

## *Guiding Principles for Rural Community Organizing*

By Susana De Anda

Co-Executive Director, Community Water Center

**G***anas* (Motivation to Act): Motivation needs to be transformed into action. People are ready for change and will act given good information and the opportunity. It's important to build hope, but not give false expectations. People need to see concrete actions and commitments in their own community to be an active part of larger movement for change – it's about building the base for the bigger picture. Remember that everyone in a community already has unique skills so everyone is capable of making change.

**A***prender* (Learn): Give people information to connect individual problems to the larger vision. Give people an opportunity to learn from each other and recognize their own skills and sharpen them. Flexibility is a crucial component in rural community organizing because each community is different. Therefore, it is important to make time to reflect and evaluate as you create and implement a strategic campaign. At the end of the day, when we know more we can ignore less.

**N***egociar* (Negotiate): Building ongoing relationships is just as important as creating and implementing a strategic campaign. Strive to build respectful relationships within the community group, as well as with potential allies and other organizations. Good relationships will provide more ideas, information, resources and support for your efforts. Community organizing is about negotiating for change, working proactively to make things better, and not just complaining about the problem. Remember to make time to interact and develop strong relationships within the community group.

**A***cción* (Action): Create a collective strategic campaign focused on actions and tangible results. Goals and actions must be created collectively in order for all group members to feel engaged and continue to support the campaign. Campaigns should focus on one tangible victory in the community to gain trust and momentum toward changes. Always bring the action back to larger vision and offer leadership, while also giving opportunities and support for others to lead.

**S***eguimiento* (Follow-through): Check-ins by phone and in person are important ways to have consistent follow-through, both to implement a strategic campaign and to maintain relationships. Recognizing that communities will change as people move in and out, it is important to provide stability to the campaign work over the long-term. Rural community organizing often benefits from connecting local community campaigns to efforts in other communities, coalitions, and groups. Be patient but continue forward.

Remember all you need is **GANAS** and people with **GANAS**.