt that there was an ample level of freedom to experiment with various art forms and promote an independent Guatemalan tradition of film production. In 2004, more rigid requirements were placed on the management of the project, and the evaluation of the same year was in part motivated by the search for more sustainable ways to secure future activities of Casa Comal. The co-directors admit that until the evaluation in 2004, the activities of Casa Comal were dispersed and not very well planned, causing much improvisations and changing of plans. The art workshops were phased out in mid-2005 and by abandoning the localities in Zone 10 the same year and moving to more ample and secluded localities in Zone 15 underlined the changing of focus towards an audiovisual production and education entity.

HIVOS became a partner with Casa Comal in 2003, subscribing the institutional program already supported by Norway. In 2005, a new agreement was made to support Casa Comal for additional three years, until July 2008 within the areas of formation, the Ícaro Festival, cinematographic productions and the development of informative mass media on art and culture. Due to financial constraints, HIVOS will not prolong its contract with Casa Comal in 2008.

Despite ten years of relative peace, the cultural vision of the successive government has been shortsighted, and has not provided significant changes. An indicator of this is that only 0.25% of the nations' budget is dedicated to culture and sport¹. There seems to persist a fear that "free expression" carries the risk of subversion. Private initiative has also seen few opportunities in creative art as a driving force for social work and development. Their contributions have been sketchy and isolated. The most important contributors to the democratization of art in the country continue to be the bilateral cultural institutions like Cooperación Española, Alianza Francesa and the various cultural funds from the international cooperation.

With this support, the "alternative" artistic sector in the country, and specially the ones related to the audiovisual art, have taken a qualitative step during the past five years, indicted by the fact that more feature and short film has been produced during the past years than during the last 40 years of the past century combined. These films have received more than 50 international awards, which in turn has stimulated the creation of

¹ Of this modest contribution, the major part is earmarked for sports, another part for the "national patrimony", and the smallest part of the budget is dedicated to culture and art which include all performing and creative art forms

audiovisual productions in Central America and Guatemala has obtained fame as the founder of the only film festival in the region.

4. Evaluation of 2004

The evaluation carried out towards the end of 2004 by Beate Thoresen and Pablo Osorio reported that Casa Comal had developed significantly during the first three years of its existence, positioning itself as a dynamic actor in the artistic and cultural environment in Guatemala and Central America. This was achieved through persistent work in the promotion and production of audiovisual material, the formation in various art forms, a professional promotion and good management.

The training component was considered as complying with a high quality and with an innovating methodology based on stimulating the creativity through "learning while doing" which combines theoretical learning with practice. The results tended to surpass the intended goals, especially when it came to audiovisual production. Working with children was regarded as having great potentials, but had not reached out to many. The target group tended to be urban middle class youth. There was not a clear vision or strategy accompanying the artistic disciplines that were not audiovisual.

The Ícaro Festival had already by 2004 established itself as the most important audiovisual festival in Central America and was an important stimulation for audiovisual production and improved quality in the region. The release of the feature film *La casa de enfrente* was regarded as a milestone. The film was a manifestation of the ability of Guatemalan film makers to produce a modern film, reflecting a contemporary identity with post-conflict Guatemala. A large number of Guatemalans have seen the film. The festival and the film have made it easier for Casa Comal to get government institutions and private enterprises to get interested in Guatemalan film production.

The evaluation also found that Casa Comal had been successful in promoting and distributing its audiovisual products. The administrative capacity was found adequate and the project had contributed to an important degree of institutionalization. However, the evaluation found that the institution was far from achieving financial sustainability. Important potentials were also seen in the collaboration of the Cuban film school EICTV.

The evaluation does not recommend a further expansion of cultural activities, but rather a concentration on the most successful component, the audiovisual production and promotion. Another recommendation was also to extend and strengthen the collaboration with other organizations, especially with the perspective of reaching children and youth in other departments of Guatemala. On the institutional level, the evaluation recommended that Casa Comal established its status as a non-governmental organization rather than as a private enterprise as well as finding a more appropriate and proper installations.

5. Results and follow-up of recommendations

Casa Comal has over the past two years concentrated its activities on audiovisual training, production and promotion. These are interlinked through the production of feature films and television productions for a commercial and international market, the Ícaro Festival which serves as the major promoter of Central American film and the professional training with academic links to the San Carlos University. These three components provide the collective environment of Casa Comal and the need for technical and professional assistance, administrative and logistical support and a center of activities.

In the following, a short description and analysis will be provided of the various components of Casa Comal.

5.1. Audiovisual Production

Casa Comal has developed an important potential for film production in Guatemala, and is the most important reference in the area. The fact that the expression "Guatemalan cinema" has been established is to a large extent due to the work of Casa Comal². In addition to Casa Comal, a few successful film makers have contributed lately with important works, but as individual artists, and not within a concept of an environment based on education and promoting a film festival as is the case of Casa Comal. In addition to own productions, Casa Comal provides young film makers with equipment, advice and other technical support.

The evaluation of 2004 suggested that Casa Comal should concentrate more on film production, rather than spreading its activities to a variety of art forms. This recommendation has been followed.

Since 2004, Casa Comal has been engaged in two major film productions and one television series. After the success of *La casa de enfrente*, directed by Elias Jiménez, the production was initiated of a second feature film with content from the armed conflict, *Las Cruces. Poblado próximo* directed by Rafael Rosal. The film is motivated by the peace accords and the truth commission report (Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico), and depicts the dilemma of the armed resistance, how their members relate with the civilian population, and the tragic outcome of this relationship. This content reflect perhaps what an audience outside Guatemala would expect as a production from this country, but its impact in Guatemala was less than the first production. Some 47,000 spectators responded to the commercial release in September 2006. Thousands of students have also been able to see the film as part of an arrangement with the Ministry of Culture and Sports. A conservative estimate would be that some 500,000 persons have seen the film, including the pirated distribution. The rights to distribute the film in the United States have been sold to Music Art Inc. *Las Cruces* had, however, more success at international

² "Casa Comal has been vital for Guatemalan cinema" (Ana Carlos), "Casa Comal revolutionized Guatemalan cinema" (Walter Figueroa)

film festivals, and won prizes at the festivals El Ojo Cojo and Unión Latina in Spain in 2006. The film participated at some 20 festivals in Brazil, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Netherlands, United States, Colombia, Spain and Canada.

High expectations have been linked to the latest production *VIP. La otra casa*, a follow-up of *La casa de enfrente* with focus on justice and the prison situation in Guatemala. A preliminary version of the film was presented at the Ícaro Festival 2006 with much acclaim, and the final version has been prepared for commercial release in November 2007. This production is by far the most professional released by Casa Comal to date. The major part of the film is made on location in one of the most notorious prisons in Guatemala, El Preventivo para Varones, and inmates from the prison make up a large part of the cast. The storyline is the fate of a white collar criminal from a governmental institution involved in a corruption scheme and charged with murder who expects privileged treatment in prison, but to little prevail. Inmates participating in the film confirm the authentic depiction of Guatemalan prison situation. The film will most likely have a strong impact and is yet another manifestation of increased technical quality of Guatemalan cinema production.

The latest production of Casa Comal is television series in 6 parts, aimed at a Central American audience. The working title is *Buscando a Maya*, a young woman dominated by the chaos and violence which has dominated Central America for the past 500 years. However, the ambitions of this production surpassed the realistic scope and budget, and the production has become a documentary and *reality show* on the research and casting for the series all over Central America. With the existing material and some parts that are still lacking, Casa Comal expects to put together 12 programs for television, dealing with the spirituality of the indigenous populations, interviews with local artists, the casting for the *Buscando a Maya* production, etc. This is the first major television production of Casa Comal. The established relationship with Channel 3 and Channel 7 in Guatemala already secures the showing in Guatemala. The owners of these channels have also important television stations in Nicaragua and Costa Rica. In Panama, television production is already advanced, and Casa Comal has enjoyed technical support from a local channel during the production of the Panamanian part of the series. Honduras and El Salvador are still pending, but Casa Comal seems confident that agreements will be reached before the release of the series in all the Central American countries. This in itself is a new feat in audiovisual development on the sub-continent. Based on this preparation, Casa Comal hopes to find financial support for a fiction film trilogy which will be the first effort to make a Central American co-production.

The financial opportunities for film production in Guatemala are very few. There is no defined policy by the Ministry of Culture and Sports in favor of the art form. Although Guatemala has emerged in Central America as the most important producer of feature film, there is very little recognition of this fact on the part of the government. Apart from bilateral support enjoyed by Casa Comal and others, Guatemalan film makers need to

compete at a regional level for funding. The following are the most common opportunities for funding:

- Ibermedia: With funding from Spain and Catalonia, this program for film and television co-productions was created in 1997 with the goal of fomenting and stimulates productions in Latin America, especially in the initial production phase. So far, the only Central American productions that have received support through Ibermedia are 3 projects from Panamá in 2005 and 2006. The Guatemalan government has not contributed to Ibermedia.
- Cinergía: Since 2004, the Fund for Audiovisual Promotion in Central America and Cuba (Cinergia), based in Costa Rica, has rewarded annually US\$ 150,000 to promising projects. The prices which vary from US\$ 5,000 to US\$ 20,000 each represent, however, a modest contribution to film production. The Guatemalans Alejo Crisóstomo and Julio Hernández have both been rewarded several prices

Producing feature film is a major undertaking, and as long as the Ministry of Culture in Guatemala has no capacity or priority to support the production, the most likely solution is to opt for co-productions and international fund raising. Ibermedia could be an important opportunity, but this requires that the Guatemalan government invest US\$ 175,000 in the program³. Casa Comal should definitely be regarded as a film producer with a track record and artistic credibility. This places Casa Comal in a category where other sponsors would be interested in investing in film projects with the institution. Some film makers in Guatemala resort to commercial productions to raise finances for their own artistic ambitions. This does not appear to be a relevant solution for Casa Comal, but other colleagues consider this as the only realistic way to finance personal film projects.

Possessing film equipment is rare among film makers in Guatemala, and Casa Comal has an important advantage in this sense. The generosity of Casa Comal to make the equipment available to other emerging film makers is an important aspect of the institution. Without the support of Casa Comal's equipment, Julio Hernández would not have been able to produce his award winning film *Gasoline*. Hernández applied several creative methods to raise finances for his film, among others by auctioning art pieces, winning awards and receiving small donations. His important achievement at the San Sebastian Film Festival for films in production means that the festival sponsors facilitate the post-production costs of € 250,000, distribution in Europe and participation in the Cannes Film Festival. These are important achievements for a young Guatemalan film maker and also indicate how films can be produced without core funding.

During the Ícaro Festival of 2006, the vice-minister of culture, Federico Enrique Matheu⁴ took the initiative to gather the active film makers in Guatemala to promote a cinematographic law and a formal constitution of this professional group. This initiative

³ Panama is the only Central American country that invested US\$ 175,000 in Ibermedia, and Panamenian film makers have already benefited with more than US\$ 1 million in support from the fund

⁴ In 2007, Matheu became Minister of Culture and Sports

gave birth to the Professional Association of Cinematographs of Guatemala – AGACINE. Casa Comal plays an active role in this 37 member organization. A proposal for a cinematographic law has been elaborated, and AGACINE presently considers the convenience of presenting the proposal to the outgoing Congress or if it is more prudent to wait until the new Congress is being installed in January 2008. The only Central American country with a cinematographic law is Panama. Guatemala refers to its only law on the subject, the Law on Public Events of 1956, which reference to cinema is limited to rating and censorship. AGACINE has therefore spent much effort in studying cinematographic laws in Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela and the Dominican Republic. Such a law will among others create a fund for film production, generated from taxes on cinemas and showing of foreign films. Tax exemption can be considered in the cases where the cinemas have Guatemalan productions on the program. The Ministry of Culture has provided legal assistance to AGACINE for the promotion of the law in Congress. Other issues on the AGACINE agenda are the formalization of professional cinematographic training and the creation of a Guatemalan film institute.

Over the past years, the film production in Guatemala has been strengthened, thanks to a large degree to Casa Comal and its sponsors. The next critical step is distribution and marketing, and there is still a lot to be learned in this respect. Casa Comal is often characterized as very generous, a very noble value, but often financially undermining. Once the credibility and ability to produce have been established, it is important to marketing the product. The importance of publicity, negotiations with distributors and cinemas are important components of a successful film production. Copyright violations and pirating of productions seem very common. Although a wider audience can be reached, important potential income is being lost.

Assessment

Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The production of three feature films in 6 years is a merit, and places Guatemala among the top feature film producers in Latin America. ○ Casa Comal is generous with other young film makers by making equipment purchased through the project available.
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Film production is expensive, and a substantial part of the budget has supported this component of the project, which in turn provides the most visible results and products.
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guatemala has become one of the most productive countries in Latin America of feature films. ○ Guatemalan film production has become visible to an international audience through participation in international film festivals. ○ A very active environment of young talents interested in film production has emerged in Guatemala, and some of

	these have had international success.
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guatemalan and international audience has been exposed to very relevant and controversial topics through the feature films: corruption, degeneration, prison system, justice and the aftermath of the armed conflict. ○ Through the production phase, young talents are invited to participate and gain experience. ○ Casa Comal contributes to contemporary cultural expression by highlighting an art form that has been neglected in Guatemala.
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Casa Comal has generated confidence and credibility as a serious and high qualified film producing entity among other artists in the field, producers, distributors, the government and potential investors. ○ The three feature films and the television series is a capital which serves as reference for future production. ○ The ability to produce film of high quality is an important asset when approaching financial sources in the future. ○ Casa Comal has been instrumental in the creation of AGACINE which has as its important tasks to create a law to regulate cinematographic production in Guatemala and create the basis for a proper funding base. ○ The Guatemalan Ministry of Culture and Sports does not have the possibility to include film production or Casa Comal in its budget, but will work actively to promote the cinematographic law. ○ Casa Comal needs to explore more opportunities within marketing and distribution, and not only production.

General assessment: Casa Comal has established itself as a highly professional producer of feature film and has been a leading force in placing Guatemala on the map as a leading film producer in Latin America.

5.2. The ICARO Film Festival

The origin of Casa Comal is found in the Ícaro Film Festival which in 2007 will be organized for the 10th time. The festival has established itself as the only Central American film festival with growing attendance, and an important place of encounter among Central American film makers. The festival has also achieved international attention, and a large number of film makers from various countries show increasing interest to have their productions showed at the Ícaro Festival. The festival pays special

attention to the publicity of issues related to a diversified culture, environmental issues, human rights, gender and the construction of a peace culture.

Since the first festival in 1998, which was organized with the Rafael Landívar University, the format has been improving year by year. During the first years, there was a dominance of what is considered journalistic contributions, reports and publicity spots. During the first years (1998-2003), the festival was open to all contributions, usually somewhere between 175 and 250 each year. From 2004, however, selection criteria were introduced, reducing the program to 94 of the more than 200 works that were offered. In the course of the years, more short film and artistic expressions have been presented, along with more critical selection criteria. The number of films selected has now come back to about 200, which indicates a growing number of quality film being produced in the region.

During the initial years, the localities were rather inadequate and improvised. By establishing alliances with certain cinemas, more professional surroundings have been found for the projection of the films. The cinemas charge the ticket price for this improved logistics. In collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Sports and the Municipality of Guatemala, the National Theatre and open air projections have provided extra dimensions to the opening of the festivals. Partnership with the television channels 3 and 7 as well as radio stations have provided important publicity and airing of certain works. The promotion of the festival has become highly professional.

On the 2007 program, a total of 239 films have been selected of which 189 are Central American productions – 92 of these being Guatemalan - and 50 have been offered from outside the region. The dominating category is short film with a total of 58 contributions. A growing number of documentaries are also shown at the festivals which in 2007 have the following categories: animation, short film, documentary, educational documentary, institutional documentary, experimental, journalistic notes, television programs, reports, publicity spots, video clips and feature films. In this last category, there are no Central American productions this year, only 8 films presented from countries outside the region⁵.

Evolution of the past 5 Ícaro festivals

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Works offered	176	220	320	258	324
Works selected	176	94	141	176	239
Participants	11,700	10,300	14,720	11,780	Pending

The success of the festival and the efforts to make it available to more people led to the effort in 2003 to establish 15 different projection locations in Guatemala City and 10 in other parts of Guatemala. This turned out to be a major logistical challenge and was met

⁵ The awarded film *Gasolina* by Julio Hernández will be completed early 2008, and the Cannes Festival in France has reserved the right to premier showing, as part of the conditions of the San Sebastián Film Festival prize

by a disappointing turnout. In 2004, only 4 major cities were chosen, and by 2006, the festival was back to its initial format with projections only in Guatemala City.

Since 2006, however, a different duplication festival with the award winning films in 12 categories from the previous year, *La Muestra Itinerante del Festival Ícaro*, was brought to the neighboring capitals San Salvador, Tegucigalpa, Managua, San José and Panama City. This important event is not only a new dimension of the festival, but strengthens the network among colleagues and film enthusiasts in Central America involved in the organization, logistics, organizing committees and financial support efforts. This dimension of the festival has been consolidated in 2007 and has become an important way to reach a much wider audience. In some of the countries, the festival has also been brought beyond the capital (Matagalpa, León, Granada and Corn Island in Nicaragua, San Pedro Sula in Honduras, and David in Panama). Ícaro has hereby become a truly regional festival, and manifests itself as a strategic factor to raise the interest for film in the region and recognize the audiovisual contributions from the region itself and to strengthen a regional organizing committee. New efforts are being made also to show the *Muestra Itinerante* in the interior of Guatemala.

Assessment

Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The festival has been organized 10 times during the same amount of years with a growing attendance. ○ The festival has added new aspects each year and has always grown with the ambitions of improving. ○ A large number of volunteers and temporary employees secures a professionally logistic program as well as reception and selection of works.
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The festival depends to a large degree on international cooperation, but has also been able to create important alliances with national television channels and other national sponsors.
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The festival is the only of its kind in Central America and has become a reference for film makers and film enthusiasts. ○ The duplicating effect throughout Central America has made the festival accessible to a wide audience. ○ Central American films are being discovered at the festival and receive invitations to other international festivals.
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The festival represents for Casa Comal its external image as a professional, experimental and generous organization. ○ The festival represents a motivation for students at Casa Comal's audiovisual training and for young film makers.

Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The festival has been established as a permanent event, and it would be unthinkable to suspend it.○ The government of Guatemala and the municipality of Guatemala City need to play a more supportive role, recognizing the benefits and prestige the festival bring to the country and the city.○ There are several opportunities to find funding for the festival, given the positive image created and the assurance of success.○ Casa Comal should, with professional advisory, establish a strategy for fund raising in favor of the festival.
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General assessment: The Ícaro Festival is the most visible part of Casa Comal and a culmination each year of productions and new talents. It would be unthinkable for film makers in the region and beyond that the festival would be suspended. A national and municipal ownership of the festival should be promoted.

5.3. Professional Film Education

The activities of audiovisual and artistic training of Casa Comal have their background in the Centre for Audiovisual Training which functioned in the initial phase as part of the education project of the organization, with emphasis on developing workshops with the aim of professionalize the audiovisual production and to stimulate the development of creativity and capacities among children and youth with limited resources, within a concept of "learning while doing". The workshops known as *Arte Fácil*, in which multi disciplinary teams of artists offered courses of esthetic stimulation in public educational centers, were terminated in mid-2005 with good results and an accumulated participation of more than 2,500 children.

Within the same framework, an important exchange has taken place with the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión – EICTV, which has provided the possibility to professionalize many audiovisual workers with high quality human resources. Casa Comal also initiated an academic training course on television Realization with the School of Communication Sciences at the San Carlos University of Guatemala (USAC).

With the intention to link the professional training to the cinematographic industry in the country and later on in the region, and in coordination with the School of Communication Sciences at USAC, a technical career plan was established on Audiovisual Realization, based on Saturday courses during three years. The only other alternative to this training in the region exists in Costa Rica (Escuela VERITAS), and is very costly. The call to integrate the first group of students was made in 2006, and the second one took place in 2007, and so far applications were received from 166 candidates (of whom 85% were male), and of these, 72 students were chosen (12% of these were female). At the moment, 52 students remain (25 in their first year, 27 in their second year), and the

desertion has been some 20%, due to difficulties of combining work and study, and in some cases the difficulty of paying US\$ 80 which the course costs per month. The first group is due to graduate in 2008, the second one in 2009. The funding situation makes it uncertain if a third group will be initiated in 2008.

So far there has been little progress in the development of an academic curriculum and there are still legal impediments to include the study as part of the technical curriculum at USAC. Presently the study has the status of a *diplomado*, which has less academic weight than the course offered by the Galileo University which has academic recognition but which is more based on publicity than cinema. Part of the delay in approving the academic status at USAC can be explained by the busy schedule of the directors of Casa Comal and on support on the part of USAC, despite the fact that the study is a pioneering one in the country as well as in the region. The Rafael Landívar University has also made administrative preparations to initiate a technical curriculum in January of 2008 linked to stage art with emphasis on audiovisual creation, including the interest to include Casa Comal, and thereby opening yet another opportunity for formal training within the organization.

However, despite the lack of definition of the status of the course and the academic standing, the students are highly motivated by the contents and the methodology applied in each of the sessions, modeled after the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión de San Antonio de los Baños in Cuba. Likewise, the students appreciate the importance of counting on portable multimedia equipment and a studio workshop to practice and apply the method of learning while doing. Another important motivation for the students has been the possibility to participate in actual film production with Casa Comal. Similarly, the Ícaro Festival is an annual stimulus to produce quality videos, given that the students are motivated to produce their own material and participate in the competition during the festival. In 2007, the students have been encouraged to elaborate their first film work about HIV/AIDS in an effort to incorporate publicity and sensibility on the topic. The students are realistically aware of the limited possibilities to find employment within the area of cinema and video and to make a career in the country. However, they consider themselves as pioneers who open the path within audiovisual production and they trust that the education will permit them to make audiovisual art from a perspective of freedom of expression, and that they can contribute to strengthen their identity and the project of creating a nation.

The economic support provided by Norway and HIVOS has been fundamental to organize and implement the education project at Casa Comal. The infrastructure acquired with this support and which proves to be fundamental for the practice of the students, has stimulated the quality of the education with which the classes are given, including the participation of professional lecturers, many of who have recognized and international fame within the sector of cinema and audiovisual production. However, the study is at the moment not sustainable given that the tuition paid by the students does not cover the real costs, resulting in that the formation is largely subsidized by the three main donors of Casa Comal.

The situation of financial sustainability of the School is even more complicated with the perspective that HIVOS will suspend its support from mid-2008. This will lead to a substantial reduction in the amount at disposal for training. So far, Casa Comal has not discussed a strategy for finding new financial sources which can secure the continuation of the School in service of the organization.

Assessment

Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The economic and technical resources as well as time has been optimized and led to a training program of high quality. ○ Exchange with other countries has not been achieved according to the plan, nor has the plan to send second year students for a specialization course at EICTV in Cuba materialized because of lack of funding.
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The objectives of the training have been achieved through the diplomado course, the content is of high quality, the desertion is minimal, the assistance and accomplishment of the students is high, as is the promotion of their work. ○ An adequate functioning of the mobile unit of artistic formation and equip a studio workshop where the students can practice has been accomplished.
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ With the implementation of the study and the open courses, the technical and artistic level of the professionals in the area of audiovisual production in the country has been elevated.
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The study in Audiovisual Realization is pioneer in the country and represents a great opportunity for the professionalization of the audiovisual and cinematographic sector in the region.
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The education project depends to a dominating degree on funding from the international cooperation, and there are no immediate possibilities nor offers from any state entity. ○ The <i>diplomado</i> students are young and the majority does not have the capacity to pay high tuitions.

General assessment: The formal training in audiovisual techniques is an integral an important component of Casa Comal's long terms goals, and contributes to consolidate a professional artistic environment in Guatemala and the detection of new talents. Some formalities need to be settled with the San Carlos University to secure an academic profile of the training.

5.4. Other Cultural Activities

Radio program El Comal.

The radio program El Comal, Arte y Cultura was transmitted uninterrupted every Wednesday morning during the period September 2005 until March 2007 on local radio frequency (Infinita 100.1 FM) as well as internationally through internet (www.radioinfinita.com). Each session would deal with art and culture in Central America and internationally. The main personalities of the program are the co-directors of Casa Comal who in collaboration with other artists transmitted conversations with more than 300 personalities from the artist and cultural scene, mainly from Central America, constituting in this was an effective cultural promotion in the country with a rating up to 30% and considered as a popular program among the youth.

In May 2007, when the budget for the radio program had been consumed, Casa Comal decided to suspend temporarily the program while the format was being reconsidered with the intention of converting it into a program with Central American coverage. During the making of the television series *Buscando a Maya* during these months, several interviews have been made which will be transmitted by the radio. The intention is that the program is back on the air in January 2008 in the shape of a radio magazine, covering the most important cultural aspects from each country in the region. The program will be transmitted from Guatemala and it is expected that agreements with radio stations throughout the region will result in live reproduction.

Documentation Center and specialized cinema videoteque.

At the moment, Casa Comal has a cinema documentation center and a videoteque. The latter contains more than 400 films within the categories of animation, documentary, science fiction, experimental cinema, foreign feature film, journalistic notes, reports, publicity spots, television spots and video clips from all over the world.

In 2007, casa Comal received a donation from Cooperación Española of 250 books on audiovisual production, which gave reason to organize the most complete library in the region on audiovisual literature. This information center is open to the public for consultation and lending of the material, but so far very few have made use of it.

The library and videoteque have been very important for the students in technical formation and for professionals in the audiovisual sector in the country. The center lacks the support of librarian who can classify and organize the literature, as well as an adequate place to consult the existing material. This could be a service for which Casa Comal could charge and possibly pay for the services of a librarian.

Multimedia Production Center.

The Multimedia Production Center at Casa Comal has continued to produce high quality written and audiovisual material needed by Casa Comal in its promotion activities and cinematographic editing. The center is based on the function of two persons together

with the sub-director of the area and counts on indicated professionals for the design of materials, while the printing of these is being sub-contracted. The editing room has been improved with the purchase of digital and audio equipment obtained from the last project.

Webpage.

The webpage constitutes a medium for publicity of the activities at Casa Comal, information about art and cultural issues and links with other organizations and networks and thematic issues like HIV/AIDS. The webpage *Portal cultural centroamericano* is a product of the cooperation between Fredskorpset, Universidad Pedagógica in Honduras and Luna Films in Nicaragua. The page is visited by some 2,500 persons each month, but this is beneath the expectation of Casa Comal. The page only has capacity to function throughout 2007, and it will be a task to find new sources of support or service lending to maintain the webpage.

Film equipment.

The film equipment at Casa Comal has been obtained in its totality by funding from international cooperation, especially as part of the agreements 2005-2005 with NORAD and HIVOS, and constitutes the most complete equipment for professional audiovisual production among non-governmental organizations in the country. This equipment is used mainly to develop activities of Casa Comal, its own productions and those of the students. Equipment is being lent out or rented to social organizations and individual producers linked to the alternative audiovisual circuit at 50% of commercial cost. This is regarded as a very generous arrangement, and this has helped other locally produced films as the prize winning "Gasolina" by the young cineaste Julio Hernández.

5.5. Cross-cutting Issues

AIDS/HIV Component.

Since the outset of the Norwegian support of Casa Comal, it was agreed to add an AIDS/HIV component to the project. This was to a large extent imposed on Casa Comal which accepted the proposal by the donor. In the course of the cooperation, the component has never constituted an important explicit part of the project, but has been considered as a cross-cutting issue. However, some examples of explicit attention to the AIDS/HIV issue can be found in the following:

- Information campaigns with posters in bathrooms at youth clubs, concerts and the Ícaro Festival have been carried out
- At the Ícaro Festival, a special prize has been established for works that address the AIDS/HIV issue. In 2007, this prize is given by FAO
- At the audiovisual school, the second year students have been encouraged to produce a short film on the AIDS/HIV issue as part of their compulsory program
- The Casa Comal webpage contains a special section of AIDS/HIV

Gender and multi-ethnic perspective.

These topics have been of particular interest to HIVOS taking into consideration the political guidelines. Although these topics are not included in an explicit manner in the three principle activities of Casa Comal's work, Casa Comal has tried to show through their organizational work, a particular interest for the incorporation of female students in the technical career, as well as within Casa Comal's own organization which accounts with almost an equal number of women and men working in different positions and participation in decision making.

In regards to the multi-ethnic perspective, there exists an interest to express and re-evaluate through the productions about the ancestral origins of the Central American populations and the multi-cultural richness from which it comes from.

General assessment: The AIDS/HIV component, the gender and multiethnic perspective have not become an important part of the Project. Casa Comal shows, however, sensitivity to the issue.

5.6. Institutionalization de Casa Comal

The Legal Status of the Organization.

Following the recommendations of the external evaluation in 2004, Casa Comal changed its legal status from being an enterprise to become a non lucrative civil organization. This change in legal status has also implied important modifications in structure and functioning, like the constitution of a board and elaboration of bylaws which now governs Casa Comal. In general the changes were considered as positive for the organization and have contributed to institutional strengthening. Equally so, Casa Comal has advanced in regulating the internal structure, which includes organizational responsibilities and activities which resulted in various levels of member participation.

Despite the reorganization, the two co-directors have remained as representatives and in decisive hierarchical positions: in the founders' assembly, in the board of directors and as paid directors of the organization. The triplicate of these efforts is not convenient for an organization whose specific philosophy supports democratic structures and encourages collective projects, which at first sight could be understood as being constituted as a personal project and a social organization open to incorporation of other professionals from the same sector.

Administrative System and Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME).

After seven years of existence, Casa Comal has been able to consolidate an orderly and efficient administrative system that responds to the necessary principle needs of the organization. Among the recently adopted procedures is the presentation of joint narrative reports and unified financial statements for all of the donors. This has been an important policy to show the transparency applied to Casa Comal's implemented activities, and an

expression of integrity of their artistic and cultural projects which permits them to save time in the elaboration of various reports for each donor.

Casa Comal does not have a planning, monitoring or evaluating system (PME) of their activities, nor does it have a strategic institutional development plan. The annual activity program is developed with a basis of donor approved project documents and fundamentally describes the principle activities that were carried out during the year. The requirements seem to have been quite flexible on several occasions, but the reports accomplish with the established period. The lack of training in planning, monitoring and evaluation (PME) technical skills is common in many organizations. In the reporting of Casa Comal, there is no clear understanding of Logical Framework Approach or a follow-up system. The donors have not commented on this or the lack of PME. So far, it can be said that the activities have been completed under the adequate direction of the co-directors and the results have been very positive.

With the absence of an institutional orientation for monitoring and systematization of their practices, Casa Comal limits its learning process of what has been accomplished. Their activism, the diversity of tasks that are accomplished, the ambition of the objectives and the intense dedication of Casa Comal's ideals could be counter-productive to the good intention, which is in reality fundamental, and could even be decisive for the achievement of the long-term objectives. The implementation of the PME system, is not only a methodological challenge, nor only technically, but fundamentally political, that would permit Casa Comal to build competency among other persons in the organization and gradually reduce the dependency upon the co-directors and in this way prepare in the near future the administrative relay from the actual co-directors that are presently in charge. The relay of the administration to other Casa Comal members could fundamentally develop tasks to insure the organizational function and permit the co-directors to potentially maximize on their talents and dedicate more time on cinematographic production.

Economic Resources and Financial Sustainability.

Casa Comal has had an important growth, in the corresponding 2001-2003 period of its existence which their income ascended to Q. 11,500,000, which according to the 2004 external evaluation, represented an annual duplicating of income between 2001 and 2003. During the 2005-2006 period the income ascended to Q.4,756,502.00, which represented an increase of eight percent. The increase was made possible by the increase in donations by the cooperation agencies (93%) and the income of Casa Comal was seven percent. During the period, NORAD remained as the most important donor; followed by the Fredskorpset and HIVOS. The contribution of these three donors constituted a very high percentage of total income which created a very elevated dependency of the cooperation funds for the functioning and development of the organization's activities.

The origin of Casa Comal's own incomes is generated from the enrollment of students taking the technical study, payment of audiovisual specialization courses, rentals of

audiovisual equipment, and theatre box office sales even though the last item has been principally utilized to initiate new Casa Comal film projects. Casa Comal has been able to obtain non-monetary support from some private businesses, for example television channel and theatre auditorium concessions on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Culture and movie theatres that has supported their activities, support which constitutes a significant savings in the events' costs.

It can be concluded that during the last period, Casa Comal has been able to manage income sources but has not been able to diversify nor been able to mobilize national resources because their relationship and contacts with the government has been limited to minimum contribution within the ICARO Festival's framework while the majority of the received non-monetary contributions has been from the private sector.

The NORAD funds make up 60 percent of the organization's budget. Fredskorpset contributes 20 percent while HIVOS makes up 18 percent and the remainder comes from the sale of Casa Comal services. Without the support from NORAD, Casa Comal would only be able to minimally maintain its functions. At this stage, it seems premature to discuss whether a financial sustainability of the organization would be possible, but it is time to explore the possibilities to establish the basis and relations to solidify new support. Casa Comal's capacity and credibility in the audiovisual medium should be exploited to secure a much higher and effective financial management.

Casa Comal growth process as well as its organizational strengthening has been directed toward institutional sustainability. The institution counts on a consolidated professional team with a clear vision and concrete audiovisual projects and an adequate administration. Casa Comal has maintained multiple activities with a small established team as well as having part of the personnel temporarily contracted to carry specific activities, for example, the ICARO Festival which is carried out in a very professional manner, with terms of reference and supported legal documents.

Links and Connections with other organizations.

The principal links and connections of Casa Comal has been with organizations from the national art and cultural sector with which joint activities have been implemented; with governmental entities such as the Ministry of Culture and Sports, the Ministry of Education, the Administration of the Historical Center of Guatemala City; with private enterprises, specifically with some representatives of television channels and other businesses that have until recently incorporated as patrons of the ICARO Festival. With all of these persons and organizations the relationship has been very cordial, aspects that have been expressed in conversations and opinions about work, efforts and production of Casa Comal.

Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The utilization of the resources and the application of the same in a responsible way has permitted a high degree of quality and almost a complete accomplishment of the objectives.
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The totality of economic, human and professional resources has permitted the implementation of an important artistic project in the central American region, with a high degree of possibilities to obtain financial sustainability on the short term.
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The provided resources have permitted an accelerated development of the cinematographic industry in a very short time.
Relevante	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The provided economic resources have been applied in an optimal way, to produce successful feature films which have been realized with relatively low budgets.
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The weakest point of the organization is its high dependence on international cooperation.

General assessment: The administration of Casa Comal has gained more experience with the management of large donations. The dependence on international cooperation should be reduced by applying own revenue and fund raising.

5.7. Fredskorpset (Norwegian Peace Corps).

Casa Comal and the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión (EICTV) in Cuba have been partners since the project was initiated in 2000. Because of the established cooperation between Norway and Casa Comal, the partnership between EICTV and Casa Comal was recommended as an example of south-south cooperation, given that EICTV was already involved in technical and professional support to Casa Comal. The first partnership contract was established in 2002-2003, renewed to cover the period of 2003-2005, and again for the period 2005-2007. The main objectives for this partnership have been.

1. Improve the technical capacity of partners.
2. Develop the capacity of new professionals in the area of cinema TV.
3. Strengthen the institutional capacity of partners.
4. Joint production of audio-visual projects.

The Partnership has been effective in establishing a cooperation model based on a long-term project for the partnership that is independent of the Fredskorpset project. The goal of improving the technical capacity of partner institutions has been successful because partners planned the Fredskorpset exchange programme to fulfill their human resources needs. In the exchange, 3 Guatemalans and 3 Cubans participated each year. Casa Comal used the exchange programme to upgrade the knowledge and skills of its staff with

the intention of promoting them upon return. All exchange participants assumed positions of direction in Casa Comal after exchanges at the EICTV. On the other hand, the EICTV used the exchange programme to keep the school updated in software usage (from Guatemala) and to supply the school with needed additional staff for teaching and for the realization of special projects. Exchange participants improved the technical capacity of partner institutions in the areas of sound, edition, photography, production, direction, publicity, software, and management capacities.

During the latest partnership period 2005-2007, the agreement has also been broadened to include Honduras and Nicaragua. 2 Guatemalans, 1 Honduran and 1 Nicaraguan participant stayed at EICTV for one year. These participants first participate in a one month preparation course in Norway, 10 months in the exchange country and finally one month on returning for feedback.

The partnership has led to cultural ties between Guatemala, Cuba and Norway through associating and publicizing Norwegian support to Casa Comal and the partnership. The partnership has also made a formal exchange of information with the Norwegian "Film Fra Sør" film festival. A cooperation contract with the Norwegian Film Institute enabled Inge-Lise Langfelt, a Norwegian film editor, to collaborate in Casa Comal's production projects.

General assessment: The Exchange through the Fredskorpset has contributed with highly professional support for Casa Comal, in production as well as formation. Guatemalan partners have had the opportunity to be part of a highly professional environment in Cuba and have extended contacts with professionals from many parts of Latin America. The Exchange is a good example of south-south cooperation.

6. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats - SWOT

Strengths:

- Casa Comal is presently an institutional and consolidated team, representing a professional strength based on a large number of persons as compared to the early years dominated by the co-directors.
- There is an accumulated ten years experience in the implementation of audiovisual projects, implementation of a successful festival on regional level and the students contribute to a constant active environment.
- The inherent technical capacity to carry out proper projects of Casa Comal and co-produce as well as being generous towards the community of audiovisual artists is an important asset for Guatemalan film production.
- Having produced 3 feature films in 5 years is a manifestation of ability to produce and contribute to the audiovisual industry and quality cinema on Central American level and this has provided prestige for Casa Comal.

- The audiovisual school is a newly initiated project but with excellent perspectives to grow at regional level, and represent the pursuit of professionalism with which the audiovisual development has taken place.
- The Ícaro Festival and its decentralized model has been consolidated in the region as the most important audiovisual art festival and a large number of volunteers contribute to this success.
- The conversion of a national project into a regional one and the elements that provide perspectives at other levels, especially international, which has constructed a network of artists that does not only function for Ícaro, since the partners have started to collaborate on other projects as well, including regional television.
- The credibility and professional respect that has been gained from governmental institutions, the community of artists and national and regional producers, independent film makers and institutions that work in this area.
- There is recognition and admiration from everyone working in the field of culture towards what Casa Comal has created, of its relevance in the country and the region and the quality of its products.

Weaknesses:

- Very little support from the Guatemalan government to subsidize the projects of cinematographic development, which is not within their plans nor capacity or interest to foment culture as a State concern, as a motor for peace and democracy that can transform the society.
- Lack of academic recognition of the training component.
- High degree of dependence on international resources to implement Casa Comal's projects. All projects will be affected by the exit of HIVOS in 2008.

Opportunities:

- The ability to produce two films annually, co-productions which can involve more professionals from the cultural sector on Central American level.
- Regionalization of Casa Comal by means of regional implementation of television and cinema, search for co-productions with more countries in Central America and the Caribbean.
- Extend the training component to El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, countries that are interested and which have great necessity for training, initiating with independent workshops and specific training in the audiovisual sector. Panamá is an important opportunity: Cinema law, finances.
- The elaboration of a cinematographic and audiovisual law in Guatemala will regulate the area and provide new opportunities for funding of production.

- Alternative funding can be found and improved strategies on marketing and publicity of Casa Comal products can enhance the financial sustainability.

Threats:

- The continuing tendency of withdrawal of international cooperation since presently some 90% of support to Casa Comal is international cooperation.
- Dwindling of foreign funding for Ícaro, in worst case close it down.
- Worst case with school to close down, staying only with the two promotions.
- Not very promising perspectives with the next government concerning cultural policy and freedom of expression, censorship.

7. Panoramas

The hypothetical situations for Casa Comal can be described as follows:

7.1. Continued international support

This represents of course the preferred panorama for Casa Comal. The financial support from Norway and HIVOS has made it possible for Casa Comal to grow as an artist community and producer of feature film. Casa Comal has created an environment for creative film in Guatemala and the region and possesses a fair amount of adequate technical equipment for film production. Continued international support will make it possible for Casa Comal to maintain its role as stimulator of film production, formation of new talents and maintaining the Ícaro Film Festival

7.2. Reduced international support

This represents a very likely scenario and it is a reality Casa Comal can live with. A reduced support over time along with a phase out strategy can allow Casa Comal to find alternative funding. Based on the prestige enjoyed by Casa Comal, support for future film production should be possible to obtain on a commercial level. The audiovisual formation is to a certain degree financed by the students themselves, and there is most likely a limit to what they can afford, running the risk to lose valuable talents. The Ícaro Festival might have to scale down its ambitions and quality. In the case of reduced support, the steps need to be considered jointly with Casa Comal. Priorities must be made for where reductions can be applied, and if possible, the donors can contribute to an adequate fund raising strategy

7.3. Absence of international support

This worst case scenario can hopefully be avoided. However, Casa Comal has taken the possibility into consideration. The artist community that has grown up around Casa Comal will not disappear with a possible disappearance of funding. Such an eventuality will

mean that Casa Comal will have to abandon its identity as an integral project and convert itself to a commercial producer. Casa Comal as it is known today will disappear temporarily until alternative solutions are found, and that means a discontinuity of production, the festival and the training. The risk of such a scenario is of course that the very positive results obtained during the first years will be lost.

8. Overall Assessment

As an overall assessment, this evaluation finds that.

- Casa Comal has established itself as an important cultural institution in Guatemala which enjoys a high level of credibility and admiration.
- The generous support from Norway and HIVOS has given Casa Comal wide artistic freedom to develop genuine artistic expression in post-conflict Guatemala where progressive art has been able to express itself as part of the peace process and the desire to transform Guatemalan society
- A high level of creativity has been expressed by Casa Comal with a program that constantly has set higher ambitions for the audiovisual artist community in Guatemala
- The production of three major feature films in five years is an achievement, given that hardly any Central American country has ventured into such a production over the past decade
- The production of feature films has placed Casa Comal as an important exponent of film industry at Central American level
- The efforts to form young talents through the audiovisual school is an expression of the desire to create a professional environment in this field on Central American level
- The Ícaro Festival has become a manifestation of excellence and pride for Central American and particularly Guatemalan film makers as the only festival of its kind in the region. The festival is provides an important projection of Central American audiovisual production.
- New standards have been set for a professional formation of future audiovisual talents with the establishment of the Film School in collaboration with the San Carlos University.
- Casa Comal has achieved much acclaim, and should be ready to look for its own sustainability as a film producing entity.
- Financial support from the Guatemalan state – the Ministry of Culture and Sports – is very unlikely due to the low priority in general in the national budget and for performing arts in particular.

- The possibility of regulating the audiovisual sector through a new law promoted by AGACINE is an important opportunity to establish a national fund in support of film production
- It would be premature to cut drastically back on the financial support until a strategy for sustainable existence has been established

9. Recommendations

9.1. Recommendations to Casa Comal

- Casa Comal needs to explore and adjust itself to the marketing and publicity of audiovisual productions. Activity: With support of a professional in the area of audiovisual marketing, Casa Comal should elaborate a finance strategy with clear identification of partners, with clear goals which support financial needs.
- Many functions are still concentrated in the hands of the co-directors. A delegation and decentralization of functions would be positive for the internal and external functioning of Casa Comal. Activity: Develop more confidence within the team, delegate more powers to the sub-directors (e.g. Ícaro Festival, the film school, management) and define clearly complementary functions.
- Casa Comal should consider if it is time to consolidate activities rather than continue to add new activities to its agenda. Activity: Consolidate the television series *Buscando Maya* as priority production and secure its completion before considering new productions. Agree to a priority of activities that can be adjusted to new budget situations.
- Casa Comal needs to assign a person to review and accompany the process of achieving academic status for the audiovisual school at the USAC. Activity: Complete the curriculum and complete the administrative requirements at USAC to secure the continuation of the Film School within the public university as an alternative to the plans of the private university Rafael Landívar which will be very costly for the target group of Casa Comal.
- The Ícaro Film Festival should be constituted as an entity with a proper board where Casa Comal could be an active participant, but not necessarily the owner. Activity: Create a proper institutional identity of the festival which is open to representatives in Central America and integrate members who can provide financial support for the festival.

9.2. Recommendations to the donors

- Recognize the fact that Casa Comal has been very successful and creative in promoting audiovisual art and production in Guatemala and Central America. Action: Maintain a constructive approach in partnership with Casa Comal which can help the institution to find options for continued contribution to the audiovisual

environment in Guatemala. Priorities should be agreed on components to eventually phase out

- Avoid abrupt changes in the cooperation since this will affect ongoing processes. Action: Elaborate a transition plan in close collaboration with Casa Comal which take into account the realistic perspective of Norwegian cooperation. Plans for changes in the cooperation should be discussed with Casa Comal, including advisory on how to manage transitions
- Support for the Ícaro Film Festival should be considered as a minimum contribution. Action: HIVOS should reconsider the effects of a total withdrawal and maintain the Ícaro festival as an option for further support; and in the transitional period support to Casa Comal with an external high level assessor to develop a management and marketing strategy that results in a consolidated business plan for the organization, wise without losing artistic and cultural objectives. Norway should also explore ways to support the festival in the case resources for Casa Comal will be drastically reduced.
- The support through Fredskorpset can be a vital part for the continuation of the Film School. Action: Instructors from the EICTV in Cuba will be important assets to secure the quality of the film school in Guatemala, and their participation can be guaranteed by Fredskorps partnership.

Annexes

1. Persons interviewed

Date	Person interviewed	Position
25.09.07	Aslaug Nygård	Second Secretary Norwegian Embassy in Guatemala
10.10.07	Rafael Rosal	Co-director Casa Comal
10.10.07	Elias Jiménez	Co-director Casa Comal
10.10.07	Pedro Díaz	Film producer Casa Comal
10.10.07	Daniela Sagone	Photographic director Casa Comal/Coordinator Icaro Festival
10.10.07	Clarissa de Paz	Administración Casa Comal y Festival ICARO
11.10.07	Håvard Austad	Counselor Norwegian Embassy in Guatemala
11.10.07	Alejo Crisóstomo	Film producer and editor/organization of Ícaro Festival
11.10.07	Julio Hernández	Film director, recent San Sebastian Prize for "Gasoline"
11.10.07	Miguel Menchú	Student at Casa Comal Film School
12.10.07	Walter Figueroa	Director of Cinemateca Universitaria
12.10.07	Maribel Rivero	Cuban instructor at Casa Comal Film School
12.10.07	Hugo Chávez	Casa Comal accountant
13.10.07	Gustavo Bracamonte	Director Communication Department, San Carlos University
13.10.07	Otto Gaitán	Lecturer at Casa Comal Film School
13.10.07	Damaris Boche	Student at Casa Comal Film School
13.10.07	Norma Ordoñez	Student at Casa Comal Film School
13.10.07	Carlos Ventura	Student at Casa Comal Film School
13.10.07	Isabel Reynoso	Student at Casa Comal Film School
13.10.07	12 students at Casa Comal Film School	

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15.10.07	Ana Carlos	Film producer, director of Caminos del Asombro
15.10.07	José Osorio	Coordinator of Caja Lúdica Art Collective
16.10.07	Ana Echevarría	Director of Art Academy Rafael Landívar University
16.10.07	Roberto Díaz Gomar	Actor and president of AGACINE
16.10.07	Ana Luz Castillo	Director of Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture and Sports
16.10.07	Ricardo Rodríguez	Director of Centro Histórico of Guatemala City
17.10.07	Elin Widsteen	Former Secretary Norwegian Embassy in Guatemala
23.10.07	Julieta Hernández G.	Guatemalan Hivos consultant

Respondents to written queries	
Aslaug Nygård	Second Secretary Norwegian Embassy in Guatemala
Guri Rusten	Former Secretary Norwegian Embassy in Guatemala
Luis Argueta	Guatemalan film director based in New York, USA
Hispano Duron Gómez	Honduran film maker, participant in Ícaro Festival
Martha Clarissa Hernández	Nicaraguan film maker, participant in Ícaro Festival
Ana Xóchitl Alarcón	Costa Rican film maker, participant in Ícaro Festival
Roberto Enrique King	Panamanian film maker, participant in Ícaro Festival

2. References

- Casa Comal (2007a), *Plan de trabajo octubre 2006-marzo 2008. Casa Comal, Arte y Cultura GTM-2653*, Guatemala: Document prepared for Norwegian Embassy
- Casa Comal (2007b), *Informe narrativo y financiero (agosto de 2005-diciembre de 2006)*.
- Casa Comal (2007c), *Informe semi annual – abril a septiembre 2007. Casa Comal, Arte y Cultura GTM-2653*, Guatemala: Report to the Norwegian Embassy.
- Casa Comal (2007d), *Informe parcial del proyecto HIVOS GU065C02, Casa Comal, Arte y Cultura de Guatemala. Período de agosto de 2005 al 31 de diciembre de 2006*.
- HIVOS Holanda (2005), *Casa Comal – El proyecto 2005-2008*.
- Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Casa Comal Arte y Cultura (2005), *Contract Regarding Artistic and Audio-Visual Education, Production and Dissemination*.
- Scanteam (2005), *Study of the Results of Selected Projects of Fredskorpset Primary Programme 2004*, Oslo: Evaluation report.
- Thoresen, Beate and Pablo Osorio (2004), *Informe de evaluación: Casa Comal – "Una película guatemalteca"*, Guatemala: Evaluation report.
- Widsteen, Elin (2005), *Various internal correspondence*, Guatemala: Embassy archive.

Audiovisual productions viewed

- *La casa de enfrente*, de Elias Jiménez/Casa Comal (2003).
- *Las Cruces. Poblado próximo*, de Rafael Rosal/Casa Comal (2006).
- *V.I.P. La otra casa*, de Elias Jiménez/Casa Comal (2007).

Web sites

- www.casacomal.org
- www.festivalicaro.com
- www.viplaotraca.com
- www.noruega.org.gt
- www.fredskorpset.no
- www.hivos.org

3. Terms of reference

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EVALUATION of the Project "Artistic Education, Production and Dissemination" Casa Comal GTM 2653 06/003 and HIVOS' Institutional Support to Casa Comal.

1. Background:

Casa Comal was founded in 2000 by a group of people working within arts and communications who started the ICARO Film Festival three years earlier. Following the signing of the Peace Treaties in 1996, the group proposed to contribute to the construction of a new multicultural, democratic and peaceful society by using art and culture. Since the beginning Casa Comal has been a cultural centre providing a wide array of activities and has become a meeting point for artistic and cultural expressions. Casa Comal entered into a new era with the production of their first feature film in 2002. Since then Casa Comal has produced two other films and is now producing a television series of cultural documentaries and has initiated a technical audiovisual study together with Guatemala's public university.

Casa Comal has three donors:

1. The Norwegian Embassy began their co-operation with Casa Comal in March 2001. The main goal of the first five years of the cooperation was to develop, strengthen and consolidate Casa Comal as an independent cultural institution, through artistic and audiovisual education, production and dissemination. The first five years were covered by three different agreements and had a total budget of NOK 7.750 000. The general objective of the current agreement is to strengthen Casa Comal as a centre for artistic and audiovisual education, production and dissemination of high impact in Central America, which promotes a cultural identity respectful of the country's and region's cultural diversity. The ongoing project covers a period of two years (May 2006 to April 2008) and has a budget of NOK 3.500 000.
2. The Dutch aid organisation HIVOS (Humanistic Institute for Development Cooperation) started their cooperation with Casa Comal in 2003, with an institutional support of €85.000 for two years (1 August 2003 to 31 July 2005). Thereafter they signed a second agreement with a considerably higher amount of € 180.000 for three new years (1 August 2005 to 31 July 2008).
3. The Norwegian Fredskorpset has since 2002 sponsored an exchange program between Casa Comal and the International School of Film and Television of San Antonio de los Baños (EICTV) based in Cuba and the counterparts that Casa Comal has in Honduras and El Salvador.

The Norwegian co-operation with the institution was evaluated in the second semester of 2004. The evaluation concludes "Casa Comal has in a very efficient manner implemented all plans according to agreement with NORAD, in the planning process as well as in the fulfilment". Among the most important results of the co-operation the evaluation stresses the growth and consolidation of the ICARO Film Festival as the most important film festival in Central America, and the production of the film "La Casa de Enfrente", the first Guatemalan movie in 12 years. The

movie served as an inspiration for young Guatemalan filmmakers. Casa Comal's audio-visual educational Programme was assessed to be of good quality and to meet a demand in Guatemala. Since both the agreements of HIVOS and Norway with Casa Comal will expire next year the donors wish to initiate an external evaluation of Casa Comal to assess the feasibility of a possible continuation of the cooperation and on how to improve possible weaknesses within the cooperation. The planned evaluation is mentioned in the two agreements between Norway, HIVOS and Casa Comal.

2. The Purpose of the External Evaluation.

Norway and HIVOS will undertake a joint external evaluation of Casa Comal with the general purpose of assessing the effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the institution and its activities in audiovisual production, the ICARO Film Festival, the university study in film and TV and the information campaign on HIV/AIDS. The role of Casa Comal as a societal actor in the cultural sector in Guatemala and the region shall also be assessed. Where relevant to achieve a global picture, the team should also include some insight into activities not directly covered by the two agreements, like the exchange program of the Norwegian Fredskorpset.

The evaluation shall generate recommendations regarding Casa Comal's activities (scope, content, functioning, funding) and give recommendations on HIVOS' and Norway's future involvement.

3. Scope of Work

1. *Assess and evaluate:*

- the **relevance** of Casa Comal as a cultural institution in promoting a more vibrant and inclusive cultural sector in Guatemala and the region.
- the **impact** of Casa Comal in strengthening and broadening the cultural sector in Guatemala and the region - to the degree possible.

2. *Assess the **effectiveness** of Casa Comal's activities in relation to:*

- The desired goals, objectives and results as outlined in the current agreements with Norway and HIVOS.

3. *Assess the **economic management** and **efficiency** in relation to cost/benefit of the activities and productions made by Casa Comal.*

4. *Assess the **institutional sustainability** of Casa Comal with a focus on:*

- strategic planning, knowledge management and organisational learning capacity, as well as the ability to create synergies between Casa Comal's different activities,
- to what extent Casa Comal is able to nourish institutional development through the recruitment and promotion of new young filmmakers/artists,
- to what extent Casa Comal may maintain its activities without institutional support from HIVOS and Norway,
- the efforts towards attracting sources of financing from national, regional and international institutions/donors, other than HIVOS and Norway.

5. *Examine the **risk management** in general within Casa Comal and the **transparency** in*
- the selection of students for the university study in film and TV at Guatemala's public university,
 - the selection of films to be shown at the ICARO Film Festival.

4. Implementation of the evaluation

Sources of information will mainly be documents, including the audiovisual productions, and in-depth interviews with Casa Comal, the Norwegian Embassy and HIVOS and with important stakeholders in the cultural sector in Guatemala and the region.

The methodology will be SWOT – to measure strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats through group interviews, individual in-depth interviews and interviews in writing. It is suggested that the evaluation team uses interview guides in writing for those of the stakeholders who they will not be able to meet in person, for example stakeholders from other Central American countries. It is not seen as necessary to make field visits and the evaluation should be implemented from Guatemala City.

The essential documentation to carry out the evaluation, like audiovisual productions, progress reports and financial statements, external audit reports and activity reports shall be provided to the evaluation team by Casa Comal. Other relevant information regarding agreements and the follow-up of the agreements and projects shall be provided by HIVOS and the Norwegian Embassy in Guatemala.

5. Profile of the consultants

The consultants must have experience in: i) local planning projects, monitoring and evaluation impact study, ii) cultural organizations, iii) qualifications/experience in the audio-visual cultural sector and iv) analysis of cost/benefit projects; preferably in the region and must be fluent both in Spanish and English. It is desirable with a team of two external consultants with a balance in gender. Knowledge and experience in international cultural cooperation is a plus.

6. Timetable for the evaluation for October 2007

The evaluation will last 14 days and include two consultants (28 working days in total).

No. of days	Task
5	Preparation and planning
4	Interviews with personnel of Casa Comal
3	Interviews with the donors (HIVOS, the Norwegian Embassy etc.)
2	Interviews with government representatives (Ministry of Culture, etc.)
4	Interviews with similar institutions and/or programs - both national and regional
4	Study of documents and audio-visual material
5	Development of the report of the evaluation and recommendations
1	Debriefing at Embassy

BUDGET (to be developed in detail)

The Norwegian Embassy and HIVOS will finance the cost of the consultancy which includes the consultant's fees, direct expenses, transportation and taxes. The total cost of the evaluation is estimated to 10000 USD.

7. Report

- The consultants are responsible for an independent report that does not necessarily reflect the opinions of Casa Comal, HIVOS or the Norwegian Embassy.
- The report will be delivered electronically and in written form to the Norwegian Embassy and HIVOS.
- The report will not exceed 25 pages and will include an executive summary in English of 2 pages. Appendixes might come in addition to the 25 pages.
- The report will be delivered to the Norwegian Embassy and HIVOS no later than 5 November 2007.
- The report will have an executive summary in Spanish and a final report with conclusions as well as lessons learnt and recommendations in English.

