

Chapter 7: Results

A. Past Mistakes

B. Current Weaknesses

C. Personal Growth

D. Comparison between a conventional free trade zone worker and a worker-owner at the Fair Trade Zone

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1) The Future

2) Advice

Because the Fair Trade Zone is the first worker-owned free trade zone in the world and a model project for sustainable economic alternatives for the poor, it's important to examine not only the successes of the project, but also its failures. Other groups wishing to set up a similar project can perhaps avoid some of the mistakes that the Fair Trade Zone has made and learn to strengthen their own groups in areas where the Fair Trade Zone still feels weak. We have already shown some of the successes of the Fair Trade Zone: as an employment option in an underemployed region, as a profitable business, and as a vehicle of personal development for the workers. In this chapter we look at some of the co-op's past mistakes as well as its current weaknesses. We also examine the impact that the project has had on the lives of the worker-owners, including comparative interviews with a worker in a conventional free trade zone and one of the worker-owners of the Fair Trade Zone. In conclusion, we hear the dreams the Fair Trade Zone worker-owners have for the future of their business, and members' advice to other groups wishing to carry out similar projects.

A. Past Mistakes

Like any new company, the Fair Trade Zone has made many mistakes. "We are learning along the way and sometimes we make mistakes," admits María Elena.¹³⁰ The most memorable mistake for the worker-owners was made while working on an order of white organic criss cross tops for Maggie's Organics. The criss cross tops are the most expensive item that the cooperative makes, and they are made from a very expensive cloth, which the cooperative had bought for the order. Maggie's was planning to garment dye the 500 pieces post production, which meant that the garments had to be made with 100% cotton thread. Through a production oversight, no one checked the thread that was being used until nearly all the garments had gone through the production line with the wrong thread, and by then it was too late. The garments couldn't be sold to Maggie's and the cooperative had to absorb the loss. "They just sat in the warehouse," remembers Ruth.¹³¹

The cooperative has also had its share of problems handling money. In the beginning, co-op members saw nothing wrong with simply taking the day's earnings and dividing them equally among the members, as though they were a family running an informal corner store. "In their first year as a cooperative, they sold 100 scrunchies to a visiting delegation and each took \$20 home, leaving nothing for the cooperative," remembers Mike of JHC-CDCA. When the JHC-CDCA found out about it, Mike called a meeting of the co-op and explained the importance of

covering the cooperative's costs and only sharing out the *profits* in the manner stipulated by the co-op's constitution and bylaws. To rectify the situation it was decided that each member would repay the \$20 out of their salaries. Some of the members weren't satisfied with the decision and the situation caused strife not only within the co-op but also between the co-op and JHC-CDCA. "It wasn't the last time they were tempted," remembers Mike, "but having to pay the money back certainly made an impression on them."¹³²

As with any business, money worries continually plague the Fair Trade Zone. In addition to making all financial decisions together as a general assembly, the cooperative has hired a trusted accountant from outside the co-op to review the monthly accounting. This helps the Fair Trade Zone avoid conflicts and doubts about financial matters.



laying out cloth in the early days

Although production slip-ups and mishandling of finances teach an expensive lesson, they are not always the most damaging mistakes to a company in the long run. In the case of the Fair Trade Zone, organizational mistakes have been more costly to the cooperative in the long term. "Well, you know that in any business there are mistakes," says Marina. "And maybe the mistake [we've made] is that we haven't worked together. We are all at fault for not having worked together with all the members."¹³³

Other worker-owners agree. "The biggest mistake that we have made I think is to still be working with people who don't want to work," says Tomasa. "Because one is always pulling one way, and the other the other way. It's like a grindstone, but a grindstone can only turn one way. And the problem I think that we are having is that we want to turn both ways...We never see the emergence of a leader who wants to direct and make us turn the same way. So we are always pulling against each other and I think that this has been a huge error that we haven't been able to overcome."¹³⁴ These experiences serve to underline the importance of evaluating potential worker-owners early in the process and weeding out those who will not make positive contributions to the cooperative (See Chapter 3 section Keys to Success for more information.)

B. Current Weaknesses

Any successful business continues to eradicate its weaknesses as it grows, and the Fair Trade Zone is no exception. The worker-owners recognize that there is still plenty of room for improvement in their business. "We have some weaknesses because we started as poor women with little experience," says Verónica. "Yes, I feel that it has been hard for us, but we are going to overcome."

One of their admitted debilities is that they are still in the process of learning how to make hard decisions, particularly relating to personnel. "The organization in different [production] areas has affected us a lot," explains Verónica, "because each member has her responsibilities and ... it has been hard for us to get used to giving orders."¹³⁵

Personnel conflicts between two members are also an issue. If all workers are equally owners, there can be a perception that no one member has the right to give orders to another member. There must be a distinction between co-op meetings and the production line. In meetings, each worker-owner has an equal voice as the co-op looks at the future of its business. In the production line, each worker has to come to work on time, do her work with quality and do what her supervisor tells her, even if she is the cooperative's president and her supervisor isn't on the Board of Directors.

“We have a weakness here,” says Ruth. “[I know that] if I yell at her, she's going to yell at me, so I need to not yell at her so that she doesn't yell at me. We have got to overcome this.”¹³⁶

Each worker-owner in the business has had to internalize this concept of what it means to be a worker and an owner. “The worker-owners of the Fair Trade Zone are very good at *vocalizing* this concept, but they are still struggling to *internalize* the concept,” observes Mike of the JHC-CDCA. “At times they still want to play the seniority card – why should a new member get the same benefits as me if I started the cooperative and have been here longer?”¹³⁷



The co-op members verbalize everything: cooperativism, quality, efficiency – much sooner than they internalize it and these issues have to be constantly revisited.

C. Personal Growth

Every worker-owner at the Fair Trade Zone has seen monumental changes in her family life since beginning the project, and the vast majority of these changes have been positive. “My family life has changed, I would say a lot,” says Verónica. “Because before I was just waiting for my husband to bring home the rice and beans, as we Nicaraguans say...Before we just ate rice and beans, today [my children] can have a piece of chicken or meat. I feel that this has changed because I have four children and thanks to God they are all in school, I can clothe them – maybe not well, but I can clothe them. I feel like I have fewer problems with the salary that I have. I feel less suffocated, economically, than before.”¹³⁸

Most worker-owners also say that their dedication to the cooperative has caused problems within their families from time to time. “Sometimes there are problems in the family when they say ‘Why are you coming home late?’” shares Zulema. “[I say] ‘Well, because I was contributing to my work.’ So that is the difference that comes in the family when you earn more than your husband.”

For many of the Fair Trade Zone worker-owners, their lives have changed so drastically, that it's nearly impossible to compare. Rosa Dávila's story gives us a very clear picture of how her life has improved with the project:

"I sometimes went all day washing clothes on the wash stand and I would finish with my back aching...seven years ago only my oldest daughter, who is now in high school, went to school...but today all of my children are in classes...My children's father has never been a full time worker in a business...and sometimes we had difficulties. I am a person who grew up in a



Rosa with her family

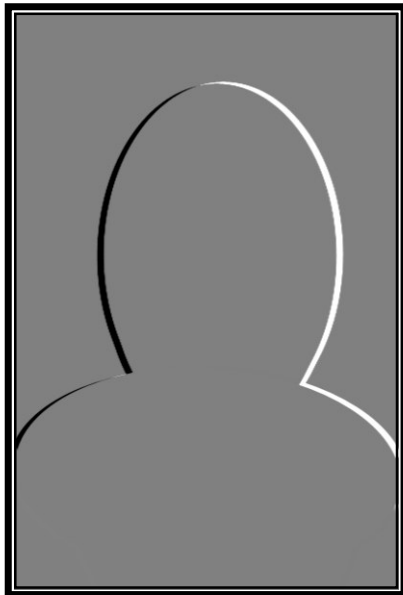
small village where I didn't go to school like a normal child, I learned to read when I was fourteen years old with the literacy campaign. I was always conscious that I was going to do everything I could because I want my children to study, to be normal children and to become professionals who serve their country and don't have to go through all the hard times that I have had...I can't say that I have a better house than I had before, or that I have all the household items that I would want to have, but yes, my three children are studying...And so with the help of their father and with my work, in one way or another we have managed and they haven't missed a year of school...[Before starting at the co-op] I had only gone to school through eighth grade and I was just washing clothes and...I didn't know that I could work, or that I was...capable of doing things...I have more confidence in myself as a

person, as a woman...Now I can offer something to my children, above all else being able to give them an education and even more, I feel like a more capable and useful woman and I understand things that didn't even occur to me when I was just in the house and these things have been very useful to my family."¹³⁹

Rosa is currently in her final year of high school and working toward an associate's degree in accounting at the same time.

D. Comparison between a conventional free trade zone worker and a worker-owner at the Fair Trade Zone

The following interviews were conducted in order to compare and contrast the experiences, living conditions and quality of life of a worker in a conventional free trade zone in Nicaragua with those of a worker-owner in the Fair Trade Zone. We chose to interview two women who come from very similar situations – both lost their homes in Hurricane Mitch in 1998, both live in Nueva Vida in Ciudad Sandino, both had the same educational level, both have husbands living with them, both have four children of similar ages and both work in a sew shop. “Mayra,” who asked that her real name not be used, works in a Taiwanese-owned free trade zone near Ciudad Sandino. Zulema is a founding member and current worker-owner of the Fair Trade Zone, the first worker-owned free trade zone in the world, owned by poor Nicaraguan women.



**Interview with “Mayra,”
worker in a conventional free trade zone
16 Oct 2005**

What is your position?

Assistant in ironing.

How long have you been working at this company?

Two years.

How much do you earn monthly?

The basic pay is \$38 [per month], but in order to earn that much we have to work overtime from 5:15 PM to 7:15 PM.



**Interview with Zulema Mena Garay
Fair Trade Zone worker/owner
16 Oct 2005**

What is your position with the Fair Trade Zone?

I am an owner and I work in cutting.

How many years have you been working there?

We've been working for seven years now.

How much do you earn monthly?

The minimum wage is \$75. But if we're earning by production, it's more, I can earn up to \$235 monthly.

["Mayra", continued]



What time do you start work?

At 7 AM sharp.

Do you receive benefits?

Yes.

Do you have health insurance and social security?

Yes.

Can you go to the doctor if you need to?

Yes.

Do you take advantage of that?

Yes, I do, I go every month for a doctor's visit.

Are you paid for a day of missed work if you go to a doctor's appointment?

Well, it's not a full paid day because they dock your pay. I can talk about how it really is, right? So, no. Because if I am sick and I go home one day because I feel sick and I want to be paid for the whole day, they don't pay me for it. They take the whole day out of my pay.

And if you get sick, they don't pay the day even if you have a doctor's note?

If I ask for the day off, but if I ask for only three hours or just the morning, they take that out of my pay. If, for example, they pay an incentive, then they take away the incentive because I missed three hours' work. And in my pay I get a bonus of \$4.70 that is paid every two weeks and they also lower that.

And if your children get sick are you paid for the time off to take them to the doctor?

They won't accept it. Just a note from the doctor for me personally.

[Zulema, continued]



What time do you start work?

7 AM.

Do you receive benefits?

Yes.

Do you have health insurance and social security?

Yes.

Can you go to the doctor if you need to?

Yes, whenever we need to.

Are you paid for a day of missed work if you go to a doctor's appointment?

Yes, it's paid.

And if your children need to go to the doctor?

That's also paid. And if there is doctor-ordered rest, that's paid too. We always need to bring the note from the doctor to show why we missed work.

[“Mayra”, continued]

Are you given maternity leave?

Yes, three months.



When you started work, did they make you take a pregnancy test?

No, but they told me that there was no work for pregnant women.

Are you paid legal holidays?

For example, the 14th and 15th of September they paid us the basic pay...But they are tricky, because sometimes on a Saturday they make us work and pay that vacation time off. They make us re-pay the hours. For example, in these past five days they gave us off as vacation, they gave us Friday. And they said, “Since the day after the 14th and 15th is a Friday, we’re going to give you the Friday too.” But then they made us pay it back by working on a Saturday. So that Saturday what we earned in overtime we didn’t actually get paid, they got it. They never come out on the losing side.

Do you work weekends?

Saturday I work all day if I want to. Sometimes I work the whole day, sometimes I work up till noon.

Do you work Sundays as well?

In my area, no. But in some areas, for example in the packing area, there is work every day and there is no rest because it’s required work. If you don’t keep working, you’re fired. They work seven days a week.

[Zulema, continued]

Are you given maternity leave?

Yes. In my case, I’m not going to have any more kids. But for other women, according to the law – because we follow what the law says – they are paid for their doctor’s visits...When she has the baby she is paid her pre-natal and post-natal time which is three months.



When you started work, did they make you take a pregnancy test?

Ah, no.

Are those women that start work now asked to take a pregnancy test?

No. We don’t do that. We haven’t reached those extremes.

Are you paid legal holidays?

Yes, if we work a holiday its double pay. If we don’t work, it’s normal pay that day.

Are you asked to “replace” a holiday?

No.

Do you work weekends?

Yes, if needed, we do. But if it’s not necessary, then we normally work Monday through Friday.

How often do you work weekends?

When we are close to finishing an order. Maybe twice a month.

["Mayra", continued]



Are overtime hours forced?

Sometimes they are, why lie about it?

Are overtime hours paid double, or how are they paid?

They're not paid double. If I work four hours of overtime, they pay me for those four hours, but they don't pay me double, no. Maybe for those people who earn production pay, but not for the basic pay.

What hours do you normally work?

From 7 AM to 5:15 PM is the normal work day, and its paid with the basic wage that one earns every two weeks.

Do you feel under pressure at your work?

Sometimes, yes.

Does your boss put pressure on you? How?

For example, maybe there is a lot of work and pressure, and if I go to the bathroom they mark the time I take. And if I stop work for a minute they are right there and they are like, "What happened? What's going on? Work!" So everything is pressure and one doesn't feel comfortable. And if they see you speak with the person next to you, they also punish you. Imagine that all of this is pressure. And I can't put a little bit of food in my mouth, you have to sneak it.

What is your daily production goal?

Where I am, as assistant in ironing, that's where the waistband, the pockets and all start. So all of these pieces have to be done and we have to finish a minimum of 7,000 – 8,000 per day.

[Zulema, continued]



Do you work overtime?

Yes, when it's necessary we also work overtime.

And how is the overtime paid?

It's double. Those working for production also are paid double.

What hours do you normally work?

From 7 AM to 5 PM.

Do you feel under pressure at your work?

Well, no because we ourselves are the owners. It's a matter of conscience whether or not you worry about getting the job done. We have a supervisor and we do what she tells us to. As I said, as members we have more responsibility to take charge of our work.

Does your boss put pressure on you?

When necessary, yes. We don't want to come out looking bad with our clients. We have to get their orders done on time, so we have to keep things moving.

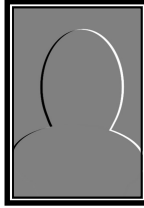
How do they put on pressure?

Well, they call us together and they say, "Look, on such and such a date we have to send the order." So we concern ourselves more to get everything out on time and have it done right, but nobody is saying "hurry up." We understand the responsibility we have.

What is your daily production goal?

We were doing 500, but now we're faster and we can do more like 800.

[“Mayra”, continued]



And what happens if you don't reach your daily production goal?

They punish us. And sometimes they lower our incentive pay if we haven't reached our goal.

And do they give you more incentive pay if you go over your goal?

Of course, if you go over the goal. If not, then they lower it.

Are you allowed to leave your station and go to the bathroom?

You can go when you want to, but if you're not careful, they will even fire you. It's controlled. For example, in my case, I go in the morning, don't take too long and don't go again until the afternoon when I'm on my way home so that I'm not going all the time.

Are you restricted in speaking with your co-workers?

If you talk, you have to hide it so that they don't see you talking.

Have you ever suffered verbal abuse from your boss or co-workers?

From my coworkers. Maybe not from the bosses because one is always trying to control oneself with them so that they don't yell at you because you need the work.. But sometimes among your own co-workers there are some who think that they are better than others and so sometimes we get mistreatment from them, hateful words.

Have you ever suffered physical abuse from your boss or co-workers?

No.

[Zulema, continued]



And what happens if you don't reach your daily production goal?

If we don't reach the goal, the business loses too.

But what happens to you if you don't reach your goal personally?

I lose the client.

There's no punishment?

There's no punishment, but the saddest thing is to lose a client. The business closes its doors if you don't have any clients.

Are you allowed to leave your station and go to the bathroom?

Yes, many times, we don't have rules about that.

Are you restricted in speaking with your co-workers?

No, no no. You can speak normally. Well, often there are times when you can't – where I am, you can't talk much because you're measuring and concentrating. But for the people in line...its not off-limits, as long as people are working.

Have you ever suffered verbal abuse from your boss or co-workers?

No, no, no.

Have you ever suffered physical abuse from your boss or co-workers?

No, no, no, no.

["Mayra", continued]



Have you seen other people suffer it?

Yes, of course I have. One time there was a girl who was sick, they didn't let her go home and the Chinese woman came over and forced a pill down her throat so that she wouldn't go, and that kind of thing isn't allowed. There are times that there are things that they do – one time a Chinese woman cut a worker with scissors and that even came out on television. You see all of that.

But are they supervisors, or managers?

They are the area bosses. The supervisors are Nicaraguans but they are the same because instead of being on the side of the workers, they are on the side of the Chinese. So sometimes one suffers mistreatment from them too. For example, I had a supervisor that thanks to God they got rid of, but you should have seen how she made me cry, she would yell at me and tell me I was all kinds of things and it made me feel horrible. But because you need work, you keep going.

How do you get to work?

In the transport buses they provide.

Do they charge you?

Yes, its three córdobas there and three back, so six total.

Could you study on Saturdays and Sundays if you wished?

Working where I do? No, because it's just not possible. Sometimes they say "You can either work or you can go to school but you can't do both."

How far did you get in school?

Through eighth grade.

Do you ever think of continuing in school?

Not anymore, because even if I wanted to, I don't have the money. My budget just doesn't stretch that far.

[Zulema, continued]



Have you seen other people suffer it?

I haven't.

How do you get to work?

Well, there are three ways to get there: on foot, by bicycle, or by bus. But for my health I go by foot or by bicycle. If I need to get there fast, I go by bus.

Could you study on Saturdays and Sundays if you wished?

Yes, I am studying. I'm in accelerated classes, but I don't go every day. I go three times a week...they offer accelerated secondary school classes, I'm in the ninth grade.

What grade level did you study before?

Well, I'm actually going backwards. I already passed the ninth grade, but one forgets a lot. I hadn't studied in many years.

[“Mayra”, continued]



Do you receive trainings in your work?

No.

How many children do you have?

Four.

And are they in school?

The oldest is in high school. The other girl studies too, and the boy, but the youngest doesn't.

Are you married?

Yes.

Does your partner work?

Yes, he is a vendor in the market right now. He has a little more time, he leaves the house at seven and gets home at five.

Does your partner help with your expenses?

Yes, when he can.

Do you have time to help your children with their homework?

I would be lying to say I do – I just don't have time.

When do you leave the house in the morning?

At ten to six.

And when do you get home at night?

I leave there at seven when I work overtime, and I arrive home at eight.

When you get home do you cook?

No, because I have my oldest daughter who helps me, but if I didn't have her I would have to come home and cook.

And on weekends you work Saturday so Sunday is your only day at home?

Yes.

[Zulema, continued]



Do you receive trainings in your work?

Yes, we do.

How many children do you have?

I have four children.

And are they in school?

Yes, from the oldest right down to the youngest.

Are you married?

Yes.

Does your partner work?

Yes, he's self-employed. He is a mechanic.

Does your partner help with your expenses?

Yes, if he didn't, I would have left by now!

Do you have time to help your children with their homework?

Yes, I have to help the littlest one most, and the other two, but the oldest one studies high school on Saturdays.

When do you leave the house in the morning?

I leave at six thirty in the morning.

And when do you get home at night?

We leave work at five, by 5:20 we're here at home.

And on weekends, are you at home?

Yes, sometimes I go out with my children. There's a circus here now and we went to the circus... Sometimes we go to the mall and have an ice cream. It's good to get out with your children.

["Mayra", continued]



What do you do after work?

Well, as I said, I have my daughter who helps, but if it weren't for her I'd have to do all the housework. On the weekends I wash clothes by hand, I cook, I do the chores. Right now I have just finished washing a mountain of clothes and there are still dirty clothes waiting. I'm going to straighten the rooms and dust.

Do you feel satisfied in your work?

Well, maybe not satisfied, but you just go on because of necessity.

How could your work be better?

Well...if they would raise our salary a little, in the first place. In the second place if the treatment were a little different.

- the end -

[Zulema, continued]



What do you do after work?

Well, if I find the dishes dirty, I wash them, I make the beds, do chores. But if I come home really worn out, I just put my feet up on a chair. Because sometimes I get home really tired from being on my feet and then riding a bicycle. I go to bed early and get up early. But most of my time off is Saturday and Sunday.

Do you feel satisfied in your work?

Ah, yes. I feel proud. Because while I'm a worker, I'm also an owner of my own work. I'm not always thinking that tomorrow they're going to fire me or if I really screw up they're going to run me off. I know that I'm not working for a [foreigner], it's us who are in charge of our work and the work is a little more relaxed.

How could your work be better?

Well, for me, I'd like to see everyone working at our factory. I would like all of Nueva Vida working there, but it's just not possible.

Anything else you'd like to mention?

Yes, I would like to support my neighborhood here in Nueva Vida more...I would like to help the children that are abused....Because imagine, the kids are sniffing glue, they're sleeping in the street, they're begging on the buses. [My neighbor] abuses the children he has...Because right now these children are sick, they are malnourished, and as punishment, he beats them with a rubber hose. This is the goal that I have right now...Maybe we [at the cooperative] can look for a way to do something for the community that we live in. Because it's not all about working and exporting, it's also about the help that we have to give, the percentage [of our profits] that we have to give to an organization, to children, to senior citizens....I would like to do this in the neighborhood where we live.

- the end -

E. Conclusion

In spite of the problems it has encountered – or maybe *because of* the problems it has encountered – the Fair Trade Zone has persevered and is not only the world’s first worker-owned free trade zone, but also is turning a profit and giving full time employment to 55 people. There is no single solution to the overwhelming problem of poverty, and no one in the Fair Trade Zone project pretends that the co-op’s worker-owners are going to become rich off of this venture. But perhaps the alternative model of the Fair Trade Zone can make a difference in the lives of poor people in other parts of the world, as working at the co-op has enabled the Fair Trade Zone’s worker-owners to stabilize their families’ precarious economic situations while also improving their quality of life. Making others aware of the existence of the Fair Trade Zone project, and the reality of what a worker-owned free trade zone means, is the first step to making this dream a reality. Step by step, with each article that is written, each visitor the co-op receives, this is happening. “Like I tell the women,” laughs Mike, “you’re going to die famous – poor, but famous.”¹⁴⁰

When visitors come to the Fair Trade Zone, it is so unlike most people’s image of a free trade zone that they are surprised when it doesn’t fit the bill. For starters, it’s a very small free trade zone. “They are expecting a huge building with lots of machinery and tons of workers,” says María Elena. “Many people have come out here and when they say ‘free trade zone’ they look around and say ‘Ooh, but this is so tiny.’”¹⁴¹



It’s also run very differently than other free trade zones, and this surprises new workers more than anyone else. “They don’t understand very well because this is not very common in Nicaragua to have a free trade zone like this,” says Rosa. “First because it’s a small free trade zone and it’s owned by the workers...the majority of the workers that we have here have worked in the free trade zone...[and it] is very different from what they are used to seeing because it’s smaller, but a whole group of people makes the decisions, not just some outside investor.”¹⁴²

Conventional free trade zones are also known for their wealth, a stereotype that unfortunately does not apply to the Fair Trade Zone. “Supposedly free trade zones are owned by people who are millionaires. So when we talk about a free trade zone people think, ‘These women are loaded,’”¹⁴³ laughs Tomasa. Despite these differences, the worker-owners of the Fair Trade Zone are immensely proud of their achievements. “Even though we’re poor women, we are owners of a free trade zone,”¹⁴⁴ says Veronica.

“In the beginning, it was hard to say that,” admits Zulema. “Because if I said it, they laughed at me. They said ‘You? An owner? You’re crazy.’ But inside I know that I am. Now with more success, I can say that I am an owner.”¹⁴⁵

1) The Future

With a relatively stable present, the Fair Trade Zone can plan for the future of the cooperative. As always, co-op members are looking to help others through the growth of their business. “My dream is for the cooperative to grow more...here in Nicaragua there is a lot of unemployment. That is why my dream is to give work to a lot of women and men too – but giving priority to women – and that our business grow. In every way – the building, more clients, more personnel, everything.”¹⁴⁶

“My dream would be for us to continue working, that we always have a market,” says Rosa. “Because I have been one of the people who hasn’t just been thinking about myself as a person, or a worker, or a member of the cooperative or an owner of the first worker-owned free trade zone in the world. But there are more than [fifty] of us who are heads of family and have every right to work with dignity, to have our rights respected, and to have an established job and steady work.”¹⁴⁷

2) Advice to Others

The worker-owners of the Fair Trade Zone would like for the success of their co-op to reach beyond the factory doors to benefit those who’d like to start a similar project. Although any project will inevitably have to make its own mistakes – this is an important part of the process – worker-owners at the Fair Trade Zone want other groups to learn from their experience, and have plenty of advice for anyone wishing to set up a worker-owned cooperative. “I think that you have to have more than a lot of patience,” says Yadira, “and know how to listen to be able to understand and help. Not listening and not communicating lead to misunderstandings.”¹⁴⁸

Verónica is also convinced that understanding one another and working together is of utmost importance. “[It’s necessary] to initiate a mutual coordination among everyone and with leading and pushing forward, it’s going to go well. Working together, working...like we did with a lot of will, with a lot of faith, to go from being poor women to being poor women who are owners of their own business.”¹⁴⁹

Having made their business a success despite all odds, the worker-owners of the Fair Trade Zone are convinced that it’s possible to do anything if you set your mind to it. “To whoever is going to hear me,” advises Verónica, “you should give it your all if you have the same idea to start a project. Everything will come out well if you give it your all.”¹⁵⁰



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- ¹³⁰ María Elena Medina Vallejos, interview with Fair Trade Zone worker-owners 14 October 2005.
- ¹³¹ Ruth Mena Garay, group interview with Fair Trade Zone worker-owners 14 October 2005.
- ¹³² Interview with Mike Woodard, 9 September 2005.
- ¹³³ Interview with Lesbia Marina Pérez 20 July 2005.
- ¹³⁴ Tomasa Jiron, group interview with Fair Trade Zone worker-owners 14 October 2005.
- ¹³⁵ Interview with Verónica Ramona Calero Banquedano, 19 October 2005.
- ¹³⁶ Ruth Mena Garay, group interview with Fair Trade Zone worker-owners 14 October 2005.
- ¹³⁷ Interview with Mike Woodard, 9 September 2005.
- ¹³⁸ Interview with Verónica Ramona Calero Banquedano, 19 October 2005.
- ¹³⁹ Interview with Rosa Isabel Dávila Alonso, 18 August 2005.
- ¹⁴⁰ Interview with Mike Woodard, 9 September 2005.
- ¹⁴¹ María Elena Medina, group interview with Fair Trade Zone worker-owners 14 October 2005.
- ¹⁴² Interview with Rosa Isabel Dávila Alonso, 18 August 2005.
- ¹⁴³ Interview with Tomasa Jirón 18 August 2005.
- ¹⁴⁴ Verónica Ramona Calero Banquedano, group interview with Fair Trade Zone worker-owners 14 October 2005.
- ¹⁴⁵ Zulema Mena Garay, group interview with Fair Trade Zone worker-owners 14 October 2005.
- ¹⁴⁶ Interview with Verónica Ramona Calero Banquedano, 19 October 2005.
- ¹⁴⁷ Interview with Rosa Isabel Dávila Alonso, 18 August 2005.
- ¹⁴⁸ Interview with Julia Yadira Vallejos, 22 August 2005.
- ¹⁴⁹ Verónica Ramona Calero Banquedano, group interview with Fair Trade Zone worker-owners 14 October 2005.
- ¹⁵⁰ Interview with Verónica Ramona Calero Banquedano, 19 October 2005.