Appeal for solidarity and help from Gustavo Esteva on behalf of Unitierra (Earth University)

26 September 2017

Dear Friends,

I need your help.

We don’t know as yet the real damages produced by the earthquakes that hit the south of Oaxaca and Chiapas on September 8th, and Morelos, Puebla and Mexico City on September 19th. We don’t know the depth of the tragedy, but we already know that it poses an immense challenge.

Provisional figures offer the first picture: more than 300 people died, many more injured, more than 7,000 communities severely affected, thousands of houses collapsed, tens of thousands of buildings seriously damaged –including hundred of schools and historical buildings, even some that are 500 years old…

In many cases, people lost not only their properties but also their means of subsistence. Some small farmers discovered that in addition to their houses they lost the topsoil of their plots: the water took it away. More than 20,000 small businesses were destroyed. Many people are sleeping in the street, afraid of their homes collapsing as a result of the thousands of aftershocks. The official estimate indicates that the earthquake and its aftermath have directly affected at least three million people.

Shelter for thousands has been organized and food is distributed for many more. As usual, local heroism and massive solidarity have generated amazing stories of human compassion and generosity. But we have also observed institutional inertias and examples of human degradation aggravating the situation. We are now afraid that, according to what today has become an international pattern, ‘aid’ and abuse can be worse than the natural disaster. We have in mind Haiti, but also many other horror stories.

Our sister organizations, Unitierra Isthmus and Unitierra Puebla, were directly affected and are deeply involved in the current process of grassroots organization. Through them, I am committed to a very intense effort to support an initiative we launched a few hours after the emergency. It attempts, first of all, to resist the trafficking of victims of the earthquake, as politicians, public agencies and even private organisms try to control groups of victims for their own agendas and interests. We must deal, in addition to the real damages and the loss of lives and properties, with a wave of destructive and corrupted ‘aid.’

We are thus participating in the organization of the autonomous reconstruction of houses, buildings, ways of life and the social fabric, particularly in the poorest communities and those out of the official radar or private charity. We need to deal with the immediate needs of the emergency, but also with a complex reconstruction process that may require years. It will be a long road, and we are doing everything we can to walk it well together. As usual, the limited means will be used in the most visible place and those marginalized…will be again marginalized.

We are using the experience of members of our group, very active in the process of reconstruction after the earthquake affecting Mexico City and many other areas on 1985, as well as 15 years of experience of Unitierra in learning processes at the grassroots.

And, we need your help.

**You can provide donations in one of two ways**:

* In collaboration with the Center for Convivial Research and Autonomy of California, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization affiliated with our sister organization, Unitierra Califas, you can make a contribution through PayPal. The Center also has agreed to receive checks and other deposits on our behalf.
* Regular support is also needed to maintain our efforts, organizing and training brigades of professionals and buying or producing materials for the reconstruction.

Please join me now by offering ongoing support for the process of reconstruction.

\_\_\_\_   Supporter of *Unitierra* ($10/month)

\_\_\_\_   Neighbor of *Unitierra* ($15/month)

\_\_\_\_   Friend of *Unitierra* ($25/month)

\_\_\_\_ *Compañerx* of *Unitierra* ($50/month or more)

**For PayPal gifts, use the following link**: <http://ggg.vostan.net/ccra/#504>

**For gifts as checks or deposits, use the following information**:

Center for Convivial Research and Autonomy

745 N. 5th St. San Jose, CA 95112

Routing#:

Acct#: 164102646211

Your support of *Unitierra* with a monthly donation will ensure that our work will continue to reach people seeking to create—in their communities—alternative ways of living, learning, healing, and more. Your one-time donation can endow the reconstruction of a house or an initiative to improve the living conditions of a group of families.

Your support will truly make a difference. We appreciate your being part of the Unitierra family and thank for your continued caring and generosity. May justice and peace be with you.

Gustavo Esteva