



*Everything
Counts!*

*Everything
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*Valuing
environmental
initiatives
with a gender
equity perspective
in
Latin America*

Everything Counts!

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Everything Counts!

Foreward

DURING THE PAST DECADES, IUCN-The World Conservation Union has made great efforts to highlight that gender makes the difference in conservation and sustainable use initiatives. This new book, "Everything Counts!" is a representation of such efforts.

For more than two years, through the contributions of valuable researchers from the entire Latin American region, and the financial support of the (IDRC) International Development Research Center, we put ourselves up to the task of investigating and collecting very diverse case studies.

*The starting point was the fact that it is first necessary to make **visible** the differentiated relationships that women and men establish with biodiversity resources. Despite the fact that over the past fifteen years considerable efforts have been made at national and international fora, very little progress has been made about understanding the fundamental role that women play in the use, management and conservation of biodiversity. It is essential to recognize that women and men have particular needs, interests and aspirations, including the fact that they make distinctly different contributions to the conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity.*

*With this book, we also wish to point out, that making visible the role that women play in biodiversity conservation, sustainable use of resources and the survival of the human species, is only the beginning. These roles should be **valued** in their broadest scope. Only when the knowledge and contributions made by women are clearly acknowledged and valued, will it be possible to promote an **effective participation** of women in decision-making at the local and international levels. The meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes entails carrying out actions to overcome gender inequalities at all levels, including participation, information sharing and generation, education, empowerment, technology transfer, organization, financial assistance and training, among others. The exclusion of women as agents of development means ignoring half of the planet's population, which-in turn-affects the efficiency and effectiveness of the actions promoted.*

Everything Counts!

Everything Counts! is a selection of 30 experiences from Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru, and two international experiences.¹

It would not have been possible to undertake this task without the support provided by many people, including those who participated in each of the initiatives herein documented, those who systematized and allowed sharing of lessons learned, the focal points who supported the work carried out in the countries, and those who raised questions, were motivated and made valuable contributions to the lessons drawn. We are deeply grateful to Denise Garrafiel, Elías de Lima, Eduardo Amaral Borges, Denyse Gomes, Kirai de León, Elena Díaz, Susana Albán, Adriana Burbano, Aracelly Pazmiño, Cony Carranza, Margarita Velásquez, Ligia Méndez and Eloisa Trellez. This whole group took on the challenge of discussing and analyzing a proposal that, although it is becoming increasingly disseminated among colleagues around the world, it has not been studied in depth; namely, the real impact of equitable relationships in the evolution of our populations.

We are also thankful to Rosa Cheng and Margarita Salas, from the Acceso Foundation, and Guiselle Rodríguez Villalobos, Jackie Siles and Paula Zúñiga, from the Social Area of IUCN, for their work and efforts regarding the regional facilitation of the project, as well as to Linda Berrón and Ana Baldiocena for their involvement in the document's editing and translation.

Lorena Aguilar Revelo

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1 *The complete collection of case studies, as well as a more detailed description of the 30 cases compiled in this book are available on the website <http://www.genderandenvironment.org>*

Introduction

THIS DOCUMENT seeks to recognize the efforts undertaken throughout the world to improve the living conditions of women and men, particularly the relationships established between them in connection with the use and benefits derived from the natural resources that surround them. This is just a small sample, an example about the great many processes promoted all over the world. All of these efforts should be properly valued, as they each have their own particular purpose and impact; in other words, ¡Everything counts! From a global perspective, we can recognize the importance of each individual process. Taken as a whole, we validate each part thereof.

A broad range of realities are recuperated thanks to these systematizations, through which we are able to weigh up the importance of mainstreaming gender equity into the interventions involving natural resource conservation and sustainable use. We find examples of experiences about management practices involving forests, environmental education, participatory diagnostics, alternative markets, recovery of degraded water and land areas, alternative undertakings, innovative field work methodologies, crop diversification, seed safeguarding, training and gender sensitization programs, institutional policies and global agreements.

These brief stories are living proof that gender equity is an essential prerequisite for the achievement of life sustainability on the planet. All of the conservation actions, regardless of scope and dimension, are permeated by the need to address and establish relationships based on equity and equality; a need felt by every single person on the planet, particularly those who have been culturally and historically neglected, to be able to become fully developed and achieve their own human development objectives.

The purpose is, hence, to verify the existence of a social demand, an ongoing process that, rather than stopping, is moving forward towards making headway to improve the living conditions of all people, regardless of sex, age, ethnic group, so that they may be able to achieve their full citizen, economic and environmental rights.

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These 30 experiences show the progress made towards linking environment and gender, on account of both, the appropriation of the ecological dimension by those involved in social subjects, and the redimension of the technical processes involving natural resource conservation and use. Through their interrelation, we are able to come closer to the answer we are searching for. It does, therefore, represent the possibility of expanding the understanding of the socio-environmental problems that affect us and the possibility to identify more integral, fair and consistent responses.

Although through the above link we are able to identify limitations and questions, there are aspects that remain unsolved. We welcome such questions, as these clearly show that we are making progress. We must now work on the new challenges that demand a more in-depth look into the responses. It is not just a matter of verifying how women are integrated into the processes; it is equally important to recognize the connection between the efforts and the local, regional, institutional and structural challenges, including national and international regulatory frameworks.

The subject of poverty overcoming springs up strongly from this reflection. Each of the experiences pointed out shows how a conservation process contributes to improve the quality of life of the populations, and how the integration of a gender equity vision into this process makes a significant improvement on the living conditions of a larger number of people. Indeed, the most important conclusion drawn from these pages is the fact that integral approaches that include the gender equity perspective, contribute effectively to improve the condition and position of the women, boys and girls, by strengthening survival strategies and improving the populations' living conditions. Empowerment and personal improvement take shape in these pages; these terms acquire specific faces. Such is the ultimate goal of sustainable development.

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NORTH AMERICA

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*Sustainable
Development
Integral Project
at the El Vizcaíno
Biosphere Reserve*

*Itzá Castañeda Camey
Guadalupe M. Flores de Medrano*

THE “EL VIZCAÍNO” BIOSPHERE RESERVE, REBIVI, is located at the northern extreme of the State of South Baja California, Mexico. In 1988 it was declared Natural Protected Area with the category of Biosphere Reserve. The strip of land where it is located consists of an area of over two and a half million square kilometers and it brings together a surprising and varied number of ecosystems that contain deserts, lakes, islands, mountain ridges, coasts, inlets, mountain peaks and active volcanoes. It also houses agricultural and cattle ranching centers and mining centers, fishing areas and even sites of archeological value that contain samples of rupestrian paintings.

During the past 150 million years, the geological history of the Gulf of California, the peninsula and the archipelagos, has originated a complex series of ecological processes of unique characteristics. Thus, the mountain ridges of San Francisco shelter species from the regions of moderate and subtropical climates and constitute an archaic biological corridor with endemic species of flora and fauna. Lagoons and inlets, which are in excellent conservation conditions, annually attract bird migrations by offering shelter and food. Thousands of marine and beach birds, as well as birds of prey, feed on the

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reserve's plentiful coasts. Similarly, marine mammals come to these clear waters, as is the case of the spectacular arrival of the gray whale, for 5 kilometers of coastal zone are included in their migration route. Algae and marine pasture provide areas adequate for the reproduction of a wide diversity of marine species.

In spite of the fact that the climate is very dry, it rains in the South during the winter months and heavy storms fall in the North during the summer months. Soils are generally poor in nutrients; clayey on the mountain slopes; saline and alkaline on the coast and limestone layers in the South. Of the 463 species of flora found in the Reserve, the majority is in shrub form. There are 37 endemic species in the area.

REBIVI belongs to the Municipality of Mulegé, one of the largest in the state. It has a population of 46,000, and 39,000 of them live in the Reserve. Taking into account the entire area, density is 1.53 inhabitants per km². Half of the population is concentrated in two cities of mining origin: Santa Rosalía and Guerrero Negro. The remaining inhabitants are distributed among eight rural towns and in widespread ranches.

Distribution by sex is similar in the entire municipality, 51.2% men and 48.8% women. Male workers who have historically migrated to the area to work in the fishing sector originated this characteristic.

The Indian speaking population, absent from the region up until the sixties, constitutes 3.06% of the total population. This migrant population comes from other Mexican states and is found mainly in agricultural areas of the Vizcaino Valley. Demographic indicators of this collectivity differ from others in the state. The incorporation of female labor is high; for every 100 active men there are 75 working women. The rates of fertility and infant mortality are above the average in the area; the levels of alphabetization and access to medical services are much lower.

The economically active population of the Municipality of Mulegé shows a high occupational rate, slightly over 99%. Nevertheless, in the case of women, less than 20%

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appear to be economically active. The gender appraisal revealed that these data reflect the work situation of women very deficiently, for domestic work, participation in the agricultural sector, or works developed in the informal sector of the economy are not registered. For the most part, the woman incorporated into the labor market reflects the condition of “house worker without pay”. This category constitutes 72.2% in the secondary and tertiary sectors.

The sector that registers the greatest growth, both at Mulegé as at the Reserve, has been the tertiary sector. The greatest proportion of economically active women is also found in the service sector: in commercial activities and especially in hotels and restaurants, where women usually develop the most precarious jobs. Activities developed in the primary sector – agriculture, cattle ranching, mining and fishing – continue to require a large number of laborers at Mulegé. The industrial sector offers little job opportunities. Among this last sector, the Salt Exporting Company generates most of the jobs.

Nevertheless, those economic activities that are not carefully planned are turning into serious threats to the conservation of natural resources, especially wildlife. The Reserve Administration Program has already identified a good number of them: extensive cattle ranching and an increasing agricultural activity; illegal fishing and hunting, as well as illegal trafficking of flora species; mining activities and the incipient urban development; water shortage and deficient waste disposal with the consequent contamination of soil and water. All of the above is augmented by the absence of formal nation-wide education programs regarding the care and protection of natural resources. Disdain and aggression towards the environment are perceived in the Reserve itself.

The need to achieve economic and human development, especially in the most needy communities, in a manner that is compatible with the conservation of REBIVI's resources and biodiversity, motivated the creation of the “Araucaria-Vizcaíno” Eco-tourism Development Integral Project at the El Vizcaíno Biosphere Reserve.

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The first stage of the project was initiated in 1999. The Social-environmental and Poverty Appraisal was initiated with the support and financing of the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation; with the collaboration and technical support of the Environmental, Natural Resources and Fishing Secretariat (later known as SEMARNAT) and the Mexican Fund for Nature Conservation.

The second stage was initiated in 2001 and was improved with the modifications suggested by SEMARNAT, related to the incorporation of the gender equity approach as the transversal axis of the four areas included in the project: eco-tourism, natural resources, management production projects and solid waste management . The social-environmental appraisal with a gender equity approach was performed during this second stage.

A trust was created in order to administrate de project, and an Executor Unit was also created to execute the project. A representative from each of the participating institutions integrated this Unit. Other entities were involved in the process, as is the case of the State Government of South Baja California, the City Government of Mulegé, the Mexican Institute of Water Technology and the Autonomous University of South Baja California. Project beneficiaries were La Perla Women's Association of Guerrero Negro, the Vizcaíno Muleteer Group, and the Fig Producer's Association.

The social-environmental appraisal with a gender equity approach was developed according to IUCN's recommendations to carry out this type of study. The participative methodology consisted of directly implicating individuals involved in a process of self-diagnosis, evaluation and systematization of experiences acquired in the use, access and control of natural resources.

In order to make the appraisal, the Reserve was divided into five zones according to their social, cultural, economic and productive characteristics. Key informers were defined in each zone, represented by gender, age, local hierarchies, leadership and capacity to convoke. Instruments utilized were

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as follows: extensive interviews and participative workshops; questionnaires for authorities regarding public services and infrastructure; discussion groups where the most relevant subject of the workshops was discussed in depth, emphasizing subjects related to the division of work according to sex; and finally, participating observation in environmental, physical and infrastructure aspects, as well as in production, reproduction and social aspects.

In addition to the environmental problems that had already been established by the REBIVI administration plan, the social-economic appraisal with a gender equity approach enabled the analysis to be finely tuned with respect to the specific problems of women and men. It was thus confirmed that in spite of the fact that women work in the primary and secondary sectors of economy, their work in the agricultural and cattle-ranching sectors, or in fish processing plants, continued to be regarded as a masculine activity. The devaluation of women makes them become invisible in these production processes.

The service sector is turning to women, but still, discrimination by reasons of gender originates salary discrimination and the type of work developed by them is precarious. Jobs developed by women in the informal sectors of economy receive no recognition and these jobs constitute important survival strategies for families in the region. In general, men continue to be stereotyped as family providers and women as responsible for reproduction and the emotional well being of all family members. This way of thinking reinforces the idea that job opportunities for women must only represent a contribution to family income, but not a source of personal and financial autonomy.

In general terms, the social-environmental appraisal served to confirm that the needs of the REBIVI population revolve around the lack of infrastructure for basic services such as water, power, waste administration and highways.

The needs of women can be seen from different angles, according to the zone in which they live and the type of activity they develop. In community or public lands women must

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have access to land tenure, as well as to land in ranches located at the Sierra. But in both cases, land would not be sufficient to modify their living conditions. They require the implementation of more extensive processes that include organization, training and credit. In the Northern Pacific fishing region, women need jobs that enable them to find their own space in a highly masculine society.

It is important to emphasize that both at the Sierra, as in fishing towns, eco-tourism can be an important alternative for women to leave their domestic confinement and become economically independent from their partners. Up to this point, eco-tourism is a resource that is under utilized at the Reserve, as can be seen from the state of deterioration of rupestrian paintings.

Women heads of household constitute the collectivity that is the most vulnerable in the Reserve itself, and with respect to the Vizcaíno Valley, women working in the agricultural sector are the most vulnerable. Due to the discrimination and limits imposed upon women, it is imperative that strategies be established in order to improve their health, education and defense of human rights.

Men appear to be more aware and knowledgeable regarding environmental problems such as decreasing numbers of marine species and the reduction of productivity in agricultural parcels of land. Men face problems of access to jobs and are weak in community and labor organization; this has a negative impact on their capabilities to negotiate in the market. But there is one problem that affects men almost exclusively and which requires a long-term integral solution: the problem of addictions and their social consequences.

Among the most important findings of the project are those derived from the social-environmental appraisal with gender equity approach, showing the problems that men and women living in the El Vizcaíno Biosphere Biological Reserve have to confront; as well as the challenges they must face in order to improve their living conditions and develop production projects in harmony with an environment that has characteristics that are both extraordinary and fragile.

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Emphasis must be made on the importance of having concluded such an important project in a protected area of the dimensions of the El Vizcaíno Reserve, for this constitutes a completely new experience in Mexico.

It is important to state that the project has served to corroborate the existence of an institutional, coordinated and consensual structure to prompt a sustainable development process focused on gender at REBIVI. The methodology utilized, which included coordinated efforts among various institutions, demonstrated in practice that joint solutions could be found.

It can be concluded that by using technical and scientific advice and by adequately administering resources, involving social organizations in the area, as well as federal, state and municipal institutions, it is possible to introduce into the reserve a process of recovery of decreasing numbers of species and endangered species.

With respect to gender relationships, the inequalities revealed by the appraisal confirm the need for providing individual, social and institutional conditions that would enable women to participate in the entire process of sustainable management of the natural resources, in conditions of equality with men.

One of the lessons learned by personnel and technicians working at the Reserve is that the project has provided them with an opportunity to regard and recognize women beyond gender stereotypes.

As corollary to all of the above, it must be stated any project that is to exert a successful influence in relationships of equity and gender and conservation of the environment must be accompanied by processes of awareness and education directed towards individuals involved in it.

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*Human
Development and
Conservation of
Biodiversity
in the El Ocote
Biosphere Reserve*

Rosa María Vidal Rodríguez

EL OCOTE RESERVE is located in the State of Chiapas and covers an area of one hundred thousand hectares. It is part of Selva Zoque, the largest jungle and forest area in Southern Mexico. This zone can be traced back to the Pleistocene era, and it contains endemic species of flora and fauna, as well as large numbers of mammals, amphibians, reptiles and birds. Altitudes vary between 400 meters and 1500 meters above sea level, thus containing pine forests and evergreen oak forests in addition to jungles. The entire population of the reserve is estimated at 9000.

Certain changes have been taking place in this reserve, particularly in the biological corridor located between El Ocote and Chimalapas, where the use given to the soil is transforming the landscape and endangering the fragile corridor. In 1997 Pronatura Chiapas, an NGO strongly represented in the area, started a project of human development and conservation of biodiversity in the El Ocote reserve. Funded by the Ford Foundation, Pronatura started to analyze different problems affecting the area. It conducted a survey on the conditions of reproductive health; it is a fact that population growth issues are often mentioned in plans for conservation of the environment,

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and frequently these plans mention that population growth is responsible for the deterioration of living conditions.

Colonia General Cardenas, where the project was developed, is located in the biological corridor and covers an area of 6500 hectares, or, 6% of the country's total area. Its population is racially mixed and comes from several nearing towns. The colony was legally recognized as such in 1961, and the 82 families living there at the present time were assigned 50 hectares each, thus enabling a more complete management of natural resources. It has a population of 321, 49% men and 51% women. Three-fourths of the population is under the age of 25. The rate of population growth is 4% annually, twice the population growth registered in the rest of the country. Houses are isolated from one another and are made of wood and generally have soil floors and latrines. It has an area that could be considered a community area, for that is where the basketball court, church, local government house and a few supply stores are located. The only existing means of transportation between the colony and Cintalapa is a truck that runs every Monday and Friday. Cardenas residents do farm work and cattle ranching. They also grow corn and beans for their own use, and coffee for sale. In addition to cattle ranching, residents also raise sheep. Recently a pond was built for aquaculture activities.

Different participatory appraisals that included separate groups of men and women, as well as groups of men and women together, and groups of teenagers and of boys and girls, were developed between 1997 and 1999. The most important problems affecting the area and detected by the process of appraisal refers to the loss of biodiversity originated in forest fires and the increase of farming land; illegal trafficking of lumber wood and wild species; water shortage and water contaminated by agrochemicals, the same as soils; and lastly, soils are in the process of losing their fertile nature due to erosion and soil compacting by cattle.

The gender conditions show that women are being oppressed. Aside from their regular house chores and caring for the children, women do farm work, grow vegetable greens and

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medicinal plants, bake bread, make cheese, sew, haul water, collect firewood and look after the animals. Their workday starts at 5 A.M. and ends at 8 P.M., with little space for breaks or socializing, except in cases approved by the community, such as attending church. Once girls complete their grade school they must start working; if money is available for schooling, families prefer that it be used on boys.

Aside from working, young women have very few options. Generally women have no access to important jobs or take part in the decision-making process of their families or communities. Midwives are the only women that hold a higher status in the community, but they don't take advantage of the situation. Men own the land, as well as the money collected from coffee sales. Women must do with what men give them to support their families. Women and minors work in every activity related to coffee growing: greenhouse maintenance, preparing the soil for planting, planting seeds and collecting the crop, plus other activities such as selecting coffee grains, removing the pulp, drying and grinding coffee, bagging and selling it. Nevertheless, work involved in all those activities is not recognized as such by men, and not even by the women themselves.

After analyzing two different elements, the group agreed on the need to integrate the gender equity approach into the project. One of these elements was the enquiries made to women regarding issues of reproductive health, for different problems such as early pregnancies and mothers dying at birth had been detected. The other element was the recognition that one of the negative results of domestic violence is the reduction of women's possibilities to participate in production activities. For example, women were unable to participate in horticulture workshops or workshops on how to make preserves, because their husbands didn't want them to leave their homes. By implementing training and organizational activities, the group was able to train men and women, on an equitable basis, on how to manage the sustainable development of their communities. Sex and reproductive health were included in said sustainable development.

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Several groups became involved with Pronatura Chiapas in this project, as is the case of the Lucille Foundation and David Packard. Packard provided funding from the year 2000 to the year 2002. The Gender and Environment Network and CRIM, an academic organization of Universidad Autonoma de Mexico, were responsible for promoting several seminars and exchanges. IMSS, a branch of the Ministry of Health, offered different learning and training materials and trained midwives from several different communities. Local organizations that were grouped to execute the project included “Los Tucanos de la selva de El Ocote” (Toucans of the El Ocote Jungle), a union of ecological coffee producers; Midwives Network; and six credit and savings groups integrated by 100 women from three different communities in the area.

After two years of work and development of an awareness and training process that covered environment, agricultural production, gender and reproductive health, the following achievements can be mentioned: there is greater awareness of, and commitment to, environmental conservation; communities have become organized in order to prevent and fight forested fires: efforts have been made to reforest river margins; and agricultural production has been diversified and new techniques are being applied for soil conservation and improvement.

One outcome on gender equity is that women’s work has now become more visible and dialogue between men and women has improved. Some spaces for women’s participation have been opened, including the opening of savings accounts, which enable women to administrate their own funds, as well as the creation of a midwives network, which generated social recognition and improvement of self respect, motivating these women to become community leaders. In order to improve their living conditions and increase their life expectancy, mothers and daughters now show more interest in receiving training and continuing their educational process.

Aside from the benefits received by the population, mention must be made of some important lessons learned during

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the process. An interdisciplinary group was integrated when the project started, but instead of working together, each professional implemented his or her own guidelines, making it impossible to harmoniously bring together the issues of environment, reproductive health, production techniques and gender equity. Interpersonal relationships wore out and members began to leave the project. It became necessary to start from the beginning, this time putting together a team that was trained together, making it possible for members to share different focuses, methodologies and concepts. In the end, the team was integrated by a female medical doctor experienced in women's issues; a medical doctor experienced in youth, both doctors having a Master's degree in rural development; two agricultural engineers who were aware of gender equity issues; and a biologist, who made an effort to understand why a gender equity perspective and different social issues affect production.

Consequently, it can be said that articulating gender and environmental issues into social projects is not simple, that it requires a special effort on the part of institutions, and also requires that teams executing the project receive special training. If this is accomplished, it is clear that conservation objectives will be dealt with from a social point of view.



*“Hurray for the
Land” Cooperative
Association*

Andrea García de la Rosa

IN CUERNAVACA, State of Morelos, Mexico, an active search for a more just, equitable and environmentally healthy world, motivated a group of six women and a man in the year 1997, to create the “Hurray for the Land” Cooperative Association. The group had no financial support or assets, and yet they initiated the project by putting together their common knowledge, experiences and contacts, acquired while doing their social work in environmental and feminist movements, and in church associations. After numerous analysis and planning meetings, the “Hurray for the Land” Cooperative Association started working with 17 groups of male and female producers.

“Hurray for the Land” wished to combat a specific problem that was affecting human health, and that was the production and usage of food containing agrochemicals, preservatives and hormones. Any strategy used to control this problem would have to take into consideration the causes of the same. A key element in that kind of problem is always the existence of a predominant economic and commercial system based on the non-sustainable logic of natural resource extraction, oriented towards fast earnings and accumulation of wealth. The process leaves behind water and soil contamination, a gradual

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exhaustion of resources, and the deterioration of the quality of life of the groups that are most vulnerable. Indigenous women, as well as women from rural areas, are found among these groups; having lived in these ecosystems for generations, they are suffering the progressive loss of the ecosystems they know well and know how to manage, being forced to live a life of exclusion and poverty. The uniformity promoted by the system in order to enlarge its market, forces the use of farming patterns and food usage, and the expansion of hybrid seeds and transgenic seeds.

The proposal of “Hurray for the Land” consisted of organizing a trading project for products prepared with environmental responsibility, within a framework of fair prices. After selling products in the market and obtaining the corresponding short-term benefits, an effort was made to favor production and usage of organic products and in that way improve alternative economic development enterprises seeking to have a more equitable social distribution of wealth. “Hurray for the Land” headquarters are located in Cuernavaca, but at the present time it is working with 110 different groups and social enterprises making organic products in 13 Mexican states. These enterprises are located in naturally protected areas, as well as in areas where biodiversity is in danger, or even in places undergoing high environmental degradation. These were selected based on a common element, they all had a commitment to work for the environment; other criteria used for selecting the groups were the quality of their products and the social-economic profile of individuals participating in them.

Ten partners (8 women and 2 men) of the two fair-price stores are among those benefited by “Hurray for the Land”. Articles sold by “Hurray for the Land” are produced by 110 social enterprises that have 2170 members. Enterprises located in urban areas are more numerous, but those located in rural areas have more members: 91.8 % of the total number. Indigenous families constitute 83% of the total number of families being benefited. Rural enterprises include a larger percentage of men; partly because coffee processing plants hire mostly men. On the contrary, urban enterprises have more women (64%).

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With respect to the geographical location of these groups of producers, almost half of them are located in the State of Morelos. It is estimated that 25% of those working in the socially-oriented companies located in indigenous areas are illiterate, especially adult women. Men and female clients are also among those being benefited. Roughly 120 frequent buyers visit the two “Hurray for the Land” stores every week, in addition to sporadic clients, which are difficult to estimate. Approximately 75% of all the clientele are women.

“Hurray for the Land” has undergone several stages since its creation, some of these stages were so difficult, that shutting it down became a possibility. Nevertheless, the strategy of using crisis to explore new ways to operate enabled a quantitative and qualitative growth. Commercial relationships and relationships between members were always based on trust, frequent communication and crystal clear monetary operations. But, it wasn’t until the third year that it was correctly administrated and included a system that contained files for each supplier. Detailed information was kept, including information that the different enterprises did not possess because their control systems were very outdated. “Hurray for the Land” files have served as model for several groups.

The experience of trading organic products has not been simple due to existing economic patterns. “Hurray for the Land” made an effort to maintain an equilibrium that would enable it to survive in the market while remaining faithful to its objectives. Certain market facts were transmitted both to producing companies as to consumers. One of these facts is that the excellent quality of a product is not sufficient for the consumer to purchase it; the consumer is also guided by the product’s appearance. Consulting services provided to producers regarding the best possible way in which to present a product to a consumer, including appearance and packaging, in many cases originated increases in sales. Consumers on their part have been accustomed by the global market to finding the products they want at any given time of the year, independently of the season. Excessive use of agrochemicals, preservatives and

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hormones is derived from that market offer. It is difficult to explain this to consumers, for the absence of a certain product is interpreted as an administrative problem or incompetence. “Hurray to the Land” held art and product shows and distributed leaflets and pamphlets that showed, for example, that marmalade sold at the store was made from fruit being harvested at the time by women who did multiple jobs. “Hurray to the Land” made an effort to increase the insufficient variety and quantity of products in the market that were made with environmental responsibility. For example, at a given time there was an excessive offer of lettuce in the market, but other products were not available. This originated periodic meetings to be held with groups of vegetable producers, so that they could be able to program production among them according to certain dates and types of products; said meetings started in May, 2000. “Hurray to the Land” at the present time sells the following products in their stores: vegetables, fruit, milk products, eggs and organic grains; preservative-free processed foods; personal hygiene products and biodegradable cleaning products; natural cosmetics; alternative medicine and medicinal herbs; recycled products; substitutes for disposable items; crafts and environmental publications.

“Hurray for the Land” members have made an effort to continue using the tactics that has best worked for them: establishing relationships, maintaining contacts and exchanging experiences, all in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation. These tactics were used with the Center for Encounters and Dialogue (CED), Mother Land Store in the Federal District, and new groups and production companies. In June 2002, “Hurray to the Land” won the Ecological Merit Award in the enterprise category for its job in stimulating environmentally and socially responsible production and usage.

Among the achievements and lessons learned it is possible to say that the “Hurray to the Land” project has become consolidated as a space of encounter for healthy and environmentally responsible product usage and a national directory of groups of organic producers has been integrated. “Hurray to the Land” has contributed towards women’s causes

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by supporting their entrepreneurship and the products they make. In addition, it has enabled increased awareness on the part of their partners regarding the equitable distribution of work and the correct valuation of said work. It must be stated that the fact that women are now being paid for their work and that their work is being valued instead of being “invisible”, is of great importance. Many women still find it difficult to be able to socially or internally legitimize their right to earn money for a job they previously did “to help others”. Women must internalize the fact that earning money gives them the right to decide how they are going to spend it or invest it. Some women who are now stronger are no longer willing to work for free or do “invisible” work.

In its plan to promote a trade alternative, “Hurray to the Land” has decided to support more women’s initiatives. This experience has shown that women are in a better disposition to work for conservation, to recycle and to use natural resources responsibly. It has also shown that women are more willing to work in organic projects, even if these projects are not very profitable. On the contrary, men are involved in alternative activities because they have understood the economic benefit of said activities due to increased sales or better prices for their products, as it is the case of organic coffee. On the other hand, women’s enterprises are increasingly discriminated. It has been confirmed that social enterprises working for the environment and which have successfully participated in the fair-price international market, are mostly integrated by men or if both men and women participate, they are led by men.

Lastly, it is important to comment on the fact that indigenous communities have been in the past, and are presently committed to working to conserve and rescue the environment. This priceless job has been assigned to women and the elderly, who possess the knowledge and the technical tools for the sustainable management of resources. “Hurray to the Land” has been able to visualize how their work is “invisible” because it is considered to be just a “natural” thing. A different trading strategy will enable the revaluation of those practices.



From the Cornfield to the Ocean

María Herrera

YUCATAN COASTS are 378 Km long, covering 3.8% of the entire Mexican coast; the system of lagoons and swamps stand out, representing 13,600 hectares of protected areas. These systems of shallow waters penetrated easily by the sun, and located between land and ocean, and influenced by tides and winds, are very productive due to the nutrients generated in them. These Yucatan coasts contain swamps, mangrove swamps, beaches, marine prairies and coral reefs. The typical vegetation of the coast includes swamps, palms, jungles and a wide variety of endemic plants such as Kukaa (*Pseidiogiebux sargentii*). There is abundant fauna; swamps are the natural habitat of flamencos (*Phoenicpterus rubber*), sea gulls, marine swallows and sea cockerels. 180 species of fish have been identified there, as well as 27 species of mollusks, 14 species of amphibians, 68 species of vegetables, 54 of mammals and 366 of birds. Fifteen of them are endemic species.

The coast has recently been included in the regionalizing system of the State of Yucatan, so its areas are not clearly defined yet. Nevertheless, taking into account the 15 villages that are located along the coast, the population of the area comes to approximately 70,000. Mayans coming from the

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peninsula, which left visible traces of the sailing, fishing and trading practices, inhabited these lands in the past. During the colony these lands were not very usable due to frequent incursions of pirates and the restrictions of the Spanish crown, which only authorized the Port of Campeche for conducting trading transactions with the capital city. The XIX saw the revival of the Yucatan coast when it became incorporated to the world market. Since then, coastal populations, indigenous people and racially mixed groups, have turned to the sea, maintaining a closer relationship with merchants of raw materials arriving at their coasts, or with people from inland.

During the XX century the coast had a great transformation. During the first half of the century foreign companies were awarded franchises for long periods of time for the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources such as gum, vanilla, sugar, tint stick and henequen. This originated the development of several villages, but most of the population was concentrated in Progreso, a port that depended basically in the henequen industry. Coast residents developed survival activities, such as fishing, agriculture, hunting, and extraction of salt. Social services and highways were absent; Yucatan wasn't connected to the interior of the country until the decade of the fifties.

As of the decade of the fifties several production activities developed in the coastal area were modified, and the area started to become an important economic region of the State. Industrial extraction of salt and extensive cattle ranching were developed, commercial fishing was intensified as a result of the introduction of ice, and the first fishing cooperative was organized in Progreso in the year 1958. One of the phenomena that exerted more influence in these changes was the henequen crisis, for it originated important migrations of peasants who were displaced from the interior of the country to the ports. These immigrants implemented different survival strategies such as hunting wild animals, working in salt production activities and tree felling. But the most important activity of these displaced individuals was industrial fishing. During the decade of the nineties, this

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activity that was oriented towards exporting to international markets and was utilizing more technology, registered an important peak. This was also the period when women began to work as regular employees in fish packing plants in the seafood processing section.

At the present time coastal ecosystems and towns are facing a series of environmental problems. The most important are related to the overexploitation of marine resources, which originates a decrease in the capture of fish near the coast, affecting the population of artisan fishermen. On the other hand, large fishing boats that are searching for the abundant product that has been lost go further out from the coast to fish, thus increasing the area that is being overexploited and using large amounts of fuel. In order to meet export demands and foreign currency demands, the regeneration processes of marine resources are being left aside. Numerous residents have confirmed that in just one generation, they have seen the environment deteriorate enormously and have observed a notorious loss of biodiversity.

Other environmental problems are originated in the infrastructure that runs parallel to the coast, which affects the exchange between the sea and the swamps, affecting the conservation of species. In addition, the population is being forced into the swamp. Urban development processes lack management plans for solid and liquid waste, originating contamination. Lastly, another problem of the area is the periodical development of meteorological phenomena, such as hurricanes, which violently modify environmental conditions.

Due to the overexploitation of the fishing industry, the population has to resort to other sources of income. This project in question had the objective of offering support to a group of women who were in search of production alternatives to meet their own needs and those of their families. The project had the objective of finding alternative strategies that would enable these women to generate an income through the sustainable use of resources.

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“From the Cornfield to the Ocean” project started in Port Chuburna, Municipality of Progreso, State of Yucatan, in 1995. Port Chuburna is located between the ocean and the swamp, in the “El Palmar” Biological Reserve. It is small town of 2000 inhabitants, a health center, a library, two kindergartens, two primary schools and one TV-high school.

The most productive activity developed there is fishing, followed by farming and cattle ranching. Young men and women work in bonded assembly plants or in private homes in Progreso and Merida. Adult women and minors collect, process and sell “chivita”, a swamp edible snail. Tourists visit the area only during vacation time.

The Chuburna population is of Mayan descent, but due the town’s proximity to henequen, there is a mixture of ethnic, urban, rural and coastal identities. Inhabitants no longer wear traditional Mayan clothes or speak the Mayan language, except the elderly, although certain traditions such as religious celebrations are maintained. Women experience subordination because of gender conditions, and they are also dominated by reasons of race, age, or economic differences. It could be said that one of the positions that is subjected to more subordination is that of being a woman, a young woman, product of a mixture of races, newly wed to a peasant man who doesn’t own any land, also product of a mixture of races, and both living in her in-laws’ house.

Koox Paakal is the name of the group of participants that was founded in 1995. 18 women and 2 men integrate it; most of the women have no young children and are 40 years old, on the average. This experience was promoted by the Foundation for Equity APIS.

The first stage of the project was developed during 1996, where experimentation with gulfweed, a type of marine alga, took place in family back yards, seeking to build the soil where organic vegetables would be grown. The following year there were two harvests of organic vegetables for family use and a proposal was made to raise poultry.

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During work meetings where the group planned activities, the importance of natural products in a balanced diet and the manner in which this issue has evolved in the region were discussed. These discussions originated the proposal of developing a recipe book for cooking products of the sea. This recipe book was published in 1998 with the support of the Municipal and Community Cultures program, under the name of “Between the Sea and the Cornfield”, and it has generated funds for the group. This book is much more than a regular recipe book; it is the result of several meetings and individual interviews recorded in 50 cassettes. These meetings served to bring back individual and group memories of the manner in which men and women lived generations back, including food, use of natural resources, cooking traditions, special recipes for children and the elderly, the sick, pregnant women and for parties and special occasions. The enormous impact that Hurricane Gilbert had on the area was discussed at those meetings, as was the fact that Port of Chuburna had to be relocated after that. This experience originated a special awareness in participants with respect to the interaction existing between nature and human beings.

Several goals were met and lessons learned as a result of the project. Women have successfully developed a production project that has enabled them to generate funds and improve their family’s nutrition. The degree of success has motivated the group to propose that the project be extended by establishing a kitchen that produces reasonably priced food and offers other services, including cooking traditional dishes of the coast.

An exchange of information and experience between the women in the group and the APIS team enabled mutual benefits; one the benefits has been the publication of the “Between the Sea and Cornfield” book, which has been presented at numerous forums.

In the area of the articulation of gender and environment, it has been possible to confirm that the gender perspective is vital if any knowledge on the management of

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sustainable resources of the area is to be recovered. Women play an important role because of their knowledge and expertise regarding nature's processes, cycles and rhythms.

Women have knowledge of, and are able to manage biodiversity; they are in a position that enables them to criticize economic institutions that are in charge of organizing the fishing activity, as well as the manner in which the environmental issue is being managed. Due to deficient channels for participation, different institutions are unable to take advantage of the valuable contribution these social agents could make to the sustainability of local development and improvement of living conditions.

Women's empowerment has allowed them to improve their self-esteem and autonomy with respect to the community and public institutions. Nevertheless, considering the social context of the conditions of subordination under which they live, these achievements could be only temporary if they are not emphasized.



*An Agricultural
Experience with a
Gender Equity
Perspective in the
Los Chenes
Mayan Indigenous
Population*

*María Teresa Mungía Gil
Germán Méndez Cárdenas*

HOLPECHEN MUNICIPALITY, where the Los Chenes region is located, covers an area of 7460 Km², representing 13.12% of the country's total area. Ecosystems are varied and of great biological importance, including deciduous tree forests, pastureland spots and lowland floodable forests. Characteristics of the geological substratum allow water to filter into the subsoil and be extracted using wells.

The region has a sub-humid warm climate and its relief has altitudes of 350 m above sea level. The predominant type of soil is one of good organic content, and there are other types of soils such as clay and wet soils, which are very susceptible to erosion. The best-preserved savannah of Campeche is located in that area, where almost 60 different pasture species have been identified. Two important butterfly species live there, evidencing the existence of primary forests, the *Memphis forreri* and *Fontainea eunyphyle confusa*.

The primary forest is almost gone and secondary forests are being affected by deforestation and expansion of agricultural areas, to such a degree that different species of trees and medicinal fruit, forage and honey-bearing plants are being endangered. Los Chenes forests are also being affected by natural

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events such as hurricanes, forest fires and fallen or dead trees, but in this case, processes of regeneration are possible due to the rapid growth of secondary forest species known as scrub which remain dormant beneath the soil; when these species grow and cover the soil they create the conditions required for original forest species to develop.

Hopelchen Municipality has 31,214 inhabitants (51.2% men and 48.8% women). Population is quite dispersed, with an approximate density of 4 inhabitants per Km². Bilingual mixed-race individuals and Mayans who only speak their tongue are predominant in the community; marginalized groups with respect to social, economic and political aspects, but who have preserved several elements of their own culture, language, customs, knowledge of natural resources and traditional medicine. Some of the other groups are whites descendant from past noble groups and the refined mixed-race, both having a higher social-economic status.

Both men and women do farm work and bring up domestic animals. Cornfields, where the “brush, knock down and burn” system is used, are mixed with bean and pumpkin fields. Other types of work are performed in order to increase family income; women weave hammocks, sew indigenous regional dresses and work in apiculture, an activity that was introduced in 1968. Young women work in bonded assembly plants and as housemaids. Men work as laborers in chicken farms or as construction workers in nearby towns. Raising pigs is a manner of saving, for pigs are sold in cases of emergency.

Community land or “ejidos” (expropriated land reallocated by the Government to workers’ collective), which have an area of 5797 Km², have been assigned more forest land; enabling residents to trade precious woods. Nevertheless, several of the additional forest lands are considered “idle”, according to a productive way of thinking, so they are in danger of being sold or rented to foreigners. Mennonites constitute an important part of this process; they arrived in the decade of the nineties. Local chiefs and authorities have been helping this religious group by selling them Government and expropriated land to build their

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settlements. The Mennonite group has an annual population growth rate of 22.4%, as opposed to the 2.5% of the Mayan population, a fact that is translated into a strong cultural influence.

On the other hand, Mennonites develop industrialized farming, using a single crop with improved seeds and agrochemicals, which presents a threat to the environment. The same is true in the case of several peasants who have been forced by official policies and the pressure of the market, to use technological packages that are strange to their culture. This process is also registering a loss of intangible goods, such as knowledge and ancestral practices of the autochthonous population.

The gender conditions respond to traditional patterns. Men exercise their power within the family, they represent the family in the public environment, are the main providers, and the ones who decide where the money is going. They have access to, and control over the resources and are the ones who take chances in the forest. They are autonomous, with an excellent public image; they live their sexuality openly and polygamy is accepted in the community.

Women are responsible for housework and for reproductive-related work, for taking care of family and education and they must also save money. These activities, as well as work done outside the home, are not socially valued; these activities do not represent an economic contribution nor do they have special requirements such as intelligence and experience. Women's sexuality is monitored; they are monogamous and oriented towards reproduction. Women organizations or participating in politics is not accepted. Their relationship with natural resources is subordinated to decisions made by men, they are not familiar with forests or scrub lands because they are not considered fit to confront any danger they may encounter.

As of 1992, the Education, Culture and Ecology Group (EDUCE), and as of the year 2000 the Muuch Kambal Indigenous organization, have developed investigations and participative appraisals in the region in order to find sustainable

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alternatives for local development. These alternatives would serve to solve environmental problems originated in deforestation, soil erosion and loss of biodiversity in Los Chenes forests.

Based on their corresponding experiences, EDUCE and Muuch Kambal formulated the program of alternative systems for sustainable development, which included the gender equity perspective component. Projects, that involve the participation of women, form part of a regional and local strategy in which The National networks of Promoters and Rural Consultants (RNPAT) and of Gender and Environment (RGMA) participate. Said strategy has the objective of institutionalizing the gender and environmental sustainability approaches in public policies. PNUD funds, as well as federal and regional funds, have constituted the sources of financing for the project.

Three female promoters and three female consultants planned and implemented the development strategies in eleven different communities. Women gained power during the process, while men had difficulties in establishing relations of equality. In spite of the above, women continued their education, they continued to get organized and they continued to give their support to production projects. Nevertheless, their success was questioned because it did not translate into earnings.

In general, there is a conflict between the alternative production proposals and the tendencies of the market, and even between the proposals and the State, since authorities are the ones promoting the sale of additional forestland and the use of agrochemicals in the reallocated areas. In addition, organic products in the market are at a disadvantage with respect to price and quantity when compared to farm products grown using technology. The yield of organic production is always less; the farmers capacity to produce organic fertilizers and insecticides does not meet the amounts required; farmers have difficulties in getting loans or Government support; and national and international funding institutions do not contemplate that organic production projects are developed mostly by indigenous populations, who often don't have the capacity to do all the paper work required. That peasants are poor and need to improve

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their living conditions is an additional disadvantage that together with all the disadvantages mentioned above endangers the survival of alternative sustainable development systems.

Based on the experience, EDUCE and Muuch Kambal decided to reorient their strategy and established the Intercultural Program of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources. This program is developed at several interrelated levels: a level for survival that includes agricultural, forestall and comprehensive management of back yard farming activities; a level of permanency directed towards the conservation of ecosystems; and a final level that links traditional knowledge and technical knowledge with gender equity and its projection into politics.

One of the important achievements of the project in Los Chenes is that now women's organizations have additional options for developing personal, economic, social and environmental activities. Two groups responsible for building greenhouses were formed, as well as seven groups for doing farm work in backyards and four groups for production of honey, ornamental and medicinal plants and crafts, as well as for setting up a bakery and a community mill.

The three women that became regional leaders have improved their social standing in the family and in the community, even though their workday has been extended. The other 120 women participants have assumed a leadership role in their communities, but need to improve their empowerment with respect to family and municipality.

Environmental awareness has improved, leading men and women to take actions to protect natural resources. Products have been diversified (36 products) in land parcels and backyards; endangered endemic species and precious woods are being reproduced. Fires have decreased by 30% in communities where organic production is carried out. The Mayan taxonomic organization has been reevaluated with respect to importance, use in nutrition, health, and income.

The need to establish equitable conditions for men and women is now better recognized.

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Some of the challenges that the project has been able to detect are as follows: officials need to be aware of the importance of interrelating gender and sustainability; consultants in different organizations require improved knowledge of, and commitment to, the gender methodology, working with men in the concept of masculinity, and women's rights; finally, financing institutions must show more interest in the areas of conservation, sustainability and gender equity relationships.

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Shoal of Fish: Gender Equity Policies in the Environmental Sector of Central America

Guiselle Rodriguez

THE REGION OF MESOAMERICA covers an area of over two million and half square kilometers that includes eight different countries: Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. The region's population is approximately 150 million. Due to its latitude and special geological configuration, its relief includes mountain chains, plateaus and plains, and a wide variety of warm, temperate and cold climates. Forests, deserts, jungles and coasts of the Central American region's ecosystem show an extensive biodiversity. Important portions of wet tropical forest are found in this region; in 1996 the forest covering was estimated at 35% of the total territory.

Mesoamerica's continental coasts measure somewhat over 15,000 Km; coasts in the Pacific are more abrupt and trimmed, while those on the Atlantic are low and sprinkled with lagoons. 8% of the mangrove swamps of the world are found in the Central American region (567,000 hectares), including the second largest reef barrier of the planet (1,600 Km of coral reefs). The continental platform's area is 237,000 Km². Central American coasts shelter 22% of the region's population. At least 250,000 indigenous people depend directly on their own natural resources.

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The fishing activity generates close to 750 million dollars per year and offers jobs to over 200,000 persons.

According to 2001¹ data, poverty affects 50.8% of the Central American population; and 23% barely survives extreme poverty conditions. That means that 1 out of every 2 Central Americans is affected by this social situation. Poverty indexes were reduced during the decade of the nineties, with respect to the previous decade; nevertheless, the increase in population also augmented by two million the number of poor individuals in Central America during that period. On the other hand, poverty was reduced in urban areas more than in rural areas because options for improvement of living conditions for individuals in conditions of extreme poverty remained the same in rural areas.

In addition to poverty, the social-economic situation is affected by conditions of inequality. Central America presents the higher indexes of concentration of income within the Latin American context. In Costa Rica, where poverty indexes are lower, the process of concentration of wealth has been the most accelerated, together with Argentina and Ecuador in South America.

In spite of the fact that over half of Central American inhabitants live in rural areas, rural development continues to be far behind that of urban areas. The largest percentages of individuals living in extreme poverty conditions are found in rural areas: literacy, schooling, access to health services and other services are proportionally less. Average incomes in rural areas are less than average incomes in urban areas, less than half in some cases.

Farming continues to be the predominant activity in rural areas. But the economically active population of that sector is diminishing; an increasing percentage is turning to the business and service sectors, especially women. That is why

1 *Data used for this report mainly refer to Central America. Where data on Mexico have been available, those data are also included and indicated.*

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international organisms present in the area believe that the term “rural” does not have to be limited to the farming activity. The importance and effect of farming in the economy of the different countries is also decreasing. It is then convenient to distinguish between rural poverty in the farming sector and that of the non-farming sector. National averages, including those that segregate poverty data by urban or rural zones, do not rigorously reflect the concentration of poverty in areas inhabited by indigenous peoples.

With respect to indigenous populations it is important to state that Mesoamerica is one of the richest bio-cultural regions in the world. In this portion of the planet not only flora and fauna are amongst the most varied, but it is also the home of over one hundred autochthonous populations. Existing statistical and cartographical information enabled the possibility of defining 39 large indigenous regions: 26 in Mexico and 13 in Central America. Mexican indigenous people are grouped into 5884 agrarian nucleuses, corresponding to 4374 common lands and 2510 communities. It is estimated that over 300,000 indigenous families own private land in regions such as Zongolica, Veracruz, Sierra Mazateca, Oaxaca, and some districts in Chiapas and Huasteca Hidalguense.

Aside from industrial activities, tourism and services, which have different impacts according to each country, the basic economic development of Mesoamerica is originated in its natural resources: farming and cattle ranching, fishing, forest exploitation, marshlands and the subsoil, in the case of Mexican petroleum. But these resources are greatly deteriorating due to overexploitation. Ecosystems are losing its integrality; deforestation is degrading the soils, and water sources are being reduced and contaminated. Other important factors to remember are the high levels of contamination of big cities, such as Mexico D.F., and vulnerability of the region before natural disasters. In addition, access to natural resources and their benefits is not fairly distributed.

With respect to gender conditions it can be stated that women’s contribution to the region’s development is made

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structurally invisible by the Mesoamerican society. The fact that among the poor, women are the most affected, is not adequately confronted, particularly women who are heads of household and live in conditions of extreme poverty. Enjoyment of rights and exercise of their citizen's rights, with true options for political participation in publicly elected positions, is still very deficient. Violence against women constitutes a serious public health problem in the region: some areas in Mexico and Guatemala now show systematic massacre characteristics. Nevertheless, it is possible to confirm that countries have recognized the gaps existing between the living conditions of Middle American women and men, and most of these countries have established national institutions that are responsible for the promotion of women.

IUCN's "Towards Equity" project began in 1997 in response to the results obtained from an ample process of participatory appraisal developed in five Central American countries. All 53 projects developed in the area demonstrated that knowledge and valuation of the social component with a gender equity approach in rural development projects and projects concerning use and conservation of natural resources are incomplete, insufficient and fragmented.

In 1998, as of the first results of the Towards Equity project, the following ministries of environment of the region requested IUCN's support to start the process of incorporation of the gender perspective in the sector's activities: SEMANAT in Mexico, MARN in Guatemala, SERNA in Honduras, MARN in el Salvador, MARENA in Nicaragua, MINAE in Costa Rica and ANAM in Panama. The Dutch Government and the Ford Foundation provided the necessary funding.

When the project was initiated, the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD) signed in 1999 a declaration at a regional level that stated that a commitment to equity between men and women would be the main axis of its work. Civilians were basic allies of the process at a regional level, they gathered around the National Networks for Equity (REDNA) in each of their corresponding five countries. These networks offered technical support to gender units in the

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ministries of the environment and later to the ministries of agriculture. One of the characteristics of this process of incorporation of the gender perspective has been the articulation of civilians with Governments. Symbolically, the group formed by civilian representatives and the ministries called themselves “A Shoal of Fish”, the same as that unit of fish that swims together, helping and protecting each other, without leaders, but guided by a same common objective.

By year 2000 the documents containing the gender policies, the action plans and the appointment of individuals that would be directly responsible for the environmental, agricultural and cattle ranching administration in the different ministries of Central America had been officially approved.

In addition to the investigation and design required to articulate the proposal, a good dose of realism was decisive for the final approval. Knowing that previous efforts had not rendered the expected results, the true political, technical and financial resources available at each ministry were taken as the starting point.

Later, with the objective of improving results, work was developed with the administration sectors of the ministries involved in order to design a new project: “Political incidence process to promote gender equity in environmental and agricultural management in Central America”. IUCN and the Arias Foundation, who together integrated the Regional Facilitation Unit (UFAR), were responsible for this project’s execution, and the project was supported by Dutch cooperation. Non-governmental organizations known as Instances of National Facilitation (INF) and the Towards Equity National Networks (REDNA) were responsible for management at a national level. All entities mentioned were awarded a regional space to exchange experiences, do some planning and evaluation; said space was the Regional Administrating Committee (CGER).

As every process that includes political impact, this project included a group of planned actions directed towards producing changes at different decision-making levels. This

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change meant that the gender perspective was to be included and equity would be promoted in instances related to the agricultural and environmental sectors.

The work model consisted of a network for institutionalizing the gender focal point. According to this model, the term reality, or any of its elements, are not lineal, for each element represents an entry point that is related to all the other points. Consequently, any action taken in any of the elements or points of entry to change the gender relations have an effect on the rest of the elements of the network. Four fields of intervention were organized in order to analyze the map of element interrelations of network members: political, bureaucratic, execution and citizenship.

Activities developed during the 3-year long execution of the project included the process of creating awareness and offering training to approximately 8000 individuals. Gender Units were created and strengthened in governmental environmental institutions. Gender equity policies were created and regulations of different entities were modified; in some cases these regulations were related to aspects of sexual harassment and violence. Groups integrated by representatives of strategic areas of different ministries were created in order to support the mainstreaming of the gender perspective.

IUCN developed methodologies and teaching materials for specialized subjects and for political-institutional subjects in order to provide technical and methodological support to the regional training process on gender. It also produced and published nine modules of the Towards Equity series.

The execution of this project, completed in 2003, left several important lessons. It has shown that it is possible to exert a political impact both on the government sector, from the decision-making levels to the operative-technical levels, as on non-government sectors.

Another important lesson learned is that the articulation between civilian organizations and state entities – such as REDNA- favors the democratic construction of spaces to

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achieve common objectives, as is the case of the promotion of gender equity in leading institutions of the environmental and agricultural sectors.

The implementation of affirmative actions for gender equity has exerted a positive impact on women's empowerment, as well as on their participation in strategies implemented to reduce poverty. Assigning resources to initiatives that promote equity, generation of land funds and the administration of protected areas, are some of the examples of the above.

A lesson learned which at the same time constitutes a challenge, is the need to monitor the process so that it may continue to be executed in order to strengthen public administration with a gender approach in the environmental and agricultural sectors of Central America. There is a particular need to strengthen the political impact exerted on local governments in order to achieve a rural and environmental development that is gender-sensitive and that stimulates social and political exchanges in communities.

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*Organic Cosmetics
made from
Medicinal Plants,
Women's
Association of San
Miguel de Guatuso*

*Ariana Araujo
Pilar Corrales*

THE “ORGANIC COSMETICS made from Medicinal Plants” project was developed in settlements of peasants located in San Miguel, Guatuso Region, Province of Alajuela, Costa Rica. Guatuso is immersed in an area of plains, declines that get flooded, and small hills where cattle ranching and survival farming are developed. Only small spots of the tropical rain forest that collect water remain; but illegal felling of lumber trees is presently taking place. Rainfall indexes are very high, registering between 2500 mm and 3000 mm per year.

Because this peasant settlement forms part of the Agrarian Development Institute (IDA), most of its population has migrated from other areas of the country. Guatuso has a population of 5692; 46.4 % women and 53.6% men. Almost the entire population is made up of farmers, but several parcels of land have been abandoned due to soil exhaustion and agrochemical contamination, as well as difficulties in getting loans for agricultural production. In addition to the problems of deforestation and soil erosion, there is another environmental problem: water contamination and exhaustion of headwaters.

The community has a school and a health service center. The town does not have public transportation service;

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people need to walk 3 km to get to the highway and catch a bus, and the nearest public phone is also located there. A few years back water had to be transported from a nearby brook; residents were frequently ill and finally two minors died, so women decided to leave their homes to get organized and promote the construction of a rural aqueduct.

The incipient organization of women, plus the successful results of their efforts, motivated them to continue opening doors to improve community health; at the same time they decided that they would struggle to improve the conditions of poverty of their families. This originated the creation of the Women's Association of San Miguel of Guatuso, and a project was then planned to produce cosmetics with medicinal plants grown organically by members of the Association.

In order to be able to develop the project, women had to face the environmental problems of the area, as well as economic and credit limitations, plus the fact that they had little or no technical or administrative training. Their project being chosen by the Office of the Director of Gender and Environment of the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE), opened doors for them to participate in a program of the Government of Costa Rica that included 50 sustainable social production projects to be developed by women in conditions of poverty and extreme poverty. This program's objectives are directed towards helping communities become aware of the importance of conservation and the rational use of natural resources. Specifically, the program intends to provide women's groups with the monetary investment required for production, as well as with the training and technical assistance needed to develop sustained production activities that may improve their living conditions.

The Women's Association of San Miguel of Guatuso signed an agreement with FUNDECOOPERACION, an international NGO that became responsible for the financial and administrative sectors of the project, as well as with IMAS (Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social), a local institution that provides social assistance. Other institutions involved were the Ministry of Environment and Energy, which took care of project execution

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and monitoring, the National Learning Institute (INA), the Agrarian Development Institute (IDA), and National University (UNA), each responsible for providing different training activities. This agreement contemplates training women involved in the project, plus in a second stage, where support for product marketing is provided through the participation of the National Council of Production (CNP) and the Ministry of Agriculture (MAG).

January of the year 2000 marked the beginning of the project, which ended in December 2002. During that time, members of the Association received training in different agricultural aspects such as handling and production of crops and organic fertilizer, construction and use of solar driers, project execution techniques, accounting, and product marketing and sale. Although no workshops on gender were offered, this subject was dealt with as of the work experience of participants. The group of project technicians used the modules of the “Towards Equity” series produced by IUCN and those of the ANDAR Association, to work with women in organization-related aspects.

Through training and financial support women were able to establish a small industry for production of organic cosmetics. At the present time they have the capacity to produce 80 units of shampoo, cream and soap per month. They purchased a solar drier to dry medicinal herbs used in the production of tea that is also sold. They also have a stable production of mint (*Mentha piperita*), oregano, “juanilama” (*Lippia alba*), chamomile (*matricaria chamomilla*) and lemon grass (*Cymbopogon citrates*).

When women from the Women’s Association of San Miguel of Guatuso evaluate this experience, they emphasized how they have improved their self-esteem by becoming active producers who generate and administrate their own resources. As their special achievements they specify increase of solidarity between women, teamwork, and ability to get involved in community matters. With respect to the environmental impact, they mention the greater degree of awareness regarding the importance of conservation of the environment and natural resources, as well as acquisition of new clean techniques for

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planting and fertilizing. They also mention the forest reforestation effort and the cleaning campaigns that have resulted from the creation of environmental awareness.

Lessons learned from the project include the importance of the domino effect resulting from the participation of women in activities of conservation of the environment. The traditional reproductive role assigned to women, which makes them feel responsible for the welfare of their families, in this specific case, motivated them to leave their homes and find means to improve the health conditions of their community.

Successful construction of the aqueduct encouraged them to look beyond and establish their own production project based on the use of clean farming techniques for production of non-contaminating cosmetics. Once more, the achievements of these women have made it possible for the Women's Association of San Miguel of Guatuso to promote, among community members, the benefits of environmental conservation and the rational use of natural resources, as well as the benefits of using products and techniques that are environment-friendly.

The benefits of this program are projected to the future; women are working together with other members of the community towards the conservation of a mountain of virgin forest located near their community. That mountain, extremely vulnerable to the exploitation of its natural resources, contains headwaters, lagoons and rivers. Women are also offering their support for the construction of a community greenhouse, in search of regenerating land parcels located in the forest that are now abandoned and enabling the conservation of the Rio Frio basin.



*Incorporation
of the Gender
Equity Approach
into the Costa
Rican Minister
of Farming and
Livestock*

Ana Felicia Torres

THE FARMING AND LIVESTOCK SECTOR, as well as related public institutions, have gradually become less important to Costa Rican economy; they are in a state of crisis and in danger of completely disappearing. The percentage of traditional agricultural activities is decreasing strongly, as is the production of basic grains, sugar cane, banana and coffee, and cattle ranching is also decreasing. Other more recent activities developed, such as growing pineapples, cantaloupes and oranges; diversification of milk products; aquaculture and fishing; and tourism based on mega projects, do not generate the necessary jobs and do not enable the correct distribution of wealth in the Costa Rican rural sector.

The economic, social, and political participation gap between the rural and urban worlds has become wider as a result of a centralized development model and an accelerated commercial liberalization. New Costa Rican rural communities are at a disadvantageous position in health and education services, as well as other services provided by the State, which are necessary for exercising citizen's rights.

On the other hand, in spite of the fact that the enactment of the Law of Women Social Equality has originated

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important advances in the area of gender equity, clear disadvantages based on gender still persist; these disadvantages are generally more evident in rural sectors. Women's work is not always recognized or adequately paid for. Every day more women become part of the economically active population, but they tend to hold the less important and less paying jobs. Open unemployment and underemployment affect women particularly, and the informal sector of the economy seems to have a more feminine face every day. In activities that are little productive and only enable survival, women are denied their social security and pension rights. Poverty is also acquiring a feminine face due to the increasing number of women, often young women, who are becoming heads of household.

Poverty and exclusion in the Costa Rican rural areas are becoming more dramatic for women. In the year 2000 women represented less than one-fifth of the total number of individuals receiving benefits from agricultural services of the Ministry of Agriculture and from the Program of Productive Restructuring.

A lack of awareness and training on the gender equity approach is evident at every level in the institutions of the farming-livestock sector; even beneficiaries show resistance to this subject because it is perceived as a threat, a fad or a strategy to obtain unnecessary funding. On the other hand, the specialized methodology to incorporate the gender equity perspective into training activities, technical assistance or transfer of technology is non-existent; there are no teaching instruments or indicators segregated by sex that could orient planning, execution or evaluation process.

The project to incorporate the gender equity approach into the Costa Rican farming-livestock sector, initiated in 1994, demanded the development of a complex process that included the articulation of numerous institutions, wills and government and non-government funds. One of those government institutions is the National Women's Institute, which convoked public institutions, did the technical study and provided the necessary accompaniment, and is responsible for asking institutions working in that sector to report on different actions

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developed to favor women. High-level commissions of the farming-livestock sector integrated by the highest officials of institutions involved, were responsible for providing support and for creating favorable political and administrative conditions that would enable the incorporation of the gender equity approach into the entire sector. Project participants included individuals leading the government's Regional and General Office; municipal governments which collaborated with the creation and improvement of the Women's Municipal Office; the Gender Coordinator of the farming-livestock sector; and people in charge of the gender sector in participating institutions (Ministry of Agriculture, Institute of Farming and Livestock Development, National Production Council, INCOPECA, SENARA and SEPSA).

Some agencies of international cooperation also participated and provided funding and technical assistance. Non-government organizations provided human resources for training individuals in different organizational and methodological aspects; mention must be made of the project developed jointly by the World Conservation Union and the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress, denominated "Towards Equity: Technical assistance and support to rural development initiatives in the Central American region". Some civilian sectors such as small and medium size producer organizations integrated by men only, women only, and men and women together also participated.

The project established the goal of improving the institutional offer in the Costa Rican farming-livestock sector in order to provide differentiated and equitable services to men and women involved in rural sustainable development; another goal was to aid the Costa Rican Government in its strive to fulfill its international commitments related to women's rights, particularly rural women. Different training and educational workshops were offered within this framework, as well as national and regional forums, and methodological and teaching materials were developed; investigations were also carried out, especially regarding gender indicators in the farming-livestock sector; and lobbying and activities having a political impact were developed.

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This project has proven that by providing the conditions required for incorporating the gender equity perspective through institutional coordination, a better use of institutional resources can be achieved. The above, together with the positive changes generated in social relationships, have had a positive impact in the agricultural production. It was also demonstrated that it is possible to carry out an institutional and inter-institutional positive articulation along central and regional levels. This project originated the conformation of a team of men and women employees trained to incorporate the gender perspective, and it is also responsible for the improvement of spaces and mechanisms required to transfer that knowledge to the public sector.

Rural women's work became more visible and better valued; it was possible to present these women, who are now aware of their rights and are capable of demanding access to resources and services that were previously not available to them, to institutions working in this sector. Democratization of processes for men and women to have access to services has increased the number of women demanding said services. The gradual improvement of women's capacity to do business is having an impact in the social gender relationships, both in the family and in the rural community.

Individuals involved in the project were able to learn that a political will to incorporate the gender perspective must be translated into a sustained supply of financial and human resources, as well as into the institutionalization of the mechanisms and spaces required to carry out this incorporation.

The incorporation of the gender equity approach into the actions of institutions goes beyond the technical dimension, for it impacts the quality of working relationships and originates a new approach regarding staff management, ethics and world vision issues that have a comprehensive impact on the lives of all employees.

In addition, the importance of having the available strategies to use them individually as heads of the implementation of the process enables these individuals to confront the initial

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conditions of isolation and loneliness they have to face. These individuals must also have access to mechanisms and instruments to carry out quantitative evaluations to prevent the process from becoming stagnant and to avoid use of traditional points of view. They must not have excessive workloads and it is important for them to consider that their work is not an option or that it only concerns women.

In order to have gender equity mainstreamed within a given culture men and women must share social and political responsibilities.



*San Juan del Gozo
Project:
Reforestation
of Mangrove
Swamps*

Concepción de María Carranza

THE SAN JUAN DEL GOZO LAGOON, located by Jiquilisco Bay, names a region covering 20 Km² in the Department of Usulután, El Salvador. This region contains 875 acres of mangrove swamps that are the natural habitat of a variety of plants, as well as land and aquatic animals. Jiquilisco Bay, the most important hydrographic system in El Salvador, is important not only because of its scenery, but also because of its natural resources and the contribution it makes to the country.

San Juan del Gozo has a population of 688, distributed in 237 families. It has no drinking water and no sewer system. Many children suffer from gastrointestinal infections, acute respiratory infections, parasites, malaria and malnutrition. Every year flooding caused by rain and overflowing of rivers and the lagoon affect its residents.

Artisan fishing constitutes the most important economic activity developed by the population. Survival agriculture is also developed and there are some cattle. Certain products are extracted from the forest and there are some shrimp and fish farms.

Deforestation is one of the environmental problems present in the area; felling of lumber wood trees that has been

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going on for decades; natural disasters, such as Hurricane Mitch, which caused so much damage; plus the high seismicity of the past few years, have all worsened this problem. In addition, the San Juan del Gozo Lagoon is being contaminated due to deficient basic sanitation conditions, also, the hurricane covered it with mud, and sediment from flooding is being deposited in it. Another problem that must be pointed out is that hunting and fishing activities have reached unexpected levels; undoubtedly originated by the conditions of extreme poverty.

52.25% of the population are women, and a strict division of work according to gender conditions. In effect, women mostly do housework and take care of the children; they do not have paid jobs or have access or control of family income, which anyway is quite small. They don't take part in activities regarding the community. Nevertheless, most of them carry out activities that enable them to take food to the family table; among other activities, they fish and pull out a tuber known in Spanish as "curil" (*anadara tuberculosa*). There is a high index of inter-family violence; it is very common for women to be abused by their husbands and in turn for them to abuse their sons and daughters.

The mangrove swamp traditionally has been a place for men; women have little access to it. Women are discouraged from going into the mangrove swamp with excuses such as distance, lack of proper information on resources found there and danger they would have to face. In women's opinion, the lagoon would be their most accessible resource, but men have control over it and benefit from it.

The project was developed from March 2001 to February 2003 and it had several objectives: reforestation of sixty hectares of salt-water forest; reduction of fire wood use through construction of one hundred "fire-wood saving" stoves; strengthening the organization as well as women's leadership; and improving basic sanitation conditions through the construction of fifty fertilizer latrines.

Reports given by organizations that had previously worked in the area's reforestation indicated that 80% of participants had been men. As a result of said reports, the

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proposal provided for the creation of a space for women to participate in.

In addition to the Board of Directors of the Community Organization, which made it possible for the project to be accepted by the community and also supported actions developed at different stages of said project, other groups were also involved in it. REDES, a non-government organization, offered support in appraisal activities. The Salvadoran Association for Health Promotion ASPS, another non-government organization, collaborated with actions pertaining health, campaigns and medicine. FIAES, Initiative for the Americas Fund, was the financing organism, also responsible for monitoring and evaluation. The Salvadoran Movement of Women, MSM, executed the project and provided technical, financial and material resources for its development; it also developed monitoring and evaluation activities.

The project started by providing training and developing actions seeking to create awareness in areas such as community development and participation, women's rights, community health, gender equity and environment; and, use, reforestation and conservation of the mangrove swamp. Training and specific actions on the above-mentioned subjects took place at the same time. For example, planting vegetable gardens and building wood-saving stoves went hand in hand. At the beginning, it was mostly men who participated in the area of conservation of the mangrove swamp, but little by little women began to incorporate themselves into that activity, until they became a majority. In order to do the selecting, collecting and planting, the work day at the mangrove swamp was a four or five hour workday, plus two hours traveling to and from the swamp. Work depended on the tide; so some times workdays had to be prolonged in order to comply with the stages that had been programmed. In order to complement training on basic sanitation, groups were organized to collect trash correctly, clean houses, use water properly and handle fertilizer latrines adequately. Instruction was given on risk patterns related to acute respiratory infections and acute diarrhea-related diseases.

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In the area of community organization special emphasis was given to the importance of becoming organized, together with the responsibilities and rights that this implies for members of the community. Training sessions on self-esteem were mostly attended by women, who in addition to having to bear the greatest poverty conditions, are subjected to subordination, submission and domestic violence. Therefore, the subjects discussed in said sessions, which were related to women's rights, the importance of looking after themselves, loving themselves, and learning how to set limits, were of great importance. Techniques utilized in sessions served to have a clear view of the work performed by women during their double or triple workday, originating the full recognition of the social value of their work. Independently of the activity they developed, participants were paid \$4 per day, maximum amount set by the financing agency.

This project has contributed to create awareness in men and women of San Juan del Gozo, regarding the importance of the mangrove swamp as a valuable resource for the community.

The technical knowledge acquired by residents has served to achieve a specific goal: decrease the felling of trees and improve the conservation of the mangrove swamp. Also, exploitation of water fauna at the San Juan del Gozo Lagoon has been reduced and community sanitation conditions have also been improved.

It is important to state that women have improved their living conditions as a result of their participation in this project. They had access to paid jobs outside the home, they became knowledgeable and developed capabilities in the areas of conservation and handling of the mangrove swamp; they participated in meetings and were part of the decision-making process of the project and of other community actions. All of the above improved their level of self-esteem and knowledge of their own rights. Men became more sensitive regarding women and accepted their participation in spaces that in the past had been reserved to men.

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Regarding the articulation of the gender and environment perspectives of this project, it is possible to conclude that a project that intends to integrate both dimensions, must incorporate the gender equity perspective as one of the main axis of the same from the very start: the human team and the methodology utilized must be especially gender-sensitive at every stage and during every application.

Due to the specific problems of women in the community, greater emphasis was put in gender equity awareness in the San Juan del Gozo Project, but still some issues haven't been dealt with and are still pending. It was impossible to articulate, together with the environment, specific problems such as reproductive health, violence and self-esteem.

No strategy for dealing with participating men and for attracting teenagers and young adults, or for dealing with issues related to masculinity was available, and this is something to bear in mind for future similar projects. Due to the absence of said strategy, it was impossible to avoid desertion of some men and impossible to have them reintegrate themselves to the process.

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THE CARIBBEAN

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*Gender and
Environment in
Community
Management:
Comprehensive
Management of
Coastal Resources
at Pinar del Río*

*Greicy Rodríguez
Anua Bustío
Iluminada Milian
Miguel Gutiérrez*

MANGROVE SWAMPS are recognized worldwide as highly productive ecosystems which in addition to offering forest resources, play an important role in the cycle of life of fish, crustaceans and mollusks that have commercial value. Vegetation of Cuban mangrove swamps is represented by four arbor species: red mangrove, pietro mangrove, pataban and a species known as “yana”. This ecosystem has abundant and varied wild life species. The forest and its related habitats shelter flocks of migrating or permanent birds that feed from mangrove trees. Dolphins, turtles, reptiles and occasional manatees can also be found.

Ensenada de La Coloma was chosen for implementing the comprehensive management of coastal resources. It is located in the Southern coast, in the Pinar del Rio province. Fresh water and fertilizing sediment feed the ecosystem by way of the Guama river mouth and the Colon stream. Other rivers in this area are Itabo River and La Coloma River. Numerous inlets carry saltwater into the ecosystem during high tides.

This ecosystem has a tropical climate with temperatures ranging from 20°C and 28°C in the winter, and

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between 26°C and 28°C in the summer. Relative humidity is high, registering an annual average of 81%. Northeasterly and Easterly winds are predominant, and their speeds increase with squalls and other atmospheric phenomena. Soils are typical of mangrove swamps, formed by accumulating dead leaves that turn into organic matter; they are frequently affected by flooding, salt water and winds. Drainage is deficient all along the coast.

The mangrove swamp in question covers a total area of 601 hectares, most of it forest land, but it also includes saltpeter beds, inlets, temporary and permanent lagoons, coastal jungles and two towns, La Coloma and Las Canas. One third of the total area is covered by mangrove trees; natural pasturelands located in the lowlands and are used for cattle ranching. The Pinar del Rio lumber company, plus a farming company, both operate in the Southern coast.

Very few people live in the 14.7 Km long sea-front, only 7000, and 5804 of them live in the port of La Colona, where 53.8% are men and 46.2% are women. A combination of industrial fishing facilities (Combinado Pesquero) operate at that port, as well as numerous small fishing boats. It also has a small boat shipyard. The Western sector now includes tourist facilities, for the 40-meter wide beach has been artificially remodeled. Las Canas has a population of 286, 56.6 % men and 43.4% women.

Most of the population works in the fishing industry. Men are fishermen; women take care of reproductive-related work at home and also work in the fishing industry, more so those living at La Coloma. Nevertheless, these women do not hold leading positions at Combinado Pesquero, nor are there any woman scientists working at the Flora and Fauna Biological Station. Women take a more active part in the education, service and syndicate sectors. In recent times a woman was elected manager of the Popular Council.

Women living in Las Canas have the worst living conditions of all, they are restricted to their homes, and during prohibition time men spend in liquor all the money earned in the fishing activity. There are no opportunities for participating in

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recreational activities, services are deficient, and there is no transportation available. Las Canas families do not feel as members of the community, they wish to leave this place and go live at La Coloma. Housing conditions at Las Canas are very deficient; 85% of all homes are in poor condition; at La Coloma these homes represent only 32%.

Specialists from Pinar del Rio University chose this ecosystem because they detected a true need to conduct scientific studies that would involve different communities in the area. The Coloma-Las Canas sector was chosen because it presented different issues and interests that originated conflict: Combinado Pesquero, a key factor in the country's economy, had serious problems with contaminants; the sewer system was contaminating different towns, the mangrove swamp and headwaters; in addition, headwaters were progressively becoming salty. Soils were being overexploited and turned into desert land, and the littoral was degraded due to coastal erosion and loss of beach stability. The runoff had been diverted from its original path by channels and dams, affecting the ecosystem in the mangrove swamp and crustaceans and lobsters were becoming scarce. Some other problems also affected the area, such as the felling of trees in the mangrove swamp and clandestine hunting and fishing, activities that were impossible to control by government authorities due to the lack of a plan for managing resources. People living in the area had no environmental awareness, perhaps with the exception of school children.

After scientists and people living in the different communities finalized an agreement, the final project was accepted by financial organizations and groups, including: the International Investigation and Development Center of Canada (CIID), and its project counterparts, International Ocean Institute (IOI) of Costa Rica and the Fishing Unit of CARICOM, from Belize; also, Laval University in Canada and the University of Pinar del Rio. Local participating organizations include: the Popular Council, Revolution Defense Committees, Federation of Cuban Women, Basic Unit of Forest Production, Frontier Guard Unit, Flora and Fauna Biological Station and Combinado Pesquero.

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The Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment and the Forest State Service also took part.

The project was developed in several different stages. The first stage covered a participative diagnosis of biophysical and social-environmental problems in the area; different sectors were involved in several activities and methodologies that were adapted to each group. It must be specified that the project did not consider including the gender equity approach or any appraisal, and it also lacked definition of objectives and strategies; nevertheless, women participated in every activity in equal conditions with men. Women began to stand out when they demonstrated their enthusiasm and leadership during the social-environmental workshops that were held in double shifts for five days.

In addition to the workshops, which included a wide variety of techniques and dynamics, 80 polls were taken in the communities involved and among workers of the fishing industry, to find out their level of schooling, habits and attitude towards the mangrove swamp and its natural resources. Most of the people polled awarded great importance to the mangrove swamp, especially because of those activities that negatively affect it, such as felling of trees, hunting and making charcoal.

Individual and group interviews were developed. Nine leaders from both communities, as well as two representatives from Combinado Pesquero participated in the individual interviews. Group interviews were held with school children between the ages of 6 and 11. Interviews showed that people have very little knowledge of the mangrove swamp ecosystem, its importance and the correct and sustainable manner in which its resources must be handled. On the other hand, boys and girls are better informed on the subject of conservation and environment, possibly due to school activities.

Several 20-hour training sessions on environmental issues were given. Guards and members of the Frontier Guard Unit of Coloma-Las Canas attended said sessions, and so did men working for the Las Taironas Forest Unit, responsible for supervising forest tree plantations and mangrove swamp forests,

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as well as people working for Combinado Pesquero. This fishing industry does not have an oxidation lagoon that is adequate for insuring that flowing waters are clean when they get to the mangrove swamp. But there is still another equal or greater source of contamination, the maintenance shop for ships, where grease and petroleum spills are constant.

The project is still in its final stages, but so far numerous lessons have been learned. It has generated environmental awareness and a rational attitude towards natural resources of the mangrove swamp ecosystem.

After being trained, residents cleaned coastal areas, inlets and areas destroyed by felling of trees. One of the coastal lines was reforested with *Rizophora* mangle species and one hectare of *Eucalyptus sp* was planted to create an alternate forest inside the mangrove tree forest.

With respect to gender equity, the prominent roles that women played during the project's different stages, from appraisal to specific activities such as the rehabilitation of the coastal environment, must be emphasized. This participation experience motivated the creation of the Women's Coastal Committee, seeking to continue work in conservation of the mangrove swamp.

The importance of analyzing gender relationships immersed in a strong organizational context must also be emphasized. This experience shows us that future projects should include the gender perspective from the planning stages to the first stages of implementation.



*Gender Training
for Management of
Coastal Resources
in the Community
of Baracoa Beach*

*Elena Díaz
Tania Caram
Sofía Porro
Beatriz Díaz*

BARACOA is located in the Municipality of Bauta, Province of Havana, Cuba, and approximately 25 Km from the capital city. Baracoa covers an area of 8300 m² and has a 2.6 Km coast line. The Santa Ana River, on the East, and the Baracoa River on the West, borders it. Its ecosystem is a marine coastal one, formed by the coral reef, a strip of land, and the lagoon. The coral reef varies in depth from 0 to 15 meters; it forms a natural barrier along the coast and is one of the best-preserved reefs in Havana. Several homes have been built on the land strip, some of them on piles. The lagoon communicates to the open sea through the underground mantle and a canal built by fishermen. Nevertheless, the tide is not sufficient to restore the quality of the water because of the high degree of contamination originated in community waste disposal and sewerage. The best-preserved area is located in the El Cachon region, on the west margin of the Baracoa River, where species of red and dark mangrove, “pataban” (a variety of mangrove, hard wood used for piles) and “yana” (hard wood used to make coal) are found.

Its population of approximately 10,000 is increased during summer months by about 3000 individuals go there on vacation. Peasants from nearby regions form part of this added

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population. Health and education indicators are good, similar to the country's average; child mortality is very low and schooling goes up to the ninth grade level.

Baracoa's main activity is fishing. The Fishermen's Federation has over 600 members, most of who reside in Baracoa. There are 6 State ships and 64 private ships. Fish is marketed by the State, so fishermen sell most of its fish to the State, and the State in turn distributes it to a chain of State-owned stores. Nevertheless, part of the fish is kept for private use and for sale in the informal market. Local tourism is another important activity developed there, and lately, international tourism is also becoming important because the Latin American School of Medical Sciences is near Baracoa and 3000 students from Latin American and Africa attend that school. The vast majority of tourists visiting Baracoa are these students, all on scholarship of the Government of Cuba, and relatives who visit them. Some of its residents work in farms or in textile companies in nearby towns.

Water contamination is the most important environmental problem that Baracoa has to confront, with the corresponding disappearance of species. Deficient trash collection forces residents to dump trash into the rivers, the lagoon or the beach. Emissions originated in the decomposition of residential, fishing and industrial trash also contaminate the air and endanger the health of residents. The ocean's inlet is equally deteriorated and boats have difficulties for sailing, docking or weighing anchor near its shore.

The traditional division of work according to sex defines gender conditions; women do housework and men are the main providers. But in reality this stereotype is not true, for the work developed by women in the health and education sectors is made invisible; most of the doctors, nurses and teachers are women.

The Gender Training for Management of Coastal Resources in the Community of Baracoa Beach project, which ended in the year 2003, emerged from a previous project developed in that same community. Said project, called "Creation

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of a model for management of coastal resources”, formed part of the MINGA Program of the Canadian international organization International Development Research Centre (IDCR). This project was developed from the year 2000 up to the year 2001 and its objective was to find comprehensive solutions to water contamination problems, mostly originated in the behavior of residents and the lack of funds for trash recycling. The final report of the project stated that it had been successful with respect to the training of a team of specialists in social and natural sciences, and to the work done in the community in the area of participative management of resources. Nevertheless, as the project progressed, the need to incorporate the gender equity approach became evident.

A proposal for the project in question was then presented. One of the project’s objectives was to offer training to the team that had been responsible for the previous project in the area of gender and its relation to management of coastal resources, and also to offer this type of training to selected sectors of the population of the Baracoa community. An effort was being made to make a contribution to the development of strategies for conservation of resources through the sustainable and equitable use of resources; a fair participation by men and women in the processes of consultation, decision-making, use and control of resources and access to benefits would be promoted.

International organizations involved in this project were the International Development Research Centre (IDCR) and the World Conservation Union (UICN), which promoted the initiative, provided funding and made significant contributions to the methodological aspect; as well as FLACSO, Latin American School of Social Sciences, the project executor. The Popular Council of Baracoa, the Fishermen’s Association, the “Manolito Aguiar” School, the Baracoa Martyrs School of Comprehensive Improvement, and the Federation of Cuban Women, were the local participating institutions that provided organizational support to the project.

One of the most problematic situations that affected the previous projects, and that had to be dealt with during training

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activities, were the existing differences regarding the use of, access to and enjoyment of natural resources by gender. Fishing was one of the most evident cases, where women participants were considerably less than men participants.

Another environmental problem affecting the community was the deficient elimination of solid waste, a problem that would have better probabilities of being solved if the gender equity perspective would have been used, because families could make a contribution. Young men and women showed no interest in finding or implementing any type of solution to that problem.

Finally, it became evident that some boys and girls living in those communities are at a social disadvantage due to lack of social-economic or family support; they present inadequate types of behavior that can lead them to isolation or social alienation. Training on the gender equity approach would put a stop to the reproduction of these situations and would contribute to the social integration of these individuals.

Before starting to develop the training activities, the women responsible for the project met with the Popular Council of Baracoa. This local Government organism is integrated by delegates from all nine districts, elected every two and a half years. An effort was being made to assert the project's objectives and methodologies through the use of workshops. Groups that would attend said workshops were selected during the meetings.

The interdisciplinary group that had been put together for the previous project received training through four workshops on gender and its relationship to natural resources. After this stage was completed, the team participated in a comprehensive workshop with representatives of the selected groups.

The following groups were selected: Fishermen's Federation group, integrated by 11 men and 3 women averaging 45 years of age and most of them born in Baracoa; the group of students from the School of Comprehensive Improvement, 8 young men and 7 young women under the age of 30, more than half of them not from Baracoa; and a third group of 6 boys and 9 girls between the ages of 9 and 11, facing a situation of social

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disadvantage. Nine community leaders, 5 men and 4 women, incorporated themselves into the workshops.

Before each of the above-mentioned workshops was developed, social-demographic data was collected through surveys. Surveys included some questions on issues related to gender and natural resources. It was then possible to learn the extent to which the distinct gender characteristics of participants, especially men, influenced issues such as work division by sex, showing a tendency towards a stereotyped perception of characteristics and a traditional hierarchy of jobs.

Thus, adult men related that which is masculine to characteristics of strength, bravery, and honesty; and that which is feminine to characteristics of physical beauty and honesty. Adult women identify men as honest and loving and women as resolute and honest. Young men identify themselves with decision and bravery, while young women perceive themselves as intelligent, hard working and sacrificed. Work division by gender assigns the role of head of household and provider to men, and the role of housewife to women. But, half of young women declare that women should, in addition to doing housework, have paying jobs outside the home. Half of the boys and girls surveyed surprisingly mentioned some jobs that are commonly assigned to women, as being performed by men, such as taking the trash out, hauling water and running errands.

Ocean, beach, lagoon and river are commonly mentioned as Baracoa's natural resources; and deforestation and water contamination by trash and domestic residues, as well as by waste from the School of Medicine are mentioned as environmental problems. Participants usually have a more difficult time in identifying the historical or cultural resources of Baracoa.

Three workshops using different strategies according to participants were offered after the surveys were analyzed. In general these workshops covered issues of gender and division of production and reproduction roles. The adult group discussed the subject of the double work shift in cases of women working outside the home. Theater in which social issues

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were included enabled young men and women to become aware of gender-originated problems. Natural and historical resources were also discussed in workshops; as well as environmental problems and their causes and effects, and the connection between gender and environment. Different problems were presented at the final workshop, and an effort was made to develop proposals for the comprehensive solution of said problems.

Popular education and participative rural evaluation methodologies were used in the workshops. Different techniques for gender analysis, particularly those assigned to the identification of work division by gender, and to access, use and control of natural resources were also utilized; social dramas, directed discussions and informal interviews were also used. Modules of the “Towards Equity” series, published by IUCN and the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress served as guidelines.

Once the project was concluded most of the members of the interdisciplinary team participated in the Workshop for Recovery of Experiences.

This project’s development has originated in members of the Baracoa community an increased awareness on the issues of gender and on the existing deficiencies in the management of natural resources. Training activities developed enabled the visualization of the relationship existing between participative management of natural resources and community empowerment, particularly on the part of women.

The project has enabled the integration of three groups of residents that have the same common objective of working for the sustainable development of the Baracoa community; these groups will insure that the objectives that have been defined will continue to be publicized, and that achievements will become permanent. Proof of the above is the proposal presented by fishermen before the Popular Council for the creation of a commission including representatives from the three different sectors to create awareness in residents of the devastating effects of depredator conducts.

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The assimilation of information and an open mind towards new dimensions of reality on the part of participants have been made possible through the interaction of workshop participants, including participants in the Workshop for Recovery of Experiences; these participants included men, women, youth and minors from the Baracoa community, members of the technical team, Delegates of the Popular Council and the Project's women executors

Although the most important problem that concerns the community has not been solved, as is the contamination of the river and the lagoon, project participants have suggested that the lagoon be dredged through the establishment of a new project for this purpose.



*Linking Gender
and Environment
in the
Agro-ecological
Farming*

Eulogio Muñoz

THIS GENDER AND ENVIRONMENT EXPERIENCE was part of the “Gradual intensification, training and publication of successful farming experiences using agro-ecological principles in Cuba” project, developed from 2001 to 2002. This project continued during 2003 as part of the Agro-ecological Beacon Program, a medium-term to long-term initiative developed for the purpose of making a contribution to sustainable farming in Cuba.

The project was developed in the Province of Sancti Spiritus, in six farms owned by four credit and services cooperative organizations. Although each individual farm has its own topographic and vegetable covering characteristics, the agricultural-forest ecosystem prevails in the area. Terrains are mostly flat and wavy, sometimes broken, covered with pasture and short-cycle rotating crops; it also includes micro-forests and mixed fruit plantations. 24°C is the annual average temperature, and the rainy season runs from May to October.

Individuals who participated in the project have for the past eight years been administrating the land as owners or users. Previously, these individuals had worked as employees or had retired from different companies or centers of farming

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investigation. Their average schooling is at the ninth grade level. State health and educational services are available for them. They are members of associations such as ANAP, National Association of Small Farmers; Credit and Services Cooperatives; Committees for Defense of the Revolution; and the Federation of Cuban Women. 45% of the population are senior citizens.

Agriculture is the most important activity; milk farming is also developed. Tobacco is the most important crop grown in three of the farms; a contract is in effect for delivery of the entire production to Cuba Tobacco, a State-owned company. Public institutions that wish to have access to exports and generate foreign currency incomes support this activity.

Environmental problems affecting the area are loss of soils and soil fertility degradation originated in the deficient production of biomass and vegetable covering, as well as the type of farming systems and overgrazing. Additional problems are deforestation, biodiversity loss and incapability of the vegetable covering to sufficient carbon dioxide fixation and atmospheric nitrogen.

Men and women experience their gender relationships based on traditional roles. Even though both sexes have a legal right to land and to means of production, land titles and legal contracts are always under men's names. But, accesses to, and use of economic benefits originated through production and trade, are distributed equally.

Men and women work equally in all farm activities, but most of the decisions and important actions are in the hands of men. Women play the traditional subordinated role of administrating production resources. Every farm leader is a man, even if women have the knowledge and experience required in agrarian systems.

The project has some basic objectives. One of them is to improve basic resources required by agro-ecological farming principles. This implies that the population has to acquire fortitudes and capabilities to enable it to design and manage farms according to said principles. Another objective is to extend the experience to other communities by offering an example of

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true management and demonstrating the manner in which individuals participating in the experience can promote it beyond their corresponding cooperative organizations.

Although this project did not contemplate a specific objective aiming to mainstream the gender equity perspective, in practice, both women and men who worked in the six selected farms became involved in the project. Another participant was the International Center for Investigation and Development (CIID) of Canada, an international NGO that provided financial and methodological support. The Cuban Association of Agricultural and Forest Engineers (ACTAF) was the national counterpart and the project's executor. The Animal Science Institute (ICA) and the Sancti Spiritus Experimental Station of Pastures and Forage, two national organizations, coordinated the project and provided technical assistance and training. Local organizations ANAP, of the Province of Sancti Spiritus, and the credit and services cooperatives, which facilitated the project, also offered legal support and carried out the required financial transactions.

A participatory appraisal developed in the field enabled the identification of the links between a limited farming production and the environmental problems present in different ecosystems. In response to the findings, an action plan was designed that included the increase of basic resources, such as materials needed to transport water to plantations of short-cycle crops and animal farms; and included training in agro-ecological farming techniques.

The group of professionals who visited the farms periodically developed the methodology of giving technical training and assistance to participants who would later share their knowledge with others. Courses were given in farms in which the process was more advanced, and the most experienced farmers became the speakers. Encounters of mutual help and seed exchange were promoted among people from different farms. Encounters of professionals, farmers and students were also promoted in order to increase their interest in agro-ecological farming.

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The project had a real positive impact, the amount of land covered with pasture diversified with species of grass and leguminous plants, forage and fruit trees was increased. The capacity of photosynthesis and carbon dioxide fixation and atmospheric nitrogen have been improved thanks to these communities of plants and to the prolonged periods of rest, growth, assimilation and accumulation.

Farms involved in the project have improved their capacity to include and manage a greater variety of plants and animals, strengthening nutrient recycling. Plants in pasturelands are now better protected with fences, diminishing the negative effects of overgrazing.

One of the results of the project is that now, more women participate in the administration of farms, improving their self-esteem. Women's protagonist actions are recognized in some instances, as is the case of the Agro-ecological Beacons, where they redesigned, managed and promoted agrarian systems with a gender equity approach.

Women contributed to the promotion of greater creativity and new project perspectives, such as the proposal related to plant diversification and inclusion of animal farms. Nevertheless, women's contributions and the high quality of their proposals continue to be made invisible due to the predominant patriarchal order.

After the conclusion of the Sancti Spiritus experience we can state that the project did not include strategies or objectives directed to women. In addition, the technical team did not possess the necessary training to incorporate the gender equity perspective into all phases of the project; if this had been done from the start, the contributions of the participants on this respect would have been used more efficiently.

The traditional emphasis used led to the search for solutions to production problems and environmental degradation in the application of technology and material resources, but gender equity in agrarian management as a key element for agro-ecological farming was left aside.

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*Gender
Mainstreaming
into an
Environmental
Project at Nipe Bay*

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THE NIPE BAY COMMUNITY PROJECT, developed in the Province of Holguin, is one of the fifteen projects contained in the “Community Administration of Natural Resources” regional program, sponsored by the International Center of Investigations for Development (CIID) of Canada, five of which are being developed in Cuba.

Nipe Bay is a bag-type bay and it is the largest bay in Cuba, covering an area of 220 Km². It is located on the Northeastern coast of the island and communicates with the ocean through a narrow and deep canal. Coasts are relatively elevated, having segments covered by mangrove swamps and outlined by winding beaches, inlets and keys. The Guatemala breakwater is located in this sector, where groups of project participants live. The town of Guatemala has 7000 inhabitants and approximately 1439 homes; there is also a hospital, a post office, telegraph and telephone services and different primary and high schools. There is also a sugar mill and fishing facilities. Sugar production, fishing, farming and mining are the most important productive activities. Coasts are elevated and are mostly protected by a seafront. Felton Port is located east of the breakwater, in a low and swampy section, crossed by rivers, inlets and the Mayari River mouth.

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Nipe Bay contains a spectrum of ecosystems, both underwater and on land. El Ramón Peninsula, located between the bays of Nipe and Banes, has the wider biodiversity. Part of the evergreen forest, as well as sand beach vegetation in which shrubs yielding an edible stone fruit, still prevail in this 100 Km² area, in spite of the degree of deterioration originated by human activities. Plantations of “guana” (*Hildegarda cubensis*), an endangered endemic species, are also found there; as is the “Polimita” land mollusk, a multicolored mollusk. Among others, sand extraction and felling of trees to make coal, have provoked deforestation of autochthonous species so a large part of the peninsula is covered with secondary vegetation. Red mangrove (*Rizophora mangle*) can be found in some sectors, offering protection and food to different species of fish and crustaceans. The coastal reefs that are next to the Melilla inlet are the best-preserved underwater biotypes, where there is abundance of flora and fauna species. The investigation led to the detection and registration of three new types of moss in Cuban waters.

For a long time the bay had offered coastal residents its resources, providing work and food and important monetary benefits from fisheries located along the coast. Nevertheless, during the last few decades captures of the most important commercial fish species have decrease considerably due to processes of deterioration of ecosystems originated in the contamination by organic and industrial waste and the disappearance of mangrove swamps.

Aside from the environmental problems in question, other factors also motivated the development of this community project. Among these factors are important short and medium term infrastructure projects that could originate a negative impact on the ecosystems of the area. One of these plans is the canal that is supposed to join the Nipe and Banes bays, which would produce large volumes of soil sediment that would alter ecology and cause unfavorable conditions for fishing. Another one is the Felton Buoy Field that has been planed to facilitate the mooring and unloading of petroleum tanker boats that supply fuel to the Nicaro nickel plant and the Felton Thermoelectric plant. This

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project would put the bay's biological resources at risk due to petroleum spills. A tourist development in the El Ramón Peninsula, which would have from two thousand rooms up to five thousand, is another threat to the beaches located inside the bay. In addition, MIP plans to develop a project for growing fish in cages in one of the nearby beaches, would enter into conflict with the tourist activity that doesn't contemplate the bay's fishing potential in its plans. Communities also lack ecological awareness and knowledge of the biological resources of the bay and the potential problems they will have to face. The beach where residents use to spend their summers is gradually deteriorating due to industrial waste.

The environmental initiative regarding this systematization was developed in several different stages from the year 1999 to the year 2001, in accordance to the objectives that were defined. The first stage included investigation at the bay to determine levels and sources of contamination. Next, social work with the population of Guatemala was developed, offering educational activities on gender and environment. The third stage was the development of multimedia that would cover all the project's activities and would serve as a new tool used to inform and educate on the environment.

The project's leader, together with other leaders from projects in the marine and rural areas, were trained on the gender equity perspective in a course sponsored by the Investigation Center for Development. Every member of the team participated also in the "Gender Equity Perspective: formulation, monitoring and evaluation of community projects", a one-week course held at the National Aquarium of Cuba. Researchers and persons from the community who had to prepare hypothetical projects with a gender perspective, which include the issue of improving the quality of life of the population, integrated the work groups. Some subjects like women's work in and outside the home and their participation in decision-making processes were discussed in the groups. As in the rest of Cuba, this part of the country shows significant progress in the subject of gender equity. From a perspective of sustainable development, the access to, use of

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and control over natural resources and other goods are affected by the gender perspective implemented in specific communities, and sustainable development that undervalue the gender equity perspective and do not incorporate it are not going to impact local living conditions.

Environmental education activities were numerous and varied, according to participating groups; the objective was to broaden the spaces offered to residents for meditation, exchange and awareness, with respect to the care and conservation of natural resources. Activities such as festivals, contests, field trips, conferences, opinion polls, voluntary work for cleaning beaches, talks at libraries and in the open air, forums and scientific conferences were developed.

The project has made it possible to learn of, and analyze, flora and fauna at Nipe Bay, both underwater and on land; the evolution of precipitations over a period of thirty years; and the behavior of turbid waters. A model of ecological simulation was developed at Nipe Bay. A new exportable resource has been disclosed: the sea cucumber. Being able to measure the magnitude of contamination of bay ecosystems and to define the sources of contamination constitutes an important project result. The information spread by the population, as well as through television and specialized magazines, constitutes a valuable contribution to scientific information to the cultural heritage of the province and the region.

Some of the lessons learned by the project are related to overcoming the initial obstacles originated by a resistance to change. A persuasive effort using talks and group work with multiple participants was vital to iron out differences.

It was important the interaction that took place among members of the team of professionals, which included specialists in areas such as natural, social and technical sciences, enabling team members to have an interdisciplinary focus of the problems. In the future it will be important to add other disciplines.

Regarding the gender equity approach it was possible to confirm that there is a positive balance between men and women

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inside the project and in the participating groups. Nevertheless, because of insufficient information on the gender perspective, the project must continue to work on subjects related to equity in social-environmental development, taking advantage of the fact that Cuba has mechanisms that are adequate for the promotion of women's visibility and equitable access of the resources.

Recommendations are that environmental education must be strengthened and must be oriented towards areas in which communities show more interest, and it must be extended to every community in the bay. Local horizontal training will be the best tool to achieve the project's future independence. In order to support this horizontal training the bibliographic background of libraries must be improved and different cultural activities must be developed.

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SOUTH AMERICA

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*Each Monkey
in its Twig:
Rural Settlements
with a
Participatory
Integral Planning*

Eduardo Amaral Borges

THIS SAO SALVADOR PROJECT was developed in the city of Mancio Lima, located in the Jurua Valley, on the Azul and Moa river margins, Amazon region. The tropical rainforest ecosystem includes large sections of lakes, canals and swamps that shelter a wide diversity of flora and fauna. Vegetable species such as palm, bamboo, timber wood trees, lianas and resin-producing plants are among the ones found in the region. Rodents, primates, marsupials, carnivorous and ungulates; large numbers of birds, reptiles and fish are some the animals found there.

Sao Salvador has 10 communities for a total of 800 inhabitants. Most of the population has lived in the area for years because of the “seringa” forest, a variety of Indian rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*) that was extracted there and remained active up until the eighties. At the present time, 120 family clans living there basically develop all productive processes. Their homes, located in the proximity of the rivers, are built with local timber. Only the first four years of primary school are taught in 13 classrooms; illiteracy rates are high, varying between 27% and 87% according to each community. Almost 60% of the population is under the age of 18.

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According to the National Foundation of Health, Sao Salvador is the region that presents more malaria cases, especially when rivers overflow. Deficient basic sanitary conditions also originate waterborne diseases. Recreational activities are limited to football soccer and volleyball on Sunday mornings, also after the church meetings families are likely to visit family or friends.

After the end of the rubber era, the population has been developing different productive activities such as hunting, exploiting wood and growing cassava (*Manito utilisima*). At the present time families are going through a transition period from practicing the activities mentioned above, to extra-activist farming and small-scale cattle ranching. The system used for farming is the “cut and burn” system that is part of their indigenous heritage; 1 to 3 additional hectares of forest are cleared every year. Soil rotation enables crop harvest and renovation of soil fertility. Corn, rice and beans are grown for family use and surpluses are sold in the market. In order to diversify production several families have begun to grow bananas and sugar cane. Nevertheless, at the end of the harvest season the soil is not allowed to rest, it is transformed into pastureland, originating greater deforestation and soil degradation. Cattle and pig farms are increasing, enabling the population to save and improve its social status. Forest wood felling for building houses and small ships is an important source of income. Forest products are extracted for family use, as is the case of lianas to build utensils and medicinal plants; the use of these last ones is decreasing because of the introduction of industrial pharmaceuticals. Hunting is one of the most important activities; men are absent for days at a time looking for animals. As the population has increased, so has the hunting activity; hunters use dogs to find their prey; nevertheless, individuals believe that dogs frighten the animals, forcing them to migrate to far away places. Fishing has also increased in response to the population’s demand.

Work is divided according to sex following their traditional pattern for women and men. Women do the house cleaning, cook and look after the children; they also raise birds and fish. Fishing is one of the productive activities in which

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more young and adult women participate; using harpoons and fishing lines they catch fully-grown fish showing greater concern about the environment than men. Men are more concerned about increasing the productivity and use nets that are forbidden by environmental regulations because they trap young fish and don't allow their reproduction, thus affecting the future supply of fish. Women are also involved, as well as the rest of the family, in farming and in making cassava flour, a process that takes several days. Girls start doing housework at an early age; they haul water and look after their younger brothers and sisters.

Men work in pasturelands, fell trees, chop firewood, build boats, give maintenance to their home, farm and extract non-timber products. By *antonomasia*, hunting is men's job. Boys always go along with their fathers to the forest, and when they get to be teenagers they participate in the hunting of wild animals. Men are also in charge of selling their farm production and the poultry women raise. Men are away for several days at a time and women prepare food for them to take on the trip; women also take over every job while men are gone. Women do not go away to sell their products because their duty is to stay at home and take care of the land they own, the house, and children. Women participate in making decisions on how to invest family funds and attend community meetings; but very few women hold leading positions.

The main objective of the Sao Salvador project was to create and validate a novel methodological proposal linking a social equity approach with environmental sustainability, to be used in establishing Amazon settlements.

The Amazon has always been seen from the perspective of individuals who are not from that region, creating an image that does not reflect reality. In numerous previous attempts, the Amazon population was not taken into account; nor was considered its diversity of indigenous peoples or rubber field workers; or its culture, interests and self-perception of problems and solutions; so individuals ended up leaving the settlements. Programs designed in offices located in big cities do not consider local tradition, true resources, limitations, or

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conflicts originated in lack of adequate planning. Along the past twenty years 23,000 families were assigned to new settlements, 11,250 families left them, demonstrating that the model used is not the correct one. A trail of deforestation, predatory fishing and extinction of wild animals is left behind due to the unsustainable use of resources.

An alliance among eight institutions was made in order to develop this project, although bureaucratic obstacles made it impossible to reach a legal consensus; the alliance has been operating informally. The following groups have been involved in the process: PESACRE, local NGO that works in investigation and extension of forest systems for farming, in charge of execution and process facilitation; SOS Amazon NGO, which collaborated providing technical information; and the Society of Agricultural Producers of Rio Moa, a base organization that convoked the different communities. Other groups involved were EMBRAPA, Brazilian Institute of Agricultural Research, which conducted studies and performed a diagnosis of soils, forests and agriculture; INCRA, the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform, which defined the size and location of the different settlements; IBAMA, the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Natural Resources, which collaborated with communities in the sustainable management of natural resources; the Municipality of Mancio Lima, collaborator and project executor and supporter of community participation; and the State of Acre Government, which collaborated in all the initiatives. Project financing was effected through the PRODETAB program of the World Bank, the BIRD, the W. Alton Foundation, and USAID agency.

The PESACRE team was selected to include representatives from different disciplines and institutions. Professionals from the SOS Amazon Project, from INCRA and from the Municipality of Mancio Lima participated as team members.

The first stage of the project consisted of preparing a social-economic and environmental appraisal that made an effort to incorporate the gender equity perspective. Project

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investigators, students and Sao Salvador residents participated in this stage. Based on the results of the appraisals and on studies of the flora, fauna and types of soils, EMBRAPA was able to map the zone. Maps detailed fertile areas suitable for farming and agro-forestry activities, and planned the agro-ecological zoning of the rubber tree plantation.

Studies made, were presented to residents of all 10 Sao Salvador communities so that they could evaluate them and based on them, establish their priorities. Because most of the population has illiteracy problems, PESACRE used different techniques to get the message across regarding map and zoning information. The appropriate language was used, as well as giant jigsaw puzzles, drawings and illustrations of the different issues included in the appraisals.

After evaluating EMBRAPA's proposal the ten communities decided to prepare an alternate plan for the sustainable use of natural resources using a different ecological and social zoning. This decision was based on a series of facts related to aspects different than the strictly agricultural ones. For example, they maintained that hunting is very important for them and expressed a desire to continue hunting in the forest reserve although this zone has the most fertile and suitable soils for farming. They also expressed that farming areas need to be near their homes and next to rivers. Rivers are a key element for community life because women and youth fish there; and rivers are used as a means of transportation for products and for people traveling to other cities in search of additional services such as stores, hospitals and schools. They stated that if they were to move to other areas, including areas of more fertile soils, they would have to move away from the river and abandon the land where they have lived for over fifteen years. They decided to keep a significant portion of the forest or rubber tree plantation to use it for hunting and to create a new regulated forest reserve for sustainable exploitation of resources.

An effort was made to involve every person in the community in the process. Youth and women, as well as senior citizens, did not participate much at the beginning, but as the

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process advanced they became aware of the importance of the contribution they could make to the new settlement model and decided to increase their participation.

The counterproposal presented by communities to INCRA includes two types of boundary rights. One of these types is individually owned land measuring approximately 20 hectares destined to farming and cattle ranching; and where felling of trees is allowed, except in areas adjacent to rivers. This type contemplates that the population has a right to use the land, the infrastructure and the harvested crops, but it is not allowed to sell the land because it continues to be Federal property. The other type, collective land, destined to the sustainable use of resources, represents 80% of the settlement's total area, and hunting and fishing is allowed there. Property boundaries are important here for residents because they can plan their work and develop their activities in their corresponding area; as the saying goes, "each monkey in its twig". People from the community can picture their homes, farming, hunting and fishing areas, and common and private areas, as if they were looking at a huge jigsaw puzzle.

Based on the above they were able to prepare the settlement's development plan, which establishes health, education, production and social organization strategies. Nevertheless, some internal conflicts were originated due different hunting and fishing systems used, the invasion of farmland by cattle and pigs, and the presence of foreign hunters and fishermen.

Lessons left by this project demonstrate that it is of vital importance that families who are going to be part of the settlement participate in the development of the project, so that these settlements can become permanent through the implementation of a sustainable relationship with the environment. This is even more so in the Amazon region, where indigenous groups working in extraction of resources and living on river margins have traditionally occupied forests. In addition to the increase in production and income, another important factor is that settlers have become more confident, for they identify

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themselves with the settlement; no one is going to force them out of there, so they are in a position to make long-term plans.

In addition to all of the above, the use of adequate information and facilitation have originated results that go beyond the mere promulgation and application of laws, for the community creates a commitment to conservationist processes and relates aspects of its own survival and culture with the sustainable management of resources.

It must be stated that the participation of public institutions is important, but these institutions must become better informed and more committed to the participation of communities in environmental administration and to the external contributions required. These institutions must take into account the limited capabilities of families whose organization is weak, who are isolated, whose knowledge of the environment and their civil rights is deficient, and who are not duly represented in those public entities that make decisions that concern them.

It is gratifying to know that as a result of this project, INCRA and the State Government have considered the possibility of utilizing this experience to develop new public policies in this sector.

Although the project has been more focused on the family than on gender, it has been possible to experience that sustainable management accompanied by family empowerment enables every family member to become involved in a more equitable manner. Still, new action strategies and appropriate methodologies are required for working with specific groups so that equity of gender can be better achieved.



*Project of the
Women's Group
from the
Sustainable
Settlement
"Bandeirantes"*

Denyse Gomes

MARABA MUNICIPAL DISTRICT is currently one of the most important districts of the State of Para. Its economic production is diversified, including agricultural, livestock and industrial activities. It is located near the Carajas railroad and near several highways that communicate it to other areas, particularly to tourist areas on the northeast that have been widely developed due to their natural environment potential.

Maraba is located where the Itacaiunas and Tocantins rivers, which collect volumes of water from several tributaries, meet. Some of the lowest lands are located in this watershed; high altitude lands of 700 m above sea level are located on the West. Most soils are clay soils, but some sectors have alluvial soils. Tropical forests and diverse vegetation are characteristic of the ecosystem; some mountainous and sub-mountainous forests, dense forests on river margins and primary forests on the Southeast prevail; as well as some secondary forests that are being endangered by cattle ranching activities. Temperature varies between 31°C and 22°C. The rainy season runs from December to May, but relative humidity is high all year round.

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Mãe-Maria, located in this region, is an indigenous heritage land covering an area of approximately 625 Km². The 1030 Km² Tapirape Biological reserve is also located there, as is the 1900 Km² Tapirape-Aquiri National Forest.

The Bandeirantes Sustainable Development Project is being developed in the Municipality of Maraba, where approximately 94 families live; about 500 people, mostly men, who have migrated from other Brazilian states. The project was developed in a 10-hectare town in the Bandeirantes Settlement where 24 families live. The National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), institute that also financed the construction of wooden houses, carried out demarcation of lots in that town. The town includes a supply store, facilities for a single teacher to teach grades one to four, and a church. The most important production activities include farming, extraction of Brazil nuts and other forest products, raising small animals and building crafts.

The area is facing environmental problems such as deforestation due to felling of trees authorized by INCRA so that farmers can grow pasture. 50 hectares were torn down during the last authorized felling of trees done by farmers. Fauna species are consequently disappearing, and due to erosion, sand banks are forming in rivers and water sources. According to 1986 satellite images, the vegetable covering at the time shows an alteration of 19%, and this information does not show the high degree of deforestation that has taken place during the past three years in the Maraba Municipality.

The women's group responsible for developing the Bandeirantes Sustainable Settlement Project was founded in the year 2001. Ten individuals worked directly in the project, 6 women and 4 men. Their objective was to develop a sustainable project to enable the use of forest products and increase family income. In order to fulfill their objective, the group decided to develop a project that included building crafts and producing candy using forest products.

At the same time the group wanted to improve relationships among community members, improve the working

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conditions of women and women's standing in the family, open opportunities for women to participate in production administration, establish a small agricultural industry to offer jobs, and contribute to the conservation of forest areas in southeastern Para.

The women's group became involved in the project and was responsible for its execution; it also provided human resources. The Farmer's Federation, the Union of Rural Workers and the Land's Pastoral Commission provided political support and funds to cover expenses originated in logistics. The Government's National Program for Peasant Families of the Ministry of Agrarian Development provided technical and financial support to the agricultural industry.

Work was developed in two directions during the project's duration. On one hand, offering information and training to the community through meetings and participation in events promoted by the Government, seeking to create more environmental awareness and promote conservation, recovery and better use of natural resources. On the other hand, offering training to women producers so that women would be able to organize their group internally and learn agricultural and crafts production techniques.

Due to the fact that several organizations formed an alliance, the women's group was able to consolidate production and give jobs to 28 individuals. A commercial establishment has been built in the settlement to sell the candy and crafts produced by the project. Traditional recipes that included Brazil nuts, banana, papaya, pumpkin, sweet potato, lemon and sugar were used in the production of candy.

Several important lessons related to environmental management have been derived from the project. It has been possible to create greater awareness about the importance of modifying the different uses given to natural resources, as is the case of forest products being used to produce candy and crafts. Several defined areas have been reforested in order to diversify production, and at the same time Brazil nut trees, which are of

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worldwide importance, have been preserved. A contribution has been made to forest conservation and hunting prevention.

In the area of gender, men are now more aware of the subject, thus contributing to improve relationships between men and women; they now work together in different activities. Women's self-esteem has been improved by their possibility to generate their own income; they now participate in decision-making processes in different social groups. Men are now participating in women's initiatives.

It has been possible to confirm that women are able to generate a large number of ideas when a bond between gender and environment is established. In this case women were able to understand that forest conservation and the recovery of degraded areas guarantee an increase in flora and fauna, thus increasing the supply of materials required for their production activities.



*Women's Vision
of the Local
Development
of the Northeast
of Pará*

Denyse Gomes

THE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF CAPANEMA belongs to the Northeastern region of the State of Para in the Bragantina micro-region. The region's ecosystem is composed of secondary forests with degraded pasturelands that have gradually replaced the primitive vegetation that covered the dense forest. This has been originated by deforestation caused by agricultural and cattle ranching activities. The Bragantina area contains large calcareous deposits that are used in cement production.

According to satellite images, the alteration of the vegetable covering reached 88.29%. Some patches of forest still remain on river margins and lowlands that are periodically flooded. Quatipuru River and the Acu and Secret lakes require protection. In general, rivers and their tributaries define the natural boundaries of the municipality. The climate is warm, with a maximum temperature of 26°C. Relative humidity is high all year round, ranging between 78% and 93%. The rainy season runs from June to November.

The District of Capanema has a population of 63,000, mostly distributed in rural areas. Settlers started to arrive in the area by mid XIX Century when the construction of

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the railroad started penetrating the forests. At that time there were great droughts in Northeastern Brazil, so some cattle ranchers opened roads to take cattle into Capanema lands and to neighboring lands. Several families followed these routes when fleeing from drought and when going in search of more friendly living and working locations.

A company administrated by Baron of Capanema, an engineer, brought the telegraph to that town; the town was therefore named after him. At the present time town residents make a living by farming and raising cattle; they produce milk and meat and use leather for building horse saddles. Life is peaceful and neighbors believe they live well, for the land is rich and harvests are generous.

The social-environmental appraisal of the problems was developed using the Fast Participatory Appraisal (FPA). One of the environmental problems detected in the area is deforestation, particularly that which affects water sources; other problems are decrease of fauna and biodiversity loss. An additional problem is the pollution of rivers that flow across towns; deficient trash collection forces solid waste to be dumped into rivers. Soils are being degraded due to rock extraction for cement production. On the other hand, economic policies approved for Northeastern Para are related to single crop farming projects and projects of extensive cattle ranching, without any consideration to environmental conservation.

Gender conditions are derived from the social, economic and domestic subordination that women must undergo. These conditions force women to be totally dependent on the decisions men make with respect to reproductive and economic issues. Sexual violence has been exacerbated to the point that gender issues are being discussed in the Syndicate of Rural Workers, in different cooperative organizations and in other institutions of the region.

The situation of marginality has prevented women from knowing their rights. Women don't participate in community discussions or in the formulation of public policies. They also

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lack information and training on adequate management of natural resources. Their contributions to family, economy and society have been made invisible.

The Women's Association of Northeastern Para, MMNEPA, has executed the project in question. This association brings together 40 groups of low-income working women from rural and urban areas in 13 of the 28 municipal districts of the Northeast region. Since 1993 MMNEPA has worked towards stimulating and guaranteeing women's participation in public policies that are committed to developing actions to guarantee social-economic, environmental and political rights; said actions also seek to improve health and sexual conditions of women and eradicate domestic violence.

Concretely, the "Women's Vision of Local Development in Northeastern Para" project has the main objective of promoting the innovative and sustainable use of natural resources and at the same time strengthen managerial capabilities of all women.

Other groups were also involved in the project besides MMNEPA, responsible for the project's execution. These groups were the Santa Rosa Ajuruteua and the Caratateu Timboteuense groups that took part in the execution and also were beneficiaries. The project's promoters and facilitators – providing technical support- were: Federation of Social and Educational Service NGO (PHASE), the Agro-ecological Work Group of the Amazon (GTNA), the Foundation for Technical Assistance of Northeastern Para (FANEP), the Para Women's Forum and the Eastern Amazon Forum. PROPENDA, an institution that receives Government and international funds, provided the required financial resources.

During the project's development the Women's Association worked in coordination with social movements, associations, labor unions and cooperative organizations. By doing so it was possible for important issues to be routed correctly towards different sectors of the community, issues related to water, conservation of water sources and waste management, among others.

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Environmental education campaigns, seminars, courses and workshops were developed. The population was able to learn to approach Government offices regarding technical issues such as environment and health; the population was also made aware of the gender conditions so that they could value women's work and the roles. The awareness campaign to promote citizen's rights, such as the right of women to have their own personal identification documents and the right to health services, plus work done in prevention of domestic violence, was very important.

The methodology used in the project's activities was in accordance to the participative and dynamic approaches and philosophy of Paulo Freire, which seeks to develop a learning process through practical actions and group discussions on said actions. An example of the use of this methodology was the participation in the campaign against organisms that are genetically modified. In addition, the use of the "do and learn" technique generated financial resources. MMNEPA has been able to bring together several production groups such as apiculture groups, hen farming groups and farmer groups, among others. An environmental garden has been created and new spaces such as backyards have been used. Reduction of river contamination by solid waste and improved protection of water sources have been some of the project's achievements; in addition, family income has been increased by implementing sustainable production projects while at the same time reducing migration towards urban centers. The population was trained in the use of techniques for recycling natural resources such as corn shells and for reusing forgotten species such as medicinal and aromatic plants.

With respect to the gender equity conditions it has been important to confirm that the Women's Association awarded itself important legal and public spaces; this enables them to develop a more important role facing public institutions and policies. The improved organization of women has allowed them to increase their participation in labor unions of rural areas and to have more women appointed for leading positions in

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institutions of the area; this has been the case in conference tables in the areas of health, education and rural development. In addition, women have been presented as candidates for congressional and executive positions in Para. One of the aspects that has been positively evaluated by participants of the sustainable rural development project is that the contribution of women and their role in production processes has been made visible, especially in managing activities related to the use of natural resources that have generated family income

This project has confirmed that the experience of articulating the gender and environment approach in conservation projects makes it possible, through a harmonious interaction, to obtain sustainable development for the benefit of the entire population and the environment.



Campaign for Seed Protection and Defense

*Kirai de León
Tatiana Rojas*

THE PROJECT “CAMPAIGN FOR SEED PROTECTION AND DEFENSE” was initiated in Chile in the year 2002, in response to the official launching of the World Campaign for Seeds in the World Summit of Alimentary Security in Rome.

Two Chilean regions were selected for this project: Region III, in Atacama, and Region VIII, in Bio Bio. The ecosystem of the Atacama Region has a classical desert climate and a semi-desert climate, both with the characteristic changes in temperature between day and night. Some rain falls in wintertime, more abundantly as you travel South. When rain falls, large portions of the territory are covered with herbs and flowers for a brief period of time known as the Flowering Desert phenomenon. Different rivers cross the mountain chains, and flatland areas are abundant on the coast. Cactus and barren plain plants grow well in coastal areas due to humidity. A wide variety of forest species can be found after an altitude of 4000 meters above sea level.

Region III has a total population of 254,336, which amounts to 1.7% of the country’s population; 49% women and 51% men. A small group of that population, 1811 individuals, accepts their indigenous origin. Copiapo is the region’s capital

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city; most of the cities are located near the coast or on transversal valleys.

This region's development has been historically based on the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources such as silver, copper and iron mining, and recently on the large-scale exploitation of gold beds. Agricultural and fishing activities have increased, enabling the economy to turn towards renewable resources. The landscapes of the high Andean ecosystems, the fluvial valleys, the Flowering Desert and the coast, have a great and important potential.

The Bio Bio Region presents a transition between the Mediterranean climate and the humid climate. Numerous pathways existing in the Andes Mountains lead all the way to the Argentine Republic. The intermediate wavy depression area contains forestlands and wheat plantations. Nahuelbuta mountain chain is known for its South American Pine (*Araucaria*) and its forests of different species. It is important to remember that the region is one of the 26 biodiversity "hot spots" in the world which must be prioritized with respect to conservation.

Concepcion is the capital city of Region VIII. This region has a population of 1,861,562, 51% women and 49% men, amounting to 13% of the country's total population. Although only 20% of the population lives in rural areas, Bio Bio has the highest population percentage living in rural areas in the country. Most of this rural population is of "Mapuche" origin and represents 8.79% of the Chilean indigenous population. Mapuche people basically work in agriculture; their production is for family use, and surpluses are sold in the market.

The agricultural sector is growing slowly. The economy has registered an increase in those areas linked to the exploitation of the Region's abundant and rich natural resources. The Bio Bio Region is characterized with a dynamic energy sector, based on hydric resources, coalmines and firewood, which enable energy production and export,. Some of the most important industries in the area are the lumber wood, petrochemicals, fishing, sugar, steel, cellulose and paper industries, as well as petroleum refineries and shipyards.

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In spite of its important development, Region VIII is the second highest in poverty and indigence indexes, second to “Araucania” (South American Pine Forests), where the highest percentage of Mapuche people live (32.6%). Expelled from the land they originally owned, the Bio Bio Mapuche population is opposing a hydroelectric project that would cause them to lose large territories of ancestral land.

Atacama and Bio Bio regions have the same problem of contaminated waters, with the corresponding hazards to human health and the survival of different species. Petrochemicals from the mining industry, as well as agricultural activities, are producing different levels of pollution in underground currents that supply drinking water to the population, and in wells, rivers, lakes, inlets and even the ocean. The coastal area of Atacama is undergoing a desertification process due to destruction of vegetation and soil becoming saline. Air purity is affected by contamination, including contamination by sulfur dioxide. Particles of sulfur dioxide are found in the air in areas in the proximity of foundries. Due to extensive usage, agricultural, cattle ranching and forests soils are becoming eroded in several different parts of the Bio Bio Region. Industrial gasses, as well as inadequate domestic and industrial waste disposal, are contaminating the air and soil of rural and urban areas.

In reference to the gender, it must be stated that women in both regions, as well as most of the women living in Chilean rural areas, have traditionally worked in the formal and informal sectors of the economy, but their work has been underrated or made invisible by society. Women are able to work mostly when they are underpaid, as is the case of temporary workers in agricultural activities. Men in general, miners, fishermen or farmers, are the heads of household as they provide and administer family funds, thus leaving women to carry out reproductive-related work and housework.

Regardless of the fact that women are raised in a natural environment and know the traditional uses of natural resources, they must depart from all of it and work for the agricultural product export industry. Also, the use and

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exploitation of natural resources is in men's hands, so they are distrustful of women in this aspect.

Fortunately, during the past few years an important network organized by women has been in the process of formation, sponsored by ANAMURI, the National Association of Rural and Indian Women, who became aware of the triple discrimination these women suffer because of their gender, conditions of poverty and indigenous origin.

ANAMURI was responsible for the Campaign for Seed Protection and Defense in Chile. El Surco and Nehuen, both confederations of peasant syndicates, collaborated during the project's organization and execution. Other groups involved were the Peasant Life World Organization, which promoted the project; as well as Henry Wolf NGO of Germany, which funded the campaign.

This national project is part of a much larger project, the World Campaign for Seeds as Patrimony of Humanity. This Project's basic proposal is that nature's biodiversity is a worldwide resource on which the planet's inhabitants depend for food; consequently, seeds must be declared a patrimony of humanity. Nutrition is a human right, and this right must not be threatened by multinational companies seeking to patent and exploit nature's products for their own benefit.

The project was initiated in the year 2002 with the creation of organic vegetable gardens. Several important factors were discovered and studied during this stage, such as the fact that human beings have to have access to land; that seeds and biodiversity must be preserved; that crops and the traditional uses given to them by generations of peasants and Indians, must also be preserved. ANAMURI, motivated by said experiences, and supported by the Peasant Life World Organization and receiving international cooperation funding, decided to set the Campaign for Seed Protection and Defense project in motion. The project was conceived in three stages. The first stage included Technical Training, Leadership Training, Knowledge of Land and Biodiversity; the second stage include Trafkintu, or exchange of seeds for knowledge; and the last stage included Seed Production and Reproduction, and the Seed Campaign (Reply and Projection).

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Training was given in the form of an intensive course denominated “Internship on Sustainable Agriculture”, where participating women learned to build organic vegetable gardens and use appropriate technology in doing so. This technology included building tree nurseries, high beds, drop-by-drop irrigation, getting the soil ready for planting and making fertilizer. Nutrition, gender, women’s rights, discrimination, cultural identity, self-esteem and personal development were subjects also included in the course. Workshops in the areas of organization and leadership were also held.

Regional coordination groups were formed after the training and education activities were concluded; these groups visited communities in both regions in order to share their knowledge and their techniques with them. Using the “hands on the job” technique, other groups were trained on how to get the soil ready for planting, fertilization, planting, irrigation, and harvest. Groups were also trained on how to collect seeds, guano and leaves, and on how to make soil with leaves and use natural elements for their crops.

Several important lessons were learned as a result of the campaign. The possibility and advantages of including both the gender and the environmental focal points into one same project is now clear. Women who participated in the project have been able to feel and demonstrate that their struggle to have access to, defend, and use the soil and the seeds, is a means to obtain their empowerment and recognition of their work on the part of communities, regions, and the country in general.

Due to their leading roles in the project, in spite of the doubts and distrust on the part of men, women have been able to prove that it is possible to continue the experience of autonomously and efficiently continuing to grow organic vegetable gardens. Good harvests and the good quality of the products are motivating other sectors of the population to participate in this experience. An important possibility has now been confirmed, and that is, that with adequate training, organic products can be used in agriculture without the need to use chemical products, enabling humanity to live in harmony with the environment and save as a result of product recycling.

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Another important factor is that women now think very positively of their capacity to supply their own products to their families, decreasing expenses and offering better nutrition.

Other women's organizations in the country that develop similar activities have been contacted in order to exchange knowledge and seeds; also, some groups of rural women developing this type of activity, and which were not organized or had available funding, have been detected. These relationships of solidarity among rural, peasant and indigenous women make it possible for the campaign to become stronger and build a network that can have national and international projection.

Skills learned during the project's execution for planting in large or small spaces, with or without soil and without using toxic products, make it possible for this experience to be duplicated in both rural and urban areas.

After the campaign, seeds turned into highly priced goods that can be exchanged through gestures full of symbolism representing a desire to preserve the environment and its resources, in other words, to preserve biodiversity, to preserve life.



*Nuevo Despertar:
Spicing up the
World with
Organic Herbs*

*Kirai de León
Scarlet Matheu*

SAN FRANCISCO DE MOZOTAL is a rural community located in Region VI, Chile. It is part of a forest where arbor and shrub species are adapted to long, dry and hot periods, as well as to rain and freezing morning temperatures. The forest is gradually being reduced due to centuries of exploitation and the recent invasion of plantations and urban development.

San Francisco de Mozotal has a population of 21,194, 50% men and 50% women. The great majority of its inhabitants (80%) are peasants who earn a living doing farm work. In the past, peasant families worked for large hacienda owners and also lived in those haciendas. Men worked in cattle ranching and farming and women worked as housemaids. In payment, they would have a place to live and a piece of land to grow their own food. In addition to working as housemaids, women did their own housework, worked in their vegetable and medicinal plant gardens, and raised a few different animals.

An agrarian reform process, originated by the de facto regime, took place during the period of agrarian counter-reform in Chile, when land was given back to its original owners. Production of farm products for exportation replaced traditional

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crops and families were forced to leave their homes and the land they had used for generations. Gradually these displaced farmers formed small rural communities where for survival they had to depend on the labor requirements and working conditions established by the new exporters.

San Francisco de Mozotal turned from a small town into an urban settlement enlarged by the arrival of poor peasants. Given its soil characteristics, families must purchase their agricultural products at high prices in the local markets or from traveling salesmen that visit different towns.

Women who get temporary jobs in farms continue to have the extra burden of working a double shift, having to travel long distances to get to work, thus having less time to do their housework and look after the family. Due to the urgency of some shipments, they must frequently extend their already long working hours.

Exporters recognize that women have a comparative advantage over men because of their fine motor skills, required for working in fruit and vegetable gardening. While performing their work, these women are strictly supervised to insure that specific planning goals are met, subjecting them to severe mental and physical stress. Disease caused by low temperatures, skin infections and respiratory infections due to contact with toxic agrochemicals and products derived from Clorox, tints, wax and others, frequently affect these women, sometimes even including malformations in their newborn children. Nevertheless, these aspects are not taken into consideration when defining their salaries, because a discriminating stereotype prevails, according to which men must earn more than women because they are the family providers. In addition to being unfair, this argument ignores the fact that many women are heads of household.

Another important issue is that San Francisco de Mozotal soils are losing their organic layers because those layers are being removed for use in the gardening business. This, together with the unregulated urban development that is taking place, is leading to a constant decrease on the amount of land available for agriculture. The community is also facing

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environmental problems that are originating health problems. These problems are originated in the use of pesticides and the existence of organic waste from chicken and pig farms, as well as from the unregulated use of agrochemicals that are contaminating irrigation water, soil and air.

In this context, in the year 2001 a group of nine women and three men related to these problems, decided to face this situation. Their main objective was to offer clean horticultural products to 50 families on a permanent basis, improving their deficient nutrition originated on poverty. One of the participants proposed a strategy that consisted on using both, traditional clean methods used by peasant families, and recent technological farming methods.

With the use of machinery loaned by the municipality, the stony ground that surrounded their houses was turned into land that was adequate for planting, so women decided to request funding from PROCESAL, a government institution. Using those funds, plus funds they themselves provided, they built a 7 m x 16 m greenhouse that included an irrigation system, and they also purchased seeds. PROCESAL's director, a very qualified engineer in the field of organic crops and an ecological activist, offered her valuable support. When the project started she offered her expertise in greenhouse construction and planting of organic crops under a plastic covering. Later, when she no longer worked at PROCESAL, she worked on a personal basis as the technical director of the production process.

A flexible, but at the same time firm project administration, enabled women to meet requirements established and to implement strategies to insure the project's success. One of the strategies used was deciding that from the very first harvest every individual would have to pay for the horticultural products their families used. This long-term vision provided the funds required for future harvests, which included repairs, replacement of equipment, purchase of seeds and tree nurseries.

Keeping a daily record of hours worked by each women, as well as assigning and distributing work in a flexible

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manner according to individual availability – some women were temporarily working in plantations or had other work or family commitments - were some of the other strategies used.

One of the participants took care of the complex accounting process, which included keeping track of the money earned by selling their products in different schools. Progress made was shown in a mural that described different crops and activities performed according to the agricultural calendar, enabling the exchange of opinions. As a matter of fact, the majority of decisions made with respect to organization and mode of operation have arisen from the group's internal discussions.

After holding a meeting with the lady in charge of the project's systematization, the Nuevo Despertar group decided to analyze results and future goals. It was concluded that the project had been successful because production goals had been met and surpassed. The second harvest, the 2003-2004 harvest, met the objective of providing clean food products to fifty families and having a surplus that was placed in the market and sold at a good price.

Good results have opened a wider panorama and women are beginning to define new goals. They would like for their production to go beyond supplying families, and turn the activity into a project that would generate enough earnings to enable women who work in temporary jobs to work in a more stable job, one that doesn't place them in such a physical and mental risk situation.

Women also think very positively of the things they have accomplished in the working environment, of the new methods learned, and of how they are presently able to deal with the issues of environmental contamination and health hazards, from the standpoint of food production.

This experience has reverted the concept of assigning certain jobs to men since women are the ones who have been in charge of this agricultural project, the ones who have made choices regarding the use of traditional or innovative methods to protect the environment and health conditions; and the ones that have provided sustainability and affirmative actions

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towards gender equity. Women have established new goals that will deter them from subordination and marginality, although they never speak in terms of “gender”.

Another important lesson learned as a result of this project is that strategically, whenever women are successful at any endeavor, it usually implies that they have been able to learn by themselves and to think highly of themselves, as well as to have better equitable relationships between men and women. Women’s leadership originates in families and the community, a new vision of women as promoters of change and actions.

This experience must serve to set an example of the wisdom women exercise when having to administrate their own groups, define their objectives and establish strategies, making it necessary to meditate on the convenience of focusing external consultations only on technical aspects, as was the case with the Nuevo Despertar group.



*Women Producers
of the Rural
Development
Project*

Kirai de León

CHILE'S CENTRAL VALLEY DEPRESSION runs the Andes mountain chain all the way up to the coast. This depression is characterized by seasonal changes, sporadic rainfall in the fall and abundant rainfall in winter, with highly varying temperatures that are not extreme. The region of Maule is located in that part of the valley. It covers an area of 30,296 Km² and it has two river basins, Mataquito and Maule. Its forests contain 347 different flora species, and its high altitude Andean steppe contains 113 species; it has a highly productive biological coastal ecosystem, very favorable for fishing.

The total population of Comuna de Teno, in the Maule region, consists of 25,598 people, 52% men and 48% women. The region's illiteracy rate, close to 15%, is the highest in the country. In the year 2000 one-fourth of the population was under the line of poverty, with a destitution rate of over 7%.

In the past, peasant families worked for landowners for a small salary and the right to work a small piece of land to grow their own food. Women worked as maids in the haciendas, did their own housework, were responsible for their own vegetable gardens and their poultry. Women mastered the use of medicinal

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plants and were community healers. During harvest time they worked next to men in the small piece of land they were assigned to. Young men had to work for free.

During the decade of the sixties the Christian Democrat Government promoted the organization of women into the so-called Mother's Centers, which were organized around traditionally feminine activities, but help creating a culture of association. From 1970 to 1973, during the Unidad Popular (Popular Unity) Government, the area underwent a process of agrarian reform, which expropriated land from large estates and turned it into peasant settlements. Even though women emerged as leaders, their participation in mixed peasant organizations was marked by subordination. After the 1973 coup d'état, peasants were thrown out of their settlements and forced to precariously relocate in rural villages. Peasant syndicates were strong in the region at the time, and after the land was overtaken, the entire Central Valley, where the best agricultural land is located, was subjected to serious repressive actions. After the de facto Government imposed a neoliberal economic model, several modern agricultural exporting companies started to operate, and today, fruit and vegetable farming is the most important production activity in the region. Peasant labor is hired during the harvest and packing season, basically women who work without receiving the social benefits that regular employees have. These temporary workers at the present time are trying to space their pregnancies, for they realize that their salaries are important to the family budget and these exporting companies offer no day-care service. The number of women who are heads of household has increased and in regular homes there is more flexibility with respect to house chores. This fact may reflect a greater autonomy and different life options for these women, compared to what dependent mothers lived in the past.

The manufacturing industry, second in importance, is concentrated in the production of wine, preserves and frozen food, beet sugar, fruit juice and other similar products. Power, gas and water services constitute another important activity,

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together with services related to tourism. As of the year 2000, Teno has a cement production company that owns plants distributed all along the country.

Parish priest, Father Luis Letsch was the project's founder; he had previously worked with peasants during the Unidad Popular period and during the agrarian reform processes. His proposal emerged as a response to the lack of articulation of peasant organizations and to the loss of peasant's conquests, which had left them with no land, and having to live precariously from a single salary in a house built on the side of the road. The 1985 earthquake worsened this situation. Father Letsch, who had already received the support of Caritas Luxemburg, initiated conversations with the Luxemburg dukedom, where he was born. These conversations led to the establishment of the Foundation of Luxemburg Homes, which had a first objective of building rural villages for young peasant families. Later on, the project of medicinal and seasoning plants production was developed in two of these villages: San Rafael, with forty-seven families, and El Molino, with thirty families, both located in Comuna de Teno.

The project became official in 1996 as the Luxcamp Association, in which the Foundation of Luxemburg Homes, the San Rafael of Teno Agricultural Association (eight herb-producing women), the Agricultural Association San Jose El Molino de Romeral (twelve herb-producing women), and the Santa Cecilia Agricultural Association (peasant organization of men and women raspberry producers) participated.

Several experiences involving women from a family perspective had previously failed in this region. Corresponding analysis performed mentioned the lack of information and technical support as well as the distance from market places and difficulties encountered by beneficiaries for compliance with their economic commitments. Hermine Vogel, a female agronomist, expert in medicinal plants and ecologist from the University of Talca, financed by a Luxemburg NGO, decided to support the project by creating a research and production center of medicinal and aromatic herbs. The manufacturer, including machinery and storage and packing facilities, is located in Teno,

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where two groups of women work and have learned leading-edge technologies.

The entire project was considerably impacted by the death of Father Luis Letsch and the constant changes of staff to replace him. The herb project has also been impacted by the rotation of the three professionals in charge. In the year 2001 specialists responsible for the project were interviewed and women were accompanied in their work. It was confirmed that women working in production earned 600 Chilean pesos an hour, the equivalent to one dollar, or the minimum wage for people working in agriculture. But earnings did not constitute a salary; instead, they represented a cash advance on future sales. This system originated doubts in women, because outsiders defined their wages, and they had no say in the matter. They also did not agree with the restrictions for women using machinery in the dehydrating plant and with the manner in which they were represented before the Luxcamp Board of Directors, where the company's guidelines are defined; only one person attended all the meetings and was responsible for all the information.

The first stage was intended to meet a great challenge: executing the comprehensive transfer of the project to the producers. Given the dependency shown by different groups, this appeared to be difficult; professionals in charge had been unable to meet the market goal and the project did not have specialists that could empower women. Women had to be in capacity to handle all the technical requisites, marketing, pricing criteria, negotiations with buyers and the administration. The new organization and the representation that the groups were supposed to assume still had to be defined.

During the last follow-up visit in the year 2003, women were working an average of only four hours per day in the project, even during the time of greater production. Earnings from advanced payment were so little, that several of them were working as temporary help in fruit plantations. Production had accumulated, so the product was being sold to homeopathic and natural labs; and in spite of the organic certification issued by European entities to the herbs produced by the project, the

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greatest part was sold at lesser prices to companies that produced seasonings. The Ministry of Cooperation of Luxemburg had announced the termination of its financial support as of the year 2005. Taking into account the failure of market strategies, there were no longer plans to transfer the project to the women. A partial lease for the drying machinery was being considered, allowing women to keep the space they were using, which was less than twenty percent of the full capacity of the manufacturer plant. Women were not informed of what was happening and still believed the project's future was in the hands of Luxcamp.

Some important achievements have been rescued from this project. The strategy of ecologic management of products, which consisted of preventing disease through a careful organic system to disinfect the soil, plus the combined planting of species and repellent plants, has turned out to be efficient. Some experimentation has been developed with crops from the Central Valley mountain chain and pre-mountain chain, making it possible to reduce the depredation of species. Leading-edge technology has been introduced for the organic drying of products and to maintain the quality of agricultural products. Women are better trained to produce ecological agricultural products and are better acquainted with the industrial drying technology; they have also demonstrated their capability for developing agricultural activities that traditionally have been assigned to men.

Nevertheless, this project has enabled us to observe certain patterns that are frequently present in our countries: the age or sex of the beneficiaries is not taken into account; experimentation in non-traditional fields is developed without previous market studies or the help of specialists; and individuals do not have the training required to make it possible to transfer the different processes to those involved in them. There are no democratic proposals for the internal organization of groups, and interested parties don't participate in decision-making processes; as was the case of the project in question, where women were treated as ordinary employees, but outsiders defined their salaries.

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Women's groups represented in the Board of Directors of Luxcamp were a minority with respect to those of the Catholic Church, presenting an obstacle for the promotion of transforming changes expected from projects such as the one in question. Women's empowerment is seen with distrust, for it endangers the traditional role of men in the family and in the community.

The international cooperating agency was not sufficiently committed to the gender equity perspective or to the ecological proposal, even though it is a known fact that temporary workers have health problems due to their intensive work with toxic agricultural products and the areas surrounding villages are generally contaminated. The social components of the project were lost and the proposal of medicinal herbs became isolated from the general initiative and from Government, social and ecological institutions working in the field and representing rural and Indian women of this country.

As of the year 2004 this project is expected to encourage the commitment of participants and to improve the levels of production through a system of distribution and individual work, different from the collective work system that has been developed until now.

It is still possible to rescue the experience and achieve a higher degree of autonomy, appropriation of the process and generation of stable incomes for women, because available funding would make it possible to hire specialists in the field.



*Gender
Perspective in the
Conservation of
the moorland in the
Ecuadorian Sierra*

Grupo Randi Randi

THE MOORLAND PROJECT for conservation of the moorland ecosystems in Ecuador began in August 1998 and its first stage was completed by December 2001. This project included twelve communities distributed from North to South in the Ecuadorian sierra. Although the project was developed in twelve different towns, more information is available on two of them: Atapo Quichalan, a Northern sierra community, and Cochapamba, in the Southern sierra.

As confirmed by satellite images, the ecosystem of the Ecuadorian moorland (highland cold region) covers an area of 12,600 km². Altitudes there range from 3500 meters above sea level, up to where the perpetual snow of the Andes is located. Its biodiversity includes forests, marshlands and places abounding in tall grass, one of the richest in the world. Studies individuals state contains 1500 different plant species. Ecuadorian moorland fauna is equally rich and varied. Large number of invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians live there. Birds constitute the most diverse group, and the largest and most representative bird of the region is the emblematic condor (*Vultur gryphus*). Some of the mammals living in the moorland are the reading glass bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*), the puma (*Puma*

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concolor), the tapir of the highlands (*Tapirus pinchque*) and the vicuña (*Vicugna vicugna*). The llama (*Lama glama*) and the alpaca (*Lama pacos*) are the most well known domestic animals.

Sierra population is estimated at five and half million; 45% of the country's total population. The moorland ecosystem, within the sierra, represents 5% of the territory; and 500,000 persons live from the resources found there. But in reality, most of the Ecuadorian population depends on the environmental services that the ecosystem provides, basically drinking water, irrigation water and water for power generation. The hydrological value of the moorland is usually not understood; it is not enough only to take care of the lagoons and swamps, the "pajonales", or places abounding in tall grass, as well as the shrubs, contribute to hydric regulation. The moorland is important even beyond national frontiers. While the majority of Andean ecosystems are fragmented, the moorland still forms a long chain from Venezuela to Peru. This chain is the only biological corridor that remains intact, thus the importance of investigations and projects such as the present one.

As mentioned above, the two communities selected for this project are Cochapamba, where 45 families live (61% women and 31% men), and Atapo Quichalan, with 18 families (53% women and 47% men).

Atapo Quichalan is an Indian community. This land was first part of a hacienda owned by a half-breed family, and today the community owns it. Soils remain in quite acceptable conditions, for they contain abundant straw and humidity; a vegetable covering of "almohadillas" (*Azorella pedunculata*) is preserved under the straw. A single-teacher bilingual (Spanish-Kichwa) is located in the middle of town; also located there are the sports fields, community house and store, and an alpaca stable. The town has power and water services and latrines. Men temporarily migrate to the cities, but there return when community celebrations are held.

Cochapamba is a community of half-breeds. The elderly previously owned the moorland where the community lives, but today a few families related with each other own it.

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Due to the prevailing inheritance system, according to which the son inherits land when he marries, the property is being fragmented into small parcels of land. There is a two-teacher school in town, a sports field, a church and a house for women; the town has public lighting, and the majority of homes have power and water services and latrines. Men in their teens, as well as adults, migrate from Cochapamba in large numbers to go to several cities in Ecuador and also to travel abroad. Those who remain are the wives and mothers.

In Atapo Quichalan sheep and cattle graze in the community moorland. Cattle are owned by the community as in looked after by men who take turns on a monthly basis. Sheep are a different story. Traditionally, raising sheep has been a woman's job since the time of the colony. Women take sheep and lamb to graze in the mornings and bring them back in the afternoon. When members of Atapo families reach the age of 6, they are given a lamb as a birthday present, hoping that as time passes, that present in kind will render many more sheep. Moorland straw is quite important due to its multiple uses: cattle feed; production of organic fertilizer and house roofs; when mixed with soil and water it is used for building homes and outside walls; and it is also used to top crop terraces and cover seeds until they sprout. Women use it for building nests, and for rope weaving and for weaving mats to sleep in. The entire family collaborates when the straw is being cut and tied and later transported; in the case of straw that is for sale, only men transport it. The community doesn't award straw its proper value.

Production activities in Cochapamba are developed on a seasonal basis and the entire family participates. Families stay at the moorland where they have their homes, vegetable gardens and sheep from October to June, during the rainy season. This season is also the school season at the sierra. During the dry season families go down to the warm zone with their animals and home supplies to grow corn, beans, vegetables and tubers and look after the cattle. When summer is extended they prolong their stay, often making children miss school or even fail. Six hours separate the moorland from the warm zone, enabling men

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to go back to check homes, crops or cattle during the entire year. This kind of altitude migration that implies a pattern of double residence apparently doesn't bother Cochapamba residents, who continue to live at the moorland because they prefer cold climate and feel emotionally tied to the land of their ancestors.

Soil erosion problems affect the slopes of Atapo due to crops and frequent burning of straw; but environmental problems are greater in Cochapamba, especially with respect to soil deterioration. Soil nutrients, as well as its ph are below the ecologically acceptable limit. Soil has been compacted and during the dry season it appears cracked. Straw has almost disappeared and the existing fine straw is not taller than 10 cm. Straw is burned, especially during the dry season, and there is excessive pasturing due to the scarcity of land.

Gender aspects present similar conditions in both communities. According to the prevailing gender roles, men must represent the family in farming associations of workers, which constitute the legal figure to which families are associated. Discriminatory arguments refer to the fact that men have greater experience, have better relationships with entities and Government officials, and are free to travel to the city when required, while women have to take care of home and family. In addition to housework, women develop multiple farming activities, they feed the animals and look after them, collect shrubs and straw to light the fire, and when husbands are away, women replace them in all their duties. In spite of the close interrelationship women have with their natural surroundings, they are not as learned as men are with regarding the ecosystem. Only the indigenous women of Atapo have a good knowledge of medicinal plants, for it has been passed on from generation to generation; these women can tell what species are extinct and what species are in the process of becoming extinct.

Atapo indigenous women must face greater obstacles than others if they wish to participate in public life, for traditionally, public spaces belong to men. On the other hand, their lack of experience is worsened by their deficient use of the Spanish language; they have less access to formal education and

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are subjected to ethnical discrimination. Although women are responsible for holding on to the money to prevent that men spend it on liquor, any intended expense must be consulted first with their husbands. On their part, Cochapamba women maintain a certain control of the earnings originated from the sale of wood or sheep that they themselves have raised.

The Moorland Project for conservation of moorland ecosystems in Ecuador began in August 1998 and was based on the investigations performed by a team of professionals from several different institutions: EcoCiencia, University of Amsterdam and , financed by the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands and supported by the Ministry of the Environment of Ecuador. This team designed a project with the general objective of learning more about the moorland and offering proven techniques for its management. At the same time actions were being developed to strengthen an institutional and political framework that would be adequate for the conservation of this ecosystem.

Although the project spoke about hiring a consultant to incorporate the gender equity approach, the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands recommended that gender specialists be incorporated to the project. Correspondingly, the Randi Randi group was incorporated to the project from March 1999 to September 2001, designing the gender strategy and lead its application both in community participatory appraisals, as in development of management plans. It also provided training on gender mainstreaming methodologies to the NGO groups and to other groups that participated in the execution of the Moorland Project.

The groups involved as of that moment were: Randi Randi gender team; investigators of Montaña Institute, EcoCiencia and the University of Amsterdam; the twelve communities of the Ecuadorian sierra; Arco Iris, Natura Foundation, Fundatierra NGO and Jatún Sacha NGO; plus groups from projects of Peasant Forest Development, DFC/Fao; MANRECUR II (FUNDAGRO) and the Podocarpus Project.

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After three years of work, six of the plans designed for moorland management had been completed and another six were still in progress because communities and organizations worked at different paces according to their corresponding characteristics. It must be mentioned that development of a management plan, which has a philosophy of participation, gender equity and the corresponding methodology, is costly and takes a lot of time. In addition to technical environmental criteria, management plans included cultural criteria. Far from imposing changes from the outside, it was preferred that changes be made based on the experience of individuals. This was the first time interested parties became involved in the investigation and improvement of their own ecosystem. Said management plans conceived in this manner, included environmental and social-economic development objectives, and improving aspects of gender equity in the community.

Multiple lessons concerning different areas have been learned from the Moorland Project. One of the most significant, from the standpoint of the strategy applied by the Randi Randi group, has been the attitude change in men and women living in the communities in question with respect to the traditional gender role. This can be illustrated with the changes that took place in Atapo's community meetings. Following Indian tradition, the community president asked the women to leave and go prepare the food for those attending the meeting. The group of specialists used the strategy of joining the women. From then on, men and women took turns in cooking and the meeting would have a lunch break.

Regardless of the fact that they are Indians or half-breeds, the gender analysis has generally shown that ecological problems affect women more than men, because they are in close contact with the resources of the ecosystem. It has been proven that women are placed in a subordinate position with respect to men, and gender gaps are greater among indigenous people than among half-breeds.

From the point of view of community women, the project's main impact has been the empowerment gained by

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playing an important role in participative investigations carried out by local investigation committees of the moorland (COLIPAS). This enabled them to have others value their knowledge and experience and to learn more from people coming from different communities, as well as from technicians. In addition, they felt motivated to improve their knowledge of the language in order to have better communication skills.

The Randi Randi team used a specific strategy for men; they paid more attention to the interest men have in productivity and started an alpaca breeding activity which involves jobs that according to previous experiences in the community, are associated to men, while women have traditionally been in charge of the sheep.

Investigators and technicians participating in the project demonstrated they were open minded and caring. Generally, women specialists have to face some degree of resistance when donors request that projects have a gender equity approach. Some of the mechanisms used by the Randi Randi group to solve institutional discrepancies included listening, properly valuing past experiences, a strong group spirit among specialists, developing permanent studying activities, and observing ecological and social-economic phenomena at the moorland. Being able to stay longer than other investigators at the moorland, allowed them to learn about, and share, the everyday life of men and women, earn their trust and respect and consolidate their participation in the project. By receiving training on gender awareness, participating NGOs were able to become familiarized with the gender equity approach and discover the practicality of that tool in the interpretation of complex social situations.

This project has provided the area of environmental management with a participative and multidisciplinary investigation methodology that is valid for the moorland ecosystem, and said methodology is available in the Moorland Project files.

Actions developed from an ecological point of view are not always right when seen from a social or gender

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perspective, as confirmed from the fieldwork developed in Apato. Here it was seen that cut straw grows more vigorously than the one that is burnt, without affecting soil composition. But, cutting straw requires labor for cutting and transporting and decisions have to be made as to its final destination. Therefore, deciding to replace one system with another does not only imply ecological considerations, but social-economic ones as well. A similar situation was detected during the observation field trips in which community men and women and project technicians participated. In order for women to have the possibility to continue to participate in their reproductive cycles while participating in field trips, the team decided to purchase disposable diapers, being fully aware of their contaminating characteristics.

Exchanges between numerous groups and institutions in order to solve and deal with important issues presented by moorland residents were made possible by working in an integrated manner, always bearing in mind the diversity of the twelve sierra communities. An important lesson was derived from these exchanges: designing an ecosystem management plan that includes both ecological and human aspects demands that those responsible have sufficient knowledge of all possible areas to be included in the plan, including biological; economic; gender; and cultural and anthropological, covering myths, customs and traditions.

The experience has served to confirm that there is no perfect formula for incorporating the focus on gender equity in conservation projects, but that in order to obtain positive results, the different interests of men and women, their respective participation spaces, their perceptions of the environment and the particular relationships they establish with their surroundings must be respected.

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*Cap Straw
Management and
Trade in Two
Towns of the
Ecuadorian Coast*

*Carolina Chiriboga
María Argüello*

PACOCHE FOREST is located at Cape San Lorenzo, the section of the Ecuadorian coast that reaches further out into the ocean. Given its closeness to Machalilla National Park, it could constitute a biological corridor and contribute to the conservation of the remains of coastal Ecuadorian forests, one of the most threatened ecosystems in the world, and one that is rich in endemic species of flora and of fauna.

The Cap Straw (Toquilla Straw) Management and Trade Project was developed in two different towns in the Manta region. One hundred and ten families live in the first one, San Lorenzo, located next to the ocean. Two hundred families live in the other one, Pacoche, located in the slopes of the coastal mountain chain. The poverty index of the region reaches 47%, but the percentage of those who don't have their basic needs met goes up to 63%. Basic services provided are scarce, and health and education services are deficient. In spite of being near Manta, an important port where a large number of fishing, industrial, tourist and trade activities take place, communication of these two towns with that city was not established until 1997, when the Ecuadorian coastal highway was built.

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San Lorenzo and Pacoche residents, half-breeds of peasant origin and traditionally linked to agriculture, are presently exerting more pressure on the Pacoche forest. Prolonged periods of drought in the area since 1960 have originated a standstill in population growth and modification of the use of space. In the past, agricultural activities were developed in the savanna and the dry forest; but soil deterioration has compelled residents to change the type of crop, or even to develop other economic activities. For example, young people are now mostly working in fishing activities.

At the present time, Pacoche and San Lorenzo residents use forest areas to grow permanent crops such as coffee, cocoa, plantains and citric fruit; they also collect guadua cane (*Guadua angustifolia*), a variety of large, thorny bamboo used in construction, and wild fruit, medicinal plants and cap straw stems (*Carludovica palmata*). Short-term crops are planted in the savanna during the rainy season and they are for personal use and for sale at local markets. The most important commercial products are coffee (*Coffea Arabica*), sold in bean form without any kind of processing; citric fruit; sugar cane (*Sacharum officinarum*), and cap straw. Women use this straw to make hats and different crafts; it is also sold to traders who take it to the southern part of the sierra where there are hundreds of men and women weavers, as well as hat production and export industries that have been there since the XIX Century. The cattle ranching activity is of little importance; some families raise goats for their own use and as a savings mechanism.

Few individuals have their land titles; this makes it difficult to develop long-term projects oriented towards conservation and management of forest remains, and it also favors those interested in purchasing land for tourist activities.

Felling of lumber wood species and the collection of guadua cane constitute the most important environmental problems in the area, affecting the composition of forest remains and its capacity to sustain animal populations; in addition, the fragmentation of original ecosystems impedes the genetic exchange of those populations that remain isolated. Erosion of

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mountain slopes, due to diminishing forest coverings, provokes the loss of the organic layer and deteriorates the production capacity of soils to a point where it is not longer possible to grow anything in the savanna area. The forest is now almost incapable of collecting the little humidity available or of providing water to communities or crops in the lowlands.

With respect to the incorporation of the gender equity approach, women in both communities are subjected to strict control by their parents, brothers or husbands. The majority cannot leave town if not accompanied by a male relative. For this reason they have only been to marketplaces in nearing towns where they purchase their food. If women wish to take courses, receive training or attend community meetings, they must first get permission, and rarely do they participate in the making of important decisions affecting the social life of their communities.

Forest deterioration has affected women in a special way. When the land for agriculture and for collection of stems was in the proximity of their homes, women were able to work together with men, for they could combine household chores with agricultural production activities. Nevertheless, land that is suitable for planting is being pushed back into the forest due to deforestation and soil deterioration. At the present time, women from Pacoche and San Lorenzo rarely go into the forest. Although women mostly use cap straw for weaving crafts, they depend on men for its supply, as well as for the supply of materials needed to process the straw.

Cap straw stems are grown in farms, and they also grow spontaneously in supervised areas. Men who work the farms and have access to the forest also cut it and transport it to their homes. Once there, women separate it, toast it, lay it out to dry and whiten it with sulfur. Later they turn it into smaller fibers of different thickness, depending on the intended use. If the straw is going to be used for weaving boxes or other objects, excepting hats, it is dyed with hot water containing aniline or with vegetable coloring. Women weavers, plus the few existing men weavers, are also responsible for selling their products to the small number of intermediaries that visit them; this is the

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only source of income over which they have control. Men purchase the materials required for processing the straw (sulfur, dyes and others) and they participate in the process when the fiber is being prepared for sale; women only provide support during this process. Boys and girls also take part in some minor activities, such as in drying the fibers.

Money earned by women from the sale of their products is invested in health, education and other family needs; but that money is not awarded its true value, and neither is the work women do, which is not regarded as a true productive activity, but just as a pastime one. This devaluated perception is also present when women negotiate with buyers, a perception that is reflected in the low prices at which they sell; women show gratitude for the small monthly amount of money they receive from buyers. In general, men have exercised control over the lives and women production activities; and a high rate of family violence and violence originated in gender is also present.

EcoScience, a non-government organization, was responsible for the design and execution of the Cap Straw Trade Project. The general objective of the project was to have women and men from Pacoche and San Lorenzo appreciate the forest and contribute to its conservation by implementing economic activities that would be ecologically sustainable and that would enable them to improve their living conditions as a result of increased incomes. The Royal Embassy of the Netherlands financed the project, and the PNUD/FMAM Program of Small Donations performed an appraisal with gender perspective.

Work started in February 1998 and continued to November 1999, using two groups of men and women weavers. The Pacoche group was integrated by seventeen women between the ages of 15 and 45. The San Lorenzo group included 19 women between the ages of 20 and 55 y two 30-year-old men. Most women were married with children.

The process included a first stage for creating awareness, to demonstrate to participants that resources were not being adequately protected and that it would be necessary to improve the practices developed. They all showed surprise, but

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after some visits to the forest and to several shops it was possible to demonstrate that resources were being improperly handled and that cap straw was becoming scarce. Once the problem was recognized, the forestation of degraded areas was agreed upon, utilizing cap straw stems; a job that was performed by men. Training was implemented through use of an exchange methodology between men and women peasants themselves. Such was the case of the Chachi Indians, living in the Province of Esmeraldas. They came to share their traditional knowledge in the field of handling large wild colonies of cap straw stems.

Reforestation with cap straw stems was initiated in areas bordering towns, so that women would have personal access to the fiber. A greenhouse was established at each location and residents learned to provide maintenance and care for the transplanted small plants. These two activities opened the way for dealing with forest conservation.

In order to diversify production and increase prices, groups discussed other uses for cap straw, as well as the way in which other parts of the plant could be used to weave different objects. Women weavers who traveled to the city of Cuenca gave lessons on how to make different objects with cap straw. Using the strategy of elimination of intermediaries, women weavers negotiated directly with buyers from the cities of Manta and Quito, contacting companies in the field of artisan production, which paid prices that were over 250% of what they were in the past. One of these companies made possible the publication of an article in the French magazine "Elle", which talked about Ecuadorian straw products and their low prices.

Planning and personal development, two important aspects needed to make the organization stronger, were emphasized during the process. Planning enabled each group to define its objectives and work on their commitments. Group dynamics, dialogues, drawing and theater were utilized for participants to express their life experiences, thus improving their personal opinion of themselves and their relationships with others. Courses on personal development were offered once participants had it clear in their minds that things such as having

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to 'ask permission' to attend group activities, or being told that they were 'lazy' because they attended planning and training sessions, made it harder for them to do the work they wanted to do.

Pacoche and San Lorenzo residents learned important lessons from the project, regardless of gender or age. They became aware of the need to struggle for forest conservation and also became aware of the relationship existing between their production activities and the sustainable use of resources.

Municipal and university authorities, as well as the media from Manta, learned of the importance of the Pacoche forest as a water resource and as an attraction for ecological tourism. The Municipality even declared it protected area.

Regarding gender, women from both towns received incredible training. They learned how to get access to, and control the raw material required for their work, in this case, cap straw. The value given to their weaving activity and the recognition of the importance their earned income has on family economy, has improved their self-respect and their self-confidence. This has enabled them to improve their negotiating abilities and obtain better prices for their woven products, as well as to search for new clients outside their communities, which could in return guarantee a stable income.

In conclusion, the gender and environment articulation of this project has made it possible to confirm that a program of environmental conservation that strives to obtain satisfactory results, cannot leave aside simultaneous activities oriented towards improving the condition of women; if this were not so, the gender inequalities, including control and violence, would continue to originate injustice, thus negatively affecting the results expected.

No activities were included in the project that would weaken the control of male relatives over women, making it difficult to develop training and production activities with them. One of the lessons learned is that if women empowerment activities had been implemented, it would had been possible to combat gender inequalities inside the home, probably improving the results of the work developed in the area conservation.



*Gender
Relationships in
the Production of
Cat-tail and Mat
Weaving
at the
Yahuarcocha
Lagoon*

Alexandra Martínez

IN 1995, Master Alexandra Martínez conducted an investigation on the gender relationships agricultural production cycle and mat weaving in the town of Yahuarcocha located on the margin of the Yahuarcocha Lagoon, Province of Imbabura, on the Northern Sierra of Ecuador.

The town of Yahuarcocha is located at 2200 meters above sea level and has an area of 290 hectares. The ecosystem where it is located consists of marshlands and experts have poorly rated it; the flora and fauna are very poor. Flora mainly consists of naturally grown cat-tail (*Schoenoplectus californicus ssp*), which is also planted by the Yahuarcocha community. Some of the large farms located in the outskirts of town include fruit tree and pastureland areas. Fauna is also scarce and those endemic species that subsist, such as the Andean porcupine (*Coendou quichua*) or the American focha bird (*Fullico Americana*), are threatened by agricultural activities, the highway bordering the lagoon and tourism. According to studies conducted by the Eco-science Foundation, the state of conservation of the lagoon is critical, for production activities carried out by communities in the area have hopelessly affected natural vegetation.

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The entire population of the river basin amounts to 2170. The town of Yahuarcocha, five kilometers distant from the city of Ibarra, has a population of 850. As of the decade of the thirties, the most important and most prestigious work option for men has been to work as municipality employees in downtown Ibarra. Married women rarely work in the city and those who do, are usually single, divorced or widowed mothers, and the main activities they develop are selling food in the marketplace and doing laundry or cooking in homes or restaurants.

Another activity, which has historically represented an important source of income, has been weaving and selling cat-tail mats. This activity has left a clear mark in the construction of homes in the town of Yahuarcocha and in the pace of life of its inhabitants. Homes generally consist of a single large room where mats are woven, and cooking, sleeping, watching televisions and visiting take place. The space dedicated to weaving is the largest and brightest in the room. Most families also have a small yard of hardened soil where the cat-tail is placed and dried.

Access to the cat-tail that grows in the lagoon has evolved with time. Prior to the Agrarian Reform of 1963, only two large haciendas had access to the lagoon. Later, old haciendas were divided into farms having a maximum area of 10 hectares. Nevertheless, farm owners restricted access to the lagoon, with the exception of two free entrances. Up until recently, according to the tradition of hacienda owners, a toll had to be paid – two days pay – in order to enter the lagoon and cut cat-tail.

Furthermore, during the last thirty years, farmers have extracted water from the lagoon in order to irrigate their plantations, causing the flooding stratum to become dryer. Pastureland and fruit plantation sections are kept in that area, in spite of the fact that the laws of Ecuador establish that said space, as well as the lagoon water surface belong to the municipalities and are public property.

In order to counteract this situation, in 1988 some male and female cat-tail mat weavers decided to create the San

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Miguel of Yahuarcocha Association, and later founded the Peasant Association of Independent Cat-tail Buyers. Through these associations, men and women have directly, and often violently, confronted farmers living on the lagoon margins.

This is the aspect that concerns the investigation of Master Alexandra Martínez. Her objective was, firstly, to find out how women and men are construed with respect to the exploitation of a natural resource, cat-tail, and with respect to the production of artisan products, in this case, mats. Secondly, to discover the manner in which the participation of women in the San Miguel de Yahuarcocha Association has influenced the gender relationships with respect to cat-tail production and mat weaving.

For the investigation the author utilized the participating observation methodology. In other words, learning to weave mats in order to become acquainted with, as of personal experience, the manner in which femininity and masculinity are construed in a space of artisan production.

The author became involved in everyday life in the marshlands, in the chores performed by women, both in mat production as in housework, enabling her to observe and collect abundant information. In this manner she was able to analyze daily life in the cat-tail process, as well as the distribution of work according to gender in Yahuarcocha.

Married weavers who have children start their daily work before five in the morning. The rhythmic patting of stone against hay can be heard then: it's the sound of women weaving mats while the rest of the family sleeps. The previous night they have sprinkled the cat-tail rolls with water and left them outside to make them damp and flexible. They weave sitting on the floor with their legs crossed or in a crouching position.

In the afternoon women usually weave mats, but they also go to the Association seeking to control the dehydration of the cat-tail, or else they go to the lake to fix it, or they give baths to their sons and daughters, or select grains. After five they prepare dinner and serve it when their husbands get home. At eight in the evening, while the rest of the family watches television, women go back to weaving mats. On weekends women

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must work harder, for in addition to their regular duties, they sell fried fish and refreshments to tourists. Some of them own small grocery stores, so in addition to map weaving, they have to take care of the store, and, some of them, work as temporary help in farms. According to the women and to some of the men, the salary earned by their husbands covers only part of the household expenses. Many women rely on their older daughters to help them cook, to look after their younger brothers or sisters, or delivering food to those working at the lagoon. On Sunday morning, most of the women go to Ibarra with their families to attend mass and later purchase groceries for the week.

Men who work at Ibarra do not cook, do laundry, take care of sons or daughters, clean or feed the animals. Saturdays they cut cat-tail at the lagoon and transport it to the Association or to their homes. Generally, Sunday afternoon, after getting back from Ibarra, while the women weave mats and watch television with their relatives or friends, some men play ball with their teenage sons and later get drunk.

It is a fact that all housework, taking care of the entire family and raising children rests entirely on the shoulders of the women of different ages that integrate the family. Similarly, women are also in charge of weaving mats, an activity that in spite of the fact that it is an income generating activity, is considered as a feminine activity.

By *antonomasia*, men's job in Yahuarcocha is to cut cat-tail. As of the XIX Century and up until well into the XX Century, hacienda owners controlled access to this resource, allowing only men who were heads of household to enter into the lagoon and cut the fiber. This process is started, as it was in the past, by obtaining access to the lagoon and negotiating with different powerful groups, an activity predominantly masculine. The process ends when the plant that is submerged in water is cut. Men have to cut it using a sickle, while maintaining their balance inside the water, so they must know how to swim well. Very few women carry out this activity.

Once plants have been cut they are placed on the margin, where expert women weavers classify them by size,

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diameter, color and rigidity. After tying them in bunches, men and women load them on trucks previously hired by the men for transporting said bunches to the Association. At the Association the plants are extended and put to drying, forming long rows. Usually the older women are the ones in charge of rotating the plants and removing any trash until the cat-tail is dry. On Saturdays men help carry the dried cat-tail from the Association to their homes.

Boys, girls and elderly women prepare the cat-tail while adult mothers do most of the weaving, frequently aided by their older daughters. Once finished, the mat is rolled and tied with the same fiber and placed on the porch for selling. Men and women come two or three times a week to purchase the mats. Usually adult or elderly women carry out the transaction. Men do not take part in the selling process and have no say in the use given to the money collected from the sale.

Analysis of the results of this investigation has given us some pointers that contribute to the study of relationships between gender and environment.

- It has been proven that relationships established by men and women with each other and with their environment, are according to their particular local history. The different types of access that men and women have to the resources of the Yahuarcocha marsh originated an overvaluation of men's work. The cutting of cat-tail exclusively by men led to a cultural representation according to which they are indispensable for obtaining that natural resource.

- Discovery of the importance that the creation of the San Miguel of Yahuarcocha Association had on two important changes made by the population. One of the changes is that women now actively participate in the Association and in the solution of conflicts with farmers, as well as in the negotiations carried out with the municipality and with legal institutions. The other is that the plant itself, as well as its cutting and transportation, are now part of the collectivity, thus enabling the network of male and female cat-tail workers to become stronger.

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- The importance of the new practices implemented by the Association, based on the equality of the work performed by men and women is emphasized. Important aspects of the representations implied in being a man or a woman have been modified as a result of the valuation of the work carried out by women who weave mats, for their work contributes to the construction of their representation as artisan cat-tail mat producers and to the increase of their family income. To that respect, women now possess a valuable identity.
- On the contrary, there are no evident changes in every day family life, in the division of chores according to gender, or in the representations of man and woman. This could suggest that the social model offered by the Association opens the masculine space to women, but that the practices and representations that are generated in daily family life are seldom questioned and continue to constitute feminine spaces where men don't participate.

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*Communal Forest
Development in
the Andes of
Ecuador*

*Grupo Randi Randi
DFC (Proyecto apoyo al
Desarrollo Forestal Comunal)*

ECUADOR IS ONE OF THE COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD WITH GREATER BIODIVERSITY. It is ranked among the first in the world by number of species of flora in its territory. This rich biodiversity is due to the different altitudes, topography and climate, which have created several ecologic floors that go from the perpetual snow of the Andes, to the bleak plateau, forest and valleys, all the way to the coastal flatlands.

The Ecuadorian territory measures 256,370 Km² and was populated by indigenous-American people who developed different cultures that were respectful of the environment, implementing conservationist agricultural, forest, silver and herding practices. The Incas, the last great pre-historic culture, used their ancestor's knowledge and developed techniques that maximized agricultural production and guaranteed food for the population.

Nevertheless, at the present time a large part of said biodiversity is being seriously threatened; some animal species are already extinct. Present destruction is the result of a long process that started during the Spanish Conquest and is still taking place. Extraction practices, the overexploitation of natural resources, and the increase in the amount of land for

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agricultural activities, have originated the ongoing deforestation of the Andean region. Prevailing native forests are fragmented and isolated. Over one third of productive soils are undergoing erosion processes that cause them to lose their fertility. Hydrographical regimes are decreasing and firewood and coal for domestic and commercial use are becoming scarce.

The threat to biodiversity is more evident at the sierra where the provinces of Imbabura, Pichincha, Bolivar, Chimborazo, Azuay, Cañar and Loja are located. Forests in this sierra have the highest deforestation rate in Latin America. Hundreds of communities located in these territories grow corn and potatoes, their basic food; as well as other Andean types of tubers and cereals of proven nutritional value. Llamas, alpacas and vicuñas live in high altitude areas. Most of the people have lost the knowledge of their ancestors due to community disintegration, and the labor and product markets.

In this Ecuadorian sierra, where 45% of the country's total population lives, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations developed the Peasant Forest Development Project, from 1993 to 2003. The local counterpart of the project was the Forest Ecuadorian Institute of Natural Areas and Wildlife (INEFAM), and later the Ministry of the Environment took over the project. The Royal Embassy of the Netherlands was responsible for funding.

This project's main objective was to solve the problem of forest destruction and deforestation in the Andean region. Proposals for community forest development in Ecuador go back as far as the decade of the sixties, when eucalyptus trees (*Eucalyptus globulus*) were planted in non-irrigated terrain, as part of the forestry management project promoted by international cooperation. Due to the rapid growth of eucalyptus trees, these trees provided wood for use in construction and mining, as well as firewood. At the time, the Government's focus on natural resources included the services of forest engineers and agronomists. The sustainable development approach was implemented during the nineties, and since then, the forest focus is losing ground.

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A change in the manner in which conservation of natural resources interrelated with the population was conceived, coincided with a period of profound social, economic and political change in Ecuador. Indian insurgent groups, which among other things demanded that the State legalize ownership of the land of their ancestors, provoked the overthrow, by coup d'état, of presidents Abdala Bucaram, in 1997, and Jamil Muhad, in the year 2000. The economic crisis originated in frozen savings accounts and bank deposits, together with the inorganic emission of currency, increased inflation and caused a 400% coin devaluation, international currency reserves dropped drastically, up to a point that in the year 2000 the U.S. dollar was adopted as local currency. Indigenous people grouped in the Pachacutik political party supported Col. Lucio Gutierrez in the year 2000 elections, when he was elected President of Ecuador. During that time a peace treaty was signed with Peru, but the ghost of war is there because of the increasing involvement of Ecuador in Colombian conflicts. Thousands of refugees flee to Ecuador, and at the same time, there is an exodus of Ecuadorian population to the United States and Europe. Most of the individuals leaving Ecuador are economically active, and the money they send back has helped to keep the country afloat.

Other problems have made the situation worse, as is the unfair distribution of wealth, existing violence and social insecurity, and the scourge of corruption. This country is in one of the first in the world in biodiversity and has a rich ethnic-cultural heritage, exports petroleum, banana and shrimp, but, had the lowest per capita income in Latin America in the year 2000.

FAO's team strategy for the project was oriented towards establishing extension programs that would encourage communities to manage themselves and would also stimulate actions to recover the wisdom and knowledge of the Indian people of the Andes. These actions would make it possible to relive the millenary survival strategy used by ancestors, which was based on a sustainable management of resources.

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The first stage of the project took five years, and 467 communities, integrated by 13,970 families, participated. 513 men and 304 women were trained as community promoters. Some of the most successful activities developed were: 2645 forest organic houses were established and 11 million forest and fruit plants were produced; almost 23,000 hectares were covered with agro-forest plantations to protect crops from wind and freeze; and 17 production alternatives for micro-enterprises were created.

The second stage also took five years and was directed towards institutionalizing a Latin American proposal for community management of resources. Said proposal, the same as the project itself, was seeking to recover the wisdom and knowledge of Andean populations, improve local organizations and empower individuals through participation.

This FAO project initially did not include the gender equity approach. In general, Ecuador State entities and the NGOs working for the environment have arisen gender equity awareness. Family and community have been prioritized, making the unfair relations of power between men and women become invisible. Groups working towards social equity involve Indian and cross-race populations living in protected areas, but rarely do they deal specifically with the problems affecting peasant women. On the other hand, the women's movement or other public entities responsible for promotion of women's rights in Ecuador, have not worked sufficiently to articulate gender and environment; in theory, progress in this area is far behind other social issues.

As of the decade of the nineties this situation began to change, and international agencies and donor institutions started to request that projects financed by them include the gender perspective; including the participation of team specialists in the field. Those that are more aware of the need for this inclusion are the Government and the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands, this last one being the funding entity of the FAO project in question.

Thus this project became the first one of its kind in Ecuador to include long-term environmental conservation strategies, together with the gender perspective. Nevertheless,

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as stated by specialist Susana Alban, responsible for the systematization of the experience, the inclusion was limited to technical aspects; an effort was being made to include a category that would enable identification of the roles of men and women with respect to natural resources, but based on the assumption that gender relationships were equitable and harmonious and did not require any special strategy. Although limited, this inclusion originated resistance against what was considered an “additional effort” that had to be made. The group of professionals who was well aware of the gender perspective, and a Dutch volunteer worker, both working in zone teams under the guidance of an international expert, also arose suspicion because others thought they constituted an external an imposition.

Nevertheless, peasant women participating in the project were able to take advantage of the opportunity being offered to them. In effect, during the first stage of the project, and until the international expert left in 1998, more peasant and Indian women were involved in the project than at any other given time. Through continuous training activities these women became responsible for one of the greatest achievements of the project, agro-forest greenhouses. These greenhouses became the site for learning, recreation and exchange; this physical space made it possible to visualize the work that made them proud; and they originated savings, improved nutrition, and additional income from sale of surplus products.

Another significant achievement for these women was the creation of micro-enterprises of medicinal plants, snails and mushrooms. In order to manage these micro-enterprises women had to learn the operating rules of other spaces, for example, insure a place in the market and a clientele for their products, some of which are being exported.

At the beginning men had difficulty in accepting that their wives and daughters left the house to be trained as promoters, to trade products or to participate in meetings having a right to vote. But gradually, with support from the project’s technical team, most of them began to accept the new roles of

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women. Some of these women, who gained a lot of power, have become community leaders.

An improvement in management of native forests and bleak plateau conservation must be mentioned as one of the project's environmental achievements. Said management has contributed to preserve the vegetable covering, to protect water sources and courses, to soil conservation and retention through physical works and the use of organic fertilizer; to the prevention and control of forest fires, and in general to the conservation of biodiversity in Andean forests and bleak plateaus.

It is important to emphasize that in spite of the serious crisis that Ecuador is undergoing, men and women who have received the support of this project have been able to maintain their economic stability and their diet has improved because of the community management of their resources.

This gender-environment articulation experience has left several important lessons. One of them is that the incorporation of the gender equity approach into an environmental project is a long-term process, as are the results of its application. It takes time to learn the dynamics of each community. Earning the trust of men and women is not sufficient; neither is the fact that women attend meetings; and using a participative methodology isn't enough; all of the above do not guarantee that individuals will depart from their traditional passive attitude. Spaces and strategies for women to gain their self-respect and be respected by family, community and environmental and development institutions must be generated. It has been confirmed that economic-productive alternatives make a great contribution to the empowerment of women.

The point of departure for a successful inclusion of the gender perspective is the will of the individuals directing the project to promote gender equity; it must be accepted that women generally have less opportunities than men with respect to access, use and enjoyment of the benefits of natural resources. To build gender equity those who are at a disadvantage must be offered greater opportunities.

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The team responsible for the project must be offered training all along the execution of the project, for that enables a comparison between what is learned during training and the problems that have to be confronted in the field. Another important point to bear in mind is that being a woman doesn't mean that that person is a gender specialist; a specialist requires an education and experience in the field, just as any other discipline.

Lastly, the project has made it possible to confirm that conservation and development institutions require a gender equity policy.

In the same manner that strategies for the participating population are defined, strategies must be defined for female team members; for example for cases of maternity leave or security measures when traveling to distant or isolated places. The monetary cost of these positive actions must be included in the project's budget and in the general programs.

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*Cultural Diversity:
Peasant Strategies
for Nutritional
Security and
Production
Marketing*

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THE CAPACHICA PENINSULA, located in the Puno Department, Peru, was the site for the “Cultural Diversity: Peasant Strategies for Nutritional Security and Production Marketing” project.

The Puno Department, covering an area of 72,382 km², includes jungles, sierras, the Andes Mountains and Lake Titicaca. Its altitudes range from 2812 meters above sea level, on the margins of the lake, to over 5000 meters above sea level on Andean mountain peaks. Lake Titicaca’s hydrological basin is located between the Oriental and Occidental mountain chains of the Andes, and it is conformed by seven river basins. This formidable mass of water – the lake itself covers an area of 8200 km² – is a determining factor in the region’s ecology. Its thermoregulation action decreases the risk of damage by freezing temperatures and drought. Humidity originated by lake evaporation – 600m³/sec – makes it possible for this land to house population centers and agricultural areas.

Variations in altitude and temperature define several agro ecological zones in the Puno Department. One of them is the circum-lacustrine ecosystem, where the Capachica Peninsula is located, site of the project in question. The altitude

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there is 3850m above sea level and the climate is cold; yearly temperatures ranging between 0°C and 25°C. The rainy season is from December to March. Flora and fauna species of this ecosystem have been able to adapt themselves to the climate and altitude conditions.

According to the last national census conducted in 1993, Capachica has a population of 11,435; 51.4% women and 48.6% men. Almost the entire population lives in rural areas, Quechua is the mother language of the majority and illiteracy stands at 40.4%. The rate of population growth is negative (-1%), but that of the entire Department stands at 1.6% and the country registers 2%. This decrease is originated in the emigration of its residents, particularly men who move to other areas.

Production activities developed there are agriculture, cattle ranching, fishing, hand made souvenirs and several small private businesses. Periodically, 45% of the working age population emigrates to areas outside the community to work as laborers and earn supplementary incomes.

Why does a rural population living in a place that offers such favorable conditions for agriculture and cattle ranching feel the need to emigrate to other regions?

The Center for Investigation, Education and Development of Puno, organization in charge of the project's execution, conducted an investigation that was part of the initial process. Participatory appraisal and polling in 15 different peasant communities enabled the identification of a social-environmental problem constituted by several interrelated aspects.

The first one of those aspects is poverty. Capachica families, averaging six family members, do not have their basic needs met in 84% of the cases, a statistic that at a national level registers only 54%. Land ownership is based on small rural properties of less than one hectare, which when individually worked, even with the excessive and dangerous use of fertilizers and pest-control substances, does not produce enough to enable a family to meet its needs.

In addition, this region is subjected to climatic hazards due to flooding, drought and periodic freezes; alterations

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that produce a decrease in land productivity. Increasing difficulties for exchanging agricultural products and purchasing industrial products also exert a negative impact on residents. Family income has decreased during the last few years due to the above-mentioned aspects.

Soil degradation is another negative aspect, constituting one of the major obstacles for the sustainable development of the Andes, affecting biodiversity. The loss of genetic diversity, originated by the disappearance of certain crops, threatens the future of agriculture and the nutrition of human groups. One of these is the red mace plant (of the malvaceous family), the most important ecosystem of Lake Titicaca, which also represents an important source of income for families living next to the lake.

Another problem affecting the Capachica community, especially 48.6% of its population, is gender inequality. In spite of the fact that in Andean culture women play an important part in the distribution of agricultural resources, this role is only played within the family environment. Women are excluded from participating in public activities, such as holding positions in community organizations or official organisms. In low-income peasant families, it is men who decide on matters of the family budget such as spending on food and health or investing in cattle, seeds, etc. When men emigrate in order to increase their income, women take care of production activities in the family property.

The objective of the Culture and Diversity Project, which started in 1997 and ended in 2003, was to make a contribution to conservation efforts and to diffuse biodiversity, as well as to solve the problem of poverty among the population. The following groups took part in the project: Center for Investigation, Education and Development – PUNO; NGO in charge of project execution; CBDC-Holland, which provided financial support; peasant families, which provided their land, labor and seeds for production of organic agricultural products; Municipality of Capachica, which produced and distributed reading material on the importance of conservation; and

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“Universidad Nacional del Altiplano” (National University of the High Plane), which made it possible for professors and students to participate. The following strategies were implemented: seed improvement by democratic and non-centralized methods, inter-institutional coordination and planning for rescuing and diffusing information, programming biodiversity fairs, contests, internships and intercommunity field trips.

Project execution began with the selection of “conservationist families” by community assemblies. These families had the job of producing and improving crops; developing organic items or materials (compost; viol, a foliage fertilizer; repellent plants; earthworm culture; etc.) to substitute agrochemicals. In addition, said families were in charge of reconstructing soil infrastructure using Andean traditional techniques such as embankments or terraces, waru-waru or elevated fields to protect crops from flooding, and irrigation systems. Families interacted with University professors and students in order to exchange information and experiences.

Different crop species and varieties harvested by conservationist families were shown at biodiversity fairs, attended by multiple community members, local authorities and representatives from different universities and the Government. These families also shared their knowledge and strategies; they presented projects and gave talks to the NGO’s, to municipal authorities and to Cusco communities, where this experience is being duplicated. A follow-up poll of each of the participating families was conducted annually in order to measure the project’s impact. Some of the lessons learned are commented below.

Biodiversity elements were recovered; the use of agrochemicals was reduced and individuals’ health improved; the area of land dedicated to agriculture was increased at the same time that the wild vegetable covering was improved.

The importance of women’s role in agriculture was socially reevaluated, especially recognizing her role in the selection of seeds and her knowledge on production of new organic items or materials for treatment of plague and disease. Women increased their participation in development committees and in

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the process of placing their products on the market. In addition, the activities involved in growing medicinal plants and transforming and exchanging these plants, created new jobs for men and women. Also, men showed a better attitude towards participating more actively in household chores.

The articulation of the two approaches on intercultural exchange, environment and gender equity, have made it possible to rescue certain virtues of the Andean world vision. The use of ancestral techniques for combating climatic change and promoting organic use of soils is added to the perception regarding the importance of the role played by women in agricultural activities. The third element of the articulation, the gender equity approach, enables the elimination of those aspects included in that world vision, which discriminate against women, thus promoting the sentiment of living in a democracy and being citizens of that democracy.

As a result of the coming together of the concepts in question, the project has made it possible for both men and women to participate in activities of conservation and betterment of natural resources in conditions of equality and with an improved sense of cooperation.



*Carob Tree Project:
Integrated
Management of
Dry Forests in the
Northern Coast*

Wilson Antonio Coronel Guevara

THE DRY FOREST is constituted by arid and fragile ecosystems that play a very important part in the battle against desertification and climatic change. Precisely, the Carob Tree Project is developed in the dry forests located in the departments of Piura, Lambayeque and Tumbes, in the Northern Peruvian coast.

This area is located at altitudes between 0 and 1000 meters above sea level, and the annual average temperature is 24°C. Normally, precipitations range from 60 to 120 mm per year. Species produced are those that register slow growth rates (1m³/hertare/year), and differing from those of tropical forests, these species are not timber-yielding, instead, their value resides in the resources obtained from their leaves, flowers and fruit. Some of the forest species, generally scarce, that can be found are: Carob tree (*Prosopis pallida*), sapote (*Capparis angulata*), aromatic myrrh tree (*Acacia aroma*), overo (*Cordia lutea*), lignum-vitae (*Bursera graveolens*), guayacan (*Tabebuia billbergii*) and Ceiba (*Bombas discolor*).

The Carob Tree Project was initiated in 1991 and its objective was to promote management of the dry forest and improvement of the quality of life of its inhabitants. Particularly,

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the objective was to rescue the carob tree, the most representative forest species and the one exerting the greatest economic impact on the dry forests of the Peruvian Northwest. Studies conducted on the carob tree fruit (*Hymenaea courbaril*) have confirmed the extent of its high nutritional value, considering it one of the resources that may be used in the nutritional recovery of children. Traditional medicine uses it to treat skin infections and strengthen hair; it is also especially useful in controlling involuntary movement in cases of epilepsy and Parkinson's disease. It is also known for its invigorating effects in fighting physical and mental exhaustion. The largest carob tree forests are found in Piura, so Piuran institutions have been conducting investigations on the carob tree's possible different uses and the sustainable development of these forests in order to maximize its economic value.

The project covers a total forest area of 146,134 hectares, divided into the three following departments: Piura, 83,700 hectares, Lambayeque, 52,284 hectares and Tumbes, 10,150 hectares. The total population of 21,216 is grouped into 4522 families. Piura has a population of 5395, Lambayeque 5395, and Tumbes 8917.

Individuals living in this region have historically been excluded politically, socially and economically. The largest percentage of these individuals belong to peasant communities and live in rural areas in conditions of extreme poverty, and a lesser percentage of them in conditions of poverty. Housing is rustic, with soil floors and no access to drinking water. Average schooling is only at the incomplete primary school level, and there is a significant percentage (20%) of illiteracy.

The great majority of illiterate individuals are women, and in addition, their work in and outside their homes receives little credit and they are excluded from making decisions that would affect them, their families and communities. Similarly, contributions made by elderly and young individuals also receive little credit.

Nevertheless, regardless of the conditions of poverty and limited production options, everyone takes part in different

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survival strategies. Most of these strategies are those of temporary agricultural activities and nomadic sheep and goat ranching. Work division by sex establishes the chores that men and women perform. Seasonal crops, such as fruit, are grown outside the forest next to rivers. Men plow the soil and women plant and collect crops. Men get paid for their work during the fruit and rice harvest seasons in nearby farms. In apiculture, men collect and sell honey, while women take care of the bottling process and the utensil cleaning process. Both men and women participate in raising animals, but only men make sale decisions. Women collect and put the carob fruit in containers, because for generations the knowledge required to do so has been transmitted to them from their Andean ancestors. Nevertheless, men decide the destination of the product.

But the forest, within reach of a needy population, is being overexploited. Indiscriminate felling of trees to meet the demand of firewood in the local and national market, as well as frequent forest fires and the advance of the agricultural frontier, are destroying the dry forest. Said destruction originates serious environmental problems such as erosion and loss of soil fertility.

The first evaluation of the environmental problem by project technicians was later polished through different participatory appraisals when the plan was first executed. At the beginning the plan did not contemplate specific objectives or strategies oriented towards gender equity. It was estimated that the objectives that contemplated improvement of the organization and administration abilities of inhabitants in order to effect a sustainable management of dry forests and improve the economy of the peasant population, implicitly contemplated the inclusion of men and women in terms of equality.

The Royal Embassy of the Netherlands, a donor institution that financed the project and participated in the Director's Committee, suggested the incorporation of the gender equity approach in 1993. Consecutive attempts to carry out this inclusion were finally successful and a plan to incorporate the gender perspective began to be implemented as of 2001.

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A first stage of the participatory appraisal gathered information related to gender relations in families of the area. Peasant families, Carob Tree Project officials and local administration committees, which constitute the basic project organization, participated in this first stage. In the second stage, the project's Executive Office put the Plan in writing with the help of the technicians and officials that took part in the appraisal stage.

The plan, which was basically directed towards creating awareness, changing attitudes and providing training on the gender equity perspective to every individual involved in the project's production activities, was then executed. Families, peasant promoters (apiculture, cattle and forest), local leaders, local administration committees and production committees participated.

Techniques utilized included different participative methodologies such as "Peasant to Peasant" and "Participative Development of Technologies", based on the revaluation of the basic role played by male and female peasants in the transmission and exchange of knowledge, techniques, practices and attitudes. An effort was made in trying to emphasize that production work was a job for the entire "family", and this had an effect on the relationships of power within the household environment; every individual was aware of the production and reproduction workload that he or she had to carry out. Using the techniques mentioned above, as well as others, the Carob Tree Project motivated participating individuals to share and publicize the proposal of conservation and management of dry forests with a gender perspective, in, and outside workspaces.

Two more stages followed: Monitoring, which generated periodic feedback reports, and Systematization, which produced the final document: "Family harmony: income and harmony in the dry forest".

It can be stated that the Carob Tree Project has made a positive contribution to the environmental management of resources and has provided several important lessons.

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Thus it is possible to confirm that by developing the organization and production capabilities of men and women –especially in the apicultural, cattle and forest areas – an increase averaging 177% in family income was registered.

Emphasis must be made on the fact that greater credit was awarded by the population to the contribution made by women to production and reproduction activities. The increase in women's community leadership has been possible as a result of their participation in the boards of directors of administration committees.

Positive changes in gender relationships are now registered, for families that share responsibilities and duties, regardless of gender, show greater emotional stability and feelings of well-being.



*Management of
Secondary Forests
in the Peruvian
Amazon*

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THE PERUVIAN DEPARTMENT OF UCAYALI, between Curimana and Irazola, located 300 meters above sea level, is the site of a 35 km long dirt road that crosses an area of secondary forests. The project in question was developed at the land parcels and settlements that are located on both sides of the road.

The area in question is a tropical forest ecosystem, with flat and slightly waved ground and areas that are flooded according to the season. Yearly temperatures range from a maximum of 30.6°C to a minimum of 19.7°C. Rainfall varies at different times of the year, dry periods are registered between June and August; heavy rainfall from November to March. Soils are low in organic matter content, more than one third is forestland; pasturelands, crops and protected areas cover only 5% of the total area.

Previously belonging to the Alexander von Humboldt National Forest, these lands were occupied by settlers who got their property titles from the Ministry of Agriculture. Land parcels measure an average of 40 hectares; the largest parcels measure 50 hectares and the smallest 8 hectares. Most of them contain a significant portion of residual primary forest and secondary forest or “purma”.

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Settlements located in the innermost sections of the mountain have no power, drinking water or drainage system. There is an artisan water well that doesn't always work. Health promoters, individuals who have been trained to deal with minor problems, handle health issues. There are seven settlements located on the sides of the road and all of them have a primary school, and two of them also have a high school. During the rainy season the road becomes impassable, making it impossible to take the products out to market.

The population is made up of half-breeds and indigenous people of the Shipibo-conibo ethnic group; they work in agriculture for survival, growing rice, corn, cassava and plantains; only when they produce more than what they use, do they take their products to market, for they prioritize their own requirements. Some palm plantations have been established for industrial extraction of oil; this has promoted felling of trees since 30% of parcel landowners grow oil palm. They own an oil extracting plant built with donations of the United Nations and a Peru-Canada Countervalue Fund. Some degree of fishing and hunting take place, and cattle ranching is also developed at a larger scale. Chicken farming is also an important activity because it enables the family to save on food.

The most important environmental problems of the area are heavy rainfall and flooding, which together with deforestation and inadequate forest management have originated soil degradation and loss of biodiversity. Ever present poverty exerts so much pressure that it becomes impossible to create a strong environmental awareness, originating deforestation due to ignorance and need.

A rigid plan of sexual division of work assigns women all the jobs related to their reproductive nature, such as housework, which includes cooking, and looking after family members, weaving and caring for animals and plants. All this work, plus farming, is not given its social value, only the work they do in preparing "masato", made with cassava and plantain, according to Indigenous tradition, is considered valuable. Offering masato to houseguests involves a symbolism that is important

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to the community. Men, on the other hand, are assigned the jobs that are socially regarded as important or requiring physical strength, such as felling of trees and burning land; hunting and building weapons, bows, arrows and blowguns; building canoes and weaving frames to be used by women.

Because men are frequently absent from the parcels of land, women also do farm work. But their increasing work in that area has not awarded them a higher status in their communities, nor has it granted them rights in decision-making processes. Men continue to decide on the crops that will be grown and on their final destination, on what is to be sold and what not, and on how the money earned will be used. They are responsible for traveling to places outside the parcels to sell their products, thus obtaining merit and prestige.

The project started in 1998 seeking to contribute to the sustainable development of the Peruvian Amazon, through development and validation of a sustainable development forest plan for secondary forests that would render commercial production. Project participating entities included the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands, which provided funding, the Forest National Chamber, which together with agriculture-forest groups and the Reforestation Committee executed the project; the municipal governments of Irazola and Curimana, which participated in planning; and the National Training and Investigation Service for the Construction Industry (SENCICO), which collaborated in training. Communities participated with 120 producer members of COCEPU, and 120 women, members of AMUCAU. The project also included 95 community youth and children.

Prior to this project, the Reforestation Committee developed the first forest management actions in the area, in 1993. At the time two organized groups already existed in the community: The Association of Peasant Women of Ucayali (AMUCAU) and the Central Committee of Palm Growers of Ucayali (COCEPU). Families belonging to those groups received the sprouts to be transplanted to those areas no longer used for farming. Nevertheless, due to lack of technical assistance in

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providing maintenance, work was interrupted. In addition, farmers had not identified themselves with the effort being made; they did not feel that reforestation was their duty. In 1994 AMUCAU and COCEPU signed agreements with the Committee to receive training in sprout production; the following year, AMUCAU women became the sprout suppliers for the Committee. This process came to an end in 1995, for according to available information, the Ministry of Agriculture took 120,000 sprouts and never paid AMUCAU for them.

In July 1998 de MADEBOSQUES organization took charge of the project in question, bearing in mind past experiences and using a different strategy. The strategy consisted of organizing families in the so-called agriculture-forest groups led by a promoter who was elected by participants themselves. The integration of 10 groups became possible, each group including an average of 14 families. In this manner it was possible to promote and publish sustainable forest management information among larger numbers of committed individuals.

A master plan for land parcels, named Individual Production Plan (PPI), was defined based on forestry training and permanent technical assistance provided. PPI establishes the borders of each parcel according to the production activities developed in it by each family, also defining forest areas that will be under management. MADEBOSQUES set up a carpenter shop to work the lumber extracted from the secondary forest being managed. It also endeavored to have property titles granted to families, thus giving them a more permanent status. This also encouraged improvements and long-term work plans.

The most important achievement of the project is having been able to develop and validate a management model for secondary forests and demonstrating that said plan increases productivity, generating funds for families involved and also generating environmental benefits.

Women becoming fully acquainted with PPI and participating in productive activities constitute another important achievement. Participating men were able to analyze the role women play and the activities they develop. It must also be

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stated that participating families have demonstrated that their attitude towards the roles of men and women has changed and that they value women more, and women have improved their self-esteem.

Nevertheless, it is important to state that having women's interests represented; even in cases where they take part in project activities, and are informed of the totality or part of the project, is not sufficient. They must participate in equal terms with men in the identification of problems that concern them; planning activities, making decisions, using resources and evaluating of results.

Specific training, oriented towards meeting the needs and demands of women is important to level off unequal starting points; but, this must not be turned into an isolated activity that falls out of context, for it would tend to reinforce the situation of women's marginality.

To conclude, an environmental project with a gender perspective demands that personnel in charge be trained and committed to the issue of gender equity. Those responsible for making the corresponding decisions must show their leadership to insure that specific gender objectives be met.



*Conservation of
Biodiversity and
Improvement of
Nutritional Health
in Vicús*

*Luz María Gallo
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THE PRESENT PROJECT was developed in the region of Piura, northern sector of Peru, Vicús Sub-sector, Province of Morropon. This area is part of the subtropical dry forest ecosystem. Sandy and high quality soils are characteristic of the region that has long, wavy and hollow formations that provide natural drainage for rainfall. Almost half of the forest area is now dedicated to agriculture; the other half contains areas that have been prepared for dry farming using winter rainfall.

Climate is dry and warm, and cool in the afternoons. The annual average temperature is approximately 23°C. It rains heavily from January to April, and temperatures can reach 40°C. These dry forests, subjected to climatic irregularities, have a good natural regeneration capacity, especially after events that imply excessive rain and dangerous situations, such as El Niño. Due to extended dry periods, Vicús suffers water shortage. Frequent felling of trees is common during said periods. Survival options for the population, as well as the relation of the population to environmental problems such as deforestation and desertification are defined by climate changes in the region.

Agriculture is one of the most important economic activities developed by this population; during the dry farming

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season they grow beans, water melon, gourd and leafy vegetables; lemon, mango, coconut, plantains, tamarind, corn and cotton and grown using irrigation. Forests and land parcel stubbles are frequently set on fire. Cattle ranching, apiculture and extraction of firewood also take place; firewood is for their own use, but it is also sold. Small groups of the population work in commercial activities, do craft work and build bricks.

The forest belongs to the community, thus allowing residents to use carob tree flowers, leaves and fruit to make medicinal products that are well liked; turning the forest into a valuable resource used as a survival strategy by families in great need.

Vicús has a population of 17,715; mostly of Indigenous descent. Its ancestors have lived in this area since the time of the colony, when they worked as “mitayos” or temporary peons. Later they worked as leaseholder peons, and today they are mostly impoverished peons who use all the products they grow, having nothing left for the market, being thus unable to improve their economic situation. This population in constantly growing, it has a rate of birth of 5.6. Over half of the population is rated poor; 25% are in extreme poverty conditions, particularly peasants who are not land owners, as well as young men, and women who are heads of household. There are no jobs available for the 10% that integrate the economically active population and are unemployed. In addition to the economic stagnation, deficient sanitary conditions are also affecting the population. Vicús doesn't have drinking water services or latrines, and trash is not collected. Illiteracy is at 20.4% and school desertion is high both in grade school and in high school, regardless of sex.

Vicús residents describe themselves as hard working, honest and happy people; but they recognize that a high degree of conformism prevails; there is lack of initiative and a tendency towards receiving aid. The community doesn't have an emergency plan to be implemented when natural disasters occur. Although there are 400 organizations in the Vicús sub-sector and its area of influence, most of them were created in

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response to partial demands and specific goals. People lack a global vision to enable a comprehensive development of the area. Also, organizations, public entities and civilians are not articulated. The only organization that has developed a global vision of the area has been the Commission of Vicús Irrigators, which includes 1500 users; but which at the present time is circumscribed to improving irrigation infrastructure.

Women, limited by their lack of autonomy and the opposition of men, are restricted to participating in welfare community groups or in church groups, such as the Mother's Club, a state organization; or in the Glass of Milk organization, a municipal organization; or in religious sisterhoods or fraternities. The contribution women make to agricultural activities and to cattle ranching is regarded as being part of their duties as housewives, and not as a job that generates supplementary funds. Women themselves do not recognize the contributions they make by preparing and selling food and "chicha" (corn liquor), which are frequently served in traveling restaurants on Vicús roads. Women also collect, prepare and sell carob beans, thus making a contribution to family economy, but men have difficulty in recognizing that women work a triple shift.

March 2000 saw the beginning of the project, seeking to find solutions to the socio-environmental problems affecting the Vicús sub-sector. IDEAS, a Peruvian NGO, was responsible for the project's execution, and OXFAM-GB, an international NGO, provided the necessary funding. Neighbors Councils (Juntas Vecinales) and the Women's Association of the District of Chulucanas also participated in the project. The Commission of Irrigators also provided its support and some of its members were trained to work as facilitators. A woman delegate from the San Jose Obrero Church also took part in the project.

The project's main objective was to improve risk prevention and environmental protection in the area, by implementing a Development Plan to be designed in equal terms by men and women, and that would serve for local organizations to become stronger.

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An interactive process named “participative planning with regional orientation” (PPOR) was set in motion to start project execution. This methodology served for people in the community to identify the most important problems and to find possible medium and long-term development strategies that served the project’s objective. The first individuals to participate in this process were community leaders and leaders of organizations of the Vicús sub-sector. With the support of this first group, 45 facilitators, 24 men and 21 women, were offered training and became proficient in the use of PPOR tools; these 45 facilitators gave decentralized workshops that served to prepare the rural participatory appraisal as well as the community action plan. A total of 296 individuals participated in the process; 103 men and 71 women took part in the appraisal activities, and 88 men and 34 women participated in the development of the plan.

Several different techniques were used in the process, enabling in-depth analysis, from different perspectives, of situations of risk; vulnerability aspects, and fortitudes. Talking maps, trees of problems and objectives, agricultural and cattle ranching calendars, and community history, were among the most productive techniques. Work was developed in groups of men, groups of women, and mixed groups, which evidenced the existing relations of power. Women participated little when attending mixed groups, not so when they attended groups integrated only by women, where their participation was fluid and impartial.

This project enabled the development of a Development Plan oriented towards risk prevention and protection of the environment. It also served to improve the manner in which the population was organized, as can be seen from the organization of a Committee for Plan Management, integrated by 11 men and 6 women. Promotion of infrastructure investments will now be possible, with contributions from the community and according to a program that is negotiable with authorities.

It has been possible to confirm that women participating in the project have improved their self-esteem and

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wish to continue their training, incorporating other women from their neighborhoods into training sessions on self-esteem, identity, family violence and family planning.

A significant project achievement is that men have become aware of women's needs to participate in different projects and to receive training; and an additional achievement is that men are now willing to have their wives participate in mixed spaces.

In reference to the gender and environment articulation, it can be confirmed that environmental problems have a different impact on the most vulnerable sectors of the community, which are women, boys and girls. Women and children spend hours hauling water from the river or the canals to their homes. Similarly, because their homes are in the proximity of brick factories and ceramic ovens, they are exposed to black smoke that affects their health.



*Local Capacity
Building to
Preserve the
Biodiversity
and Strengthen
Food Security*

Eloisa Tréllez Solís

TWO PERUVIAN DEPARTMENTS, AYACUCHO AND MARTIN, were the sites of the experience in question. This systematization will include work developed in the Ayacucho Department, specifically in two of its districts, Soccus and Chungui.

Two mountain chains cross the Ayacucho Department, and its territory includes high Andean plateaus, sierras and jungle-tropical areas. The districts of Soccus and Chungui are immersed in a wet forest ecosystem. Soccus has altitudes ranging from 3200 m to 3650 m above sea level and Steppe sierras are predominant. Chungui has altitudes ranging from 2100 m to 4800 m above sea level and has more humid and tropical characteristics.

Ayacucho has a population of 527,772, 48% men and 51% women. Over half of the population lives in rural areas and 42.3% are under the age of 15. According to the poverty map prepared in the year 2000 by Foncodes, 47.2% of the population is in the “very poor” bracket. Illiteracy and chronic malnutrition rates are high. Also, one fourth of the population has no access to drinking water, and a larger portion have no sewerage or power services.

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Only 46.3% of the economically active population works; half work in agricultural activities. Ayacucho produces cacao, several types of corn, potatoes, cassava, whole grain rice, beans and coffee. Llama, alpaca and lamb ranching are also developed in Ayacucho. Nevertheless, earnings from this last activity have been decreasing since 1974. Forest-related activities do not include production of lumber wood and the amount of land dedicated to reforestation has been on the decline. Other economic activities carried out by the population are working in the tourism sector and building crafts. Crafts have a special significance because families build them; the most important are textile and ceramic products.

The project began in 1999 and ended in 2003. The “Flora Tristan” Peruvian Women’s Center, a Peruvian NGO, was the main executor organization; and the local NGO, Center of Agricultural and Livestock Development (CEDAP), was the co-executor organization. GTZ, a German cooperation organization provided the necessary funds. The project’s main objective was to develop a participatory research methodology that focusing on the knowledge locals had of biodiversity, conservation and nutritional security, could relate social and natural elements with a gender perspective.

The investigating team was conformed by three groups: the central group, with headquarters in Lima, and one group in each of the other two Departments. The first step was to integrate the different groups so that they will be equitably distributed. Specialists in environmental engineering, gender equity and sociology participated in the process. Promoters were required to know the area well and to speak Quechua. In order to strengthen the interdisciplinary focus and the solidity of the team, investigators and promoters participated in coordination and training sessions. In order to define the final samples of the area under study, it was established that specialists would jointly have to approach 20% of the population. Soccus district has a population of 6922, 55% women and 45% men; Chungui has a population of 5622, 51% women and 49% men.

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The field investigation took seven months due the characteristics of the methodology applied, which consisted of articulating investigative activities with educational processes for the population; it also included the search for solutions and proposals for community problems under study; solutions that require organization and processes of awareness for the community itself; and the participation of several actors: investigators, institutions in the area, local promotes and the community. In addition, the emerging type of the design enabled modifications required for adapting to new elements that could arise during the process.

The methodology used maintained a comprehensive focus of the investigation thanks to the development of a network of interrelations among objectives, subjects, perspectives and techniques. Thus, basic aspects contemplated in the plan – biodiversity, conservation, and nutritional security – were analyzed and discussed regarding their linkage with the gender equity approach. This discussion and analysis was developed according to a plan that included seven different subjects; each subject had detailed guidelines for its development, which included several meditation nucleuses and a series of questions to be presented before the groups. Different techniques, planned according to the goals established and to the different types of participating individuals or groups, were applied in addition to the in-depth analysis performed. The six techniques applied during the investigation were as follows: observation of participant, in-depth interview to vitally important men and women and to key individuals; semi-structured interview for focal groups of men, groups of women and groups of men and women together, according to age range; reports and previous appraisal on basic investigation subjects; one-day workshops on specific subjects and on how to get results; and, psychosocial techniques such as symbolic drawing and acting, directed mainly to boys and girls between the ages of 7 and 14.

Several aspects concerning the socio-environmental reality of the region have resulted from this investigation. It has been confirmed that Ayacucho communities are losing their

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connection to their ancestral roots due to factors such as immigration, interracial marriage and the influence of foreign religious groups. Violence originated by “Sendero Luminoso” and the army has dismembered families and stimulated immigration. The proportion of 45% men to 55% women living in Saccos is partly due to the above-mentioned phenomenon.

Almost half of the population is integrated by young individuals who have no knowledge of, and award little value to, their people’s history, and don’t feel ethnically identified with them; instead, they reject their heritage and wish to migrated to the city, where they will be subjected to discrimination. The situation of young women has constituted an important part of this study, for older men and women are exploiting them. Women have to do all kinds of work both in the home and at the small farms, so they are the first ones to get up in the morning, and the last ones to go to bed at night. Different than young men their own age, these young women do not have holidays or Sundays off, nor time for rest or leisure or for sports; and most of them have no permission to attend school. Young women feel a strong desire to leave their towns and go to the city, where they will not have to work so hard and will earn some pay.

In general, it has become evident that from early childhood, roles are divided according to gender. The traditional way of thinking establishes that the small farms are for men and homes are for women; that men work harder and carry out the more strenuous jobs. But reality contradicts that stereotype; the study has evidenced that women dedicate several hours a day to working with natural resources. An example is the work they do in vegetable gardens, where they get the land ready for planting, they plant, take care of the crops, clean, harvest, select seeds and preserve products. In addition, women cut and transport firewood; haul water, select medicinal plants and prepare home remedies; build crafts, and use and give proper care to the tools used in all these activities. Nevertheless, all these jobs are not valued properly, sometimes even becoming invisible; making it impossible to recognize the manner in which women are related to productive activities and preventing them

from participating in decision-making and economic management processes in their own environments.

On their part, men work in small farms where women bring them food. They spend the entire day there and are able to rest during breaks. After eating they can rest and when they get home they also rest. They own the land, tools, cattle and money. Women are subordinated to men: they live where men want them to; they must get permission to study or receive training; have no say in matters related to production or money, and cannot hold public office or important jobs. If they attend meetings and decide to speak, their opinions don't count and they are made fun of. This devaluation is used against them whenever they do something that falls out of their roles as established by the patriarchal scheme of society. Consequently, women in these communities have turned into silent, conformist and obedient ones, fearful of criticism, being made fun of, and aggression.

According to women, men have their own problems; they undergo economic problems and are responsible for their families. They present health problems and are consuetudinary drinkers, facts that are reflected on their acts of violence against women. During the investigation men recognized that women work excessively hard and are discriminated against. Nevertheless, they insist on the fact that women cannot hold positions of authority because they lack education and experience. But they are not allowed to study and nothing is done to reduce their workload, turning the situation into a vicious cycle. As confirmed by the present study, this situation is a very complex one, one which requires long educational processes for men and women in the areas of human rights and gender equity.

It has been discovered that boys and girls in the communities in question value community development, cleanliness and health very highly; and reject river contamination and the attitude of those adults who contaminate and get drunk.

In the field of investigation with the community, the project has made it possible to confirm that the most important environmental problems are those concerning river

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and pond contamination, indiscriminate felling of trees and soil deterioration; also, and the use of agrochemicals that are killing beneficial insects and making plagues become stronger. Women emphasized the loss of flora and fauna species, while men mentioned a decrease in production.

In reference to biodiversity, the investigation made it possible to discover the amazing amount of information that men and women have on the region's species, in some cases, information that is not contained in the official taxonomy. In the Ayacucho region, 903 plants and 434 animals were mentioned. Women from Chungui appeared to know plants and their uses well, and men in general showed better knowledge of animals. In general, older men and women know more of the above-mentioned subjects than the rest of the population. Boys and girls showed great interest in the conservation and protection of plants and animals in their own regions.

Nutritional security is fully related to the consumption of what is produced at the small farm. Nevertheless, small farm products and domestic animals are taken to the market instead of being used by the family, originating a nutrition problem. With the money earned from the sale, individuals purchase other kinds of food such as pasta or rice. The importance of clearly establishing what is to be used in the home and what is to be taken to market was emphasized in order to reach a nutritional balance. The importance of giving more support to vegetable gardens to enable more use of vegetable greens and vegetables was also emphasized. Women mentioned difficulties in finding firewood and the absence of alternative fuel. The subject of nutrition is strictly assigned to women and is not discussed at meetings; men show little interest in supporting improvement of existing conditions. After debating, the need to pay more attention to this area was stated.

Tolerance and solidarity prevail, in spite of the conflicts of power originated on interracial processes. At the present time Ayacucho has solid organizations basically led by men; there are a few women's organizations, but members have little training and are not supported by men. Nevertheless, women

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are more critical of authorities than men, and demand that organizational skills be improved. Some community traditions based on mutual support, such as owning land and working as a community on said land (ayni and minka), still prevail.

A first evaluation of the subject indicates that the investigating team believes there are several available opportunities for development based on the sustainable management of natural resources; but there are aspects that need to be worked on, such as the Cosmo vision of one self, organizational skills and gender equity relationships. The articulation of those focuses concerning men and women increases the possibilities for such development.

This project has demonstrated hands on the job that an investigation of the community can and should provide a training component for the population that is being investigated, giving said population the opportunity to articulate the subjects of gender and environment at all stages of the joint work.



*Digging Furrows:
Peasant Women
Producing and
Looking after the
Environment*

*Kirai de León
Sandra Quintans*

“DIGGING FURROWS: PEASANT WOMEN PRODUCING AND LOOKING AFTER THE ENVIRONMENT” is a project that is being implemented since 1986 at the Canelones Department, located in the Southern part of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay. This is an area of wavy soils at less than 100 meters above sea level, and numerous watercourses. The average temperature is 17°C and precipitations are irregular, with dry periods during the summer. Vegetation consists of pasturelands and there is severe soil erosion.

Canelones has a total area of 4532 km² and a population of almost half a million inhabitants, resulting from its nearness to the capital city of Montevideo and to the coast. Nevertheless, the existence of beach resorts and urban areas in the southern part of the Department contrasts with the extremely dispersed population living in the rural areas of the Northeast. Rural population is 58,337, 47% women and 52.6% men.

Most of said population descends from migrants who at the end of the XVIII Century came from the Canary Islands. They were brought here as exploited and captive labor, to work in agriculture in the outskirts of the capital city, producing food for its inhabitants.

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Thus, production activities at the Department of Canelones have historically been ruled by the changing food demand of the capital city and the country. Canelones inhabitants stopped growing wheat and corn and other crops grown in small isolated farms, to grow beets for the sugar mill in the area, which finally ceased to operate in 1985. Peasants in Northeastern Canelones were left to drift, with their traditions, social and labor networks broken, and without production perspectives. Due to the fact that almost the totality of the country's land has been dedicated to extensive cattle ranching, the Uruguayan State has not taken any significant measures to promote rural development. In the case of Canelones, a production re-conversion plan was proposed and said plan did not render any positive results. Work is being developed in horticultural production, making a strong use of agrochemicals and irrigation; crops are covered with plastic and are meant for the capital city market.

In the specific case of women, their living conditions were situated within the narrow and rigid framework marked by peasants and Canary Island traditions. Generally dressed in black due for long periods of mourning; heads covered with shawls and hands covered with "polleritas" to protect themselves from the sun, women do their housework and grow vegetable gardens near their homes to feed their families. They made fancy lace and embroidery to wear at parties and religious events, and they were also midwives and medicine women having ample knowledge of how to grow and use medicinal herbs.

The "Digging Furrows" project started to become a reality when a GRECMU (Study Group on the Condition of Women in Uruguay) investigator and a CIESU (Investigation and Social Studies Center of Uruguay) investigator served as consultants to the Federation, an organization integrated by partnerships and agricultural associations from northeastern Canelones which had been kept inactive due to the prohibition imposed by the military regime. During the appraisal meetings, investigators were able to interact with men and women from the area and acquire an

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in-depth knowledge of the social-environmental conditions of the community.

Said conditions were characterized, among others, by aspects related to the absence of plans for the re-conversion of production and product trading, which could lessen the problems originated by poverty and social exclusion of peasants, soil degradation, excessive use of toxic agrochemicals and frequent contamination of water resources. Investigators could also detect the high degree of subordination to which women living in the area were subjected.

As the consulting and planning work advanced, an autonomous project for women became gradually defined. It was based on organic crops that would recover traditional “clean” agricultural practices and would generate an income when selling said crops in the market.

Originally the plan-generated doubts with respect to its true objectives and to the role women would play. But finally, three groups were integrated with women from three different towns of the Canelones Department: Solís Chico, with a population of 6020 (49.6 % women); Pedernal, with 9955 inhabitants (49.9% women); and Tapia, with 6651 inhabitants (49.7% women).

During the implementation of the project women were accompanied by a woman coordinator of the project and by a woman agricultural engineer. The enthusiastic support of these professionals undoubtedly constituted a decisive factor in the success of the enterprise. Women chose a name that would identify them: Groups of Women Working for Tomorrow, which led to “Mañanitas” (mornings) as the brand name for their products, and they also chose a name for the association they founded: “CALMAÑA Limited Agricultural Association”.

Women were unable to define the product they would grow due to lack of information. Consequently, the project coordinator and the agricultural engineer proposed that groups plant fine aromatic herbs and seasoning herbs. This proposal was based on a study made regarding women’s characteristics,

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soil conditions in the area, market offer, production facilities, conservation, storage and transportation.

Some of the strategies implemented in the execution of the project and which contributed to its effectiveness, must be mentioned. One of them was group autonomy; each group established its own internal rules of operation, such as distribution of jobs and earnings. Another strategy was to incorporate husbands or women's male relatives to periodic meetings, so that they would become involved in the project. Women thought that men, in addition to being the formal landowners and subjects to credit from different institutions, could contribute with their experience in agricultural practices. Willingly, men took care of the children during the frequent absences of participants.

The third strategy was not promoting the creation of positions in the different groups; women never requested any such thing. This contributed to avoid the tendency to accumulate duties and benefits on members of the Boards of Directors. Groups decided that members would rotate in the different Board positions and would take turns in going on business trips. This type of administration contributed to the personal growth of participants, for they were forced to face different challenges as they came along.

Finally, reference to the strategic objectives of the women involved was avoided, as it was suggested by GRECMU, for having done so would have contributed to arise mistrust and lack of understanding among the population. Also, the usual techniques to raise gender equity awareness were avoided when working with the groups. The methodology used consisted basically of weekly meetings for discussion and analysis, where a democratic exchange of ideas took place among participants. Subjects discussed there could be based on experiences, problems and personal or group situations of participants, and even on TV soaps. Said subjects were the starting points for analyzing opinions, beliefs and the representations assigned by society according to sex, ethnical or geographical origin.

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Several institutions were involved in the execution of the project. The most important one was GRECMU, which was responsible for the execution of the project from 1986 to 1996 and provided the human resources and infrastructure and was in charge of the administration. Additional resources were provided by CIEDUR and several agencies of international cooperation such as “Desarrollo y Paz (Development and Peace), IAF, GTZ, “Pan para el Mundo” (Bread for the World) and SAREC. From 1986 to 1990 the Federation of Partnerships of Rural Promotion and Agricultural Associations made important contributions to the project.

The “Digging Furrows” Project has offered great lessons to participants. For an entire decade peasant women circumscribed to a household environment and subjected to working without payment or recognition, lived in a world of personal and social development. At the present time these women run an agricultural association and develop their own agricultural projects, for they gradually were able to assume increasingly complex challenges.

It is worth mentioning that the efficiency of the work done, together with the correct agricultural and organic administration of the project, has enabled these women to increase plantation areas, sell larger volumes in the market and generate their own income.

Awards received, such as the Organic Certification, have not only made it possible to better position their products in the market and improve sale prices, but also to attract the attention of several publications and investigations which have echoed this experience.

Emphasis must be made on the fact that leadership has gone beyond the limits of the agricultural association and has enabled these CALMAÑA women to hold positions in different boards of directors at national organizations of women and men. It has also enabled them to serve as intermediaries for public institutions and international organisms in the agricultural and food areas, and to attend national and international events.

Another important aspect to be mentioned is the role participants played as educators and broadcasters of information on the handling of organic crops and on the importance these crops have as opposed to the danger of using toxic substances in agriculture. The work carried out by these women has become so widely known, that they are referred to when dealing with national issues regarding organic agriculture and the elimination of subordination and marginality of women in the rural area.

To conclude, women who participated in the “Digging Furrows” project have defined their central and most significant experience as the elimination of isolation and lack of perspective to which they had been subjected, because due to their personal growth, they were able to transform their lives, especially with respect to social and gender relationships.

After 1996, without any external financial aid, this women’s agricultural association started to work autonomously and independently and to this date continues to work in search of a better future, producing and looking after the environment.

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*How the UN
Convention to
Combat
Desertification
and Drought has
Promoted the Role
of Women in
Decision-Making
Processes*

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THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (UNCDD) was approved in 1994. As of that moment, numerous initiatives to stimulate equality between men and women have been developed, and governments as well as local and international non-government organizations, have provided financial and technical support for these initiatives. Because of its role in promoting women, an element that is missing from other environmental agreements, the Convention now serves as an example to other multilateral agreements.

Different processes that led to the writing of this important international agreement, which commits governments to the promotion of the role of women in managing dry lands, are described in the document that is hereby summarized. A documentary analysis and several informal interviews to representatives of every sector that took part were conducted in order to develop this document.

The manner in which the interactions of human beings with the environment are perceived, has evolved immensely during the past three decades, as is reflected by the language used in world conferences. In Stockholm in 1972 it was

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mentioned that “Man” has the fundamental right to “a quality environment”; in 2002, in Johannesburg, 104 heads of state declared their commitment to empowerment, emancipation and equality for women in order to insure a sustainable development. Semantics reflect the understanding of the connection existing between sustainable development and the active and equitable participation of everyone involved, men and women.

The idea of having an international convention to combat desertification was originated in 1972 during the Stockholm Conference on Human Development, in response to the drought that devastated Africa at the beginning of the decade of the seventies. In 1974 the country that at the present time is known as Burkina Faso, proposed to the General Assembly of the United Nations that it convoke a World Conference on Desertification and Drought (UNCDD); said conference took place in Nairobi on 1977. Among the multiple conclusions reached by the groups of experts was the fact that desertification is a global problem that is related to human activities.

During this same period the Second Decade of United Nations Development took place; it included multiple conferences related to the areas of population, women, environment and human settlements; making it possible for each different area to learn from other areas and to create connections among them. For example, the greatest achievement of the World Conference to Combat Desertification, the Action Plan to Combat Desertification (PACD), stated that social-economic factors continue to originate environmental challenges such as desertification. Some of the global recommendations given by the PACD to be implemented in different countries included references to women and their work with and use of natural resources; it recommended that women be consulted on, and trained on new technologies and alternate energy systems. It also recommended that units to be used for demonstration be established, so that men and women working in farming and herding could work and learn in said units during reasonable periods of time.

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According to these new focuses, in 1983 the United Nations General Assembly established the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission), whose main job was to prepare a Global Agenda for Change. The first achievement of the Commission was the publication in 1987 of “Our Common Future”, which granted essential priority to the basic needs of the poor around the world; it also stated that sustainable development required the effective participation of citizens in decision-making processes. Although women are not expressly mentioned, it is considered that the spirit of equal opportunity is present in the Commission’s report.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) –World Summit- took place in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. Although the subject of desertification was not discussed in depth, it was put up for discussion when the “Situation of Desertification and Implementation of the United Nations Action Plan to Combat Desertification” report mentioned that between 1978 and 1991 the PACD had had little progress, particularly due to lack of adequate technical and financial support, national and international, even to the perception that desertification is just another environmental problem and not a serious social-economic problem. One of the issues mentioned that originated PACD’s non-compliance with expectations was the fact that women making use of the land could not get credit or have access to assistance services to improve their practices.

It was recommended in the report that both men and women developing farming and herding activities should have access to education, training and adequate technology. It was also recommended that national action programs to combat desertification should be based on the participation of farmers, herders and women, during all stages of program implementation. Similarly, organizations of women, youth, boys and girls should actively participate at every level in anti-desertification activities. Finally, women should participate in private activities developed to invest in dry land, based on policies that support land ownership, adequate technology, credit, extension programs, local alimentary security and adequate pricing systems.

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In 1991, the World Congress of Women for a Healthy Planet was organized in Miami; 1500 women from around the world discussed the most important ideas presented at Nairobi. They discussed the Women's Action Agenda 21, in order to insure that the results of the Rio de Janeiro Conference of the Land, UNCED, would respond to equality conditions between men and women. Said Agenda calls for women to participate fully at every level of environmental management, given the fact that women have a greater responsibility in the production of food for family use, in soil protection and protection of other natural resources, and are better aware of the reality land overexploitation. It also states that the possibility for women to use, own and inherit land is a basic human right. The Agenda calls for the right of women to have access to credit, water, alternate sources of energy and food processing technologies; and it also calls to programs and special activities to insure their active participation and recovery of knowledge based on tradition. Reference to desertification is made in Chapter 12 of the Agenda, which is dedicated to management of fragile ecosystems and to fighting desertification and drought. This chapter also includes a call for communities to participate, especially women and youth, in the process of collecting environmental information; for women to become involved in policies and programs to improve the use of the land; for the creation of a rural bank to facilitate credit; and for the generation and publication of information segregated by gender. Chapter 24 of the Agenda demands greater participation on the part of women in decision-making processes and in the development of the capability of organizations to manage themselves; women must also actively participate in the process of eliminating illiteracy and in developing equal opportunity jobs.

As of the recommendations of Agenda 21, finally in 1992 the General Assembly of the United Nations commissioned the Inter-Governmental Negotiation Committee (INCED) to negotiate a final version of the International Convention to Combat Desertification. Five very productive sessions were developed; the first one was held in 1993 in Nairobi, and most of the countries in the world, as well as United Nations Agencies,

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development banks, NGO's and investigation institutes, participated. The fact that 900 million people are victims of desertification, most of them farmers and women, was denounced at the opening session. Nevertheless, only two of the thirty-one documents presented, which today are historical, offered an analysis of the role of women in management of natural resources; they referred to two experiences that took place in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Based on the discussion that followed, different countries presented thirty proposals to the Convention that included specific texts regarding the role of women and the commitments that were to be assumed to this respect by the Convention. Following negotiations, the Convention of the United Nations to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNCCD) was approved on June 17, 1994. The introduction includes an acceptance of the fact that in order to combat the problem of dry lands it is necessary to guarantee the full participation of men and women. Correspondingly, countries that form part of the Convention must facilitate the participation of local communities, especially women and youth, in activities developed to combat desertification and drought.

In order to carry out the implementation of the Convention in the different countries, the collaboration of national authorities, civilian representatives, investigation institutions and representatives of the international community, including donor institutions, is essential. Establishment of National Action Programs (NAP) for the continuous planning and active participation of local populations of dry lands is one of the most important jobs that national alliances are responsible for. Emphasis is made on the fact that said participation does not only imply being present, it implies that development of self-management capabilities must be promoted, especially in women and youth.

Although UNCCD is regarded as an effort on the part of the international community to work for the promotion of activities for sustainable development that include a gender focal point, it has been argued that it lacks several elements required

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for it to become a truly useful tool in the interlocking of the gender focal point and women's empowerment. Therefore, the final document does not contain information and data segregated by sex, which is considered fundamental for interlocking the gender focal point, because without said information and data it is impossible to define if projects respond to the needs of women. It also does not include references to the right of women to own land and to have access to credit, both crucial for offering equal opportunities of rural development to men and women.

Some participants expressed that the traditional lobbying by women's movements did not take place. For example, activist Gary Howe did not participate and indicated that the struggle to solve environmental problems and the struggle for women's empowerment must not be mixed.

In general, the process of negotiation of this Convention (UNCCD) followed the guidelines of the two "Rio Sister Conventions", in other words, the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity and the United Nations Convention on Climatic Change. In the introduction of the first one of these conventions it is recognized that the role developed by women in conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity is vital, and so is the need for women to fully participate at all levels of formulation and implementation of policies for the conservation of biodiversity.

The process organized by the Inter-Governmental Negotiation Committee (INCD) from January 1993 to June 1994, was affected by different conflicts. One of the most notorious was the confrontation between the North and South blocks on the subject of Convention financing and on the intention of giving priority to Africa, without whose persistence it would have been impossible to initiate this process. In addition, there were several opposing points of view for defining the concept of desertification, for countries in the process of development demanded that the social-economic causes of desertification be part of the definition given by the Convention, and industrialized countries were reluctant to detailing a diversity of social-economic factors in the definition.

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As it often happens in multilateral forums, regional or sub-regional coalitions arise based on affinity or degree of development; informal groups or work groups that consult and discuss and meet to coordinate positions facing the Convention. Government delegations receive instructions from their governments that are more or less flexible with respect to different points of the agenda. In some instances the personality and experience of delegates enable them to develop a leading role in the negotiations. In this case, when the subject of women's participation and the interlocking of the gender perspective was discussed, the Pro-Women Nordic Group usually took the lead, and Norway was the most important leader due its promotion of equity in programs of international cooperation; a similar situation happened with Canada. Other delegations, such as Senegal, Uganda, Argentina and India, supported those proposals.

Other United Nations agencies, such as the Development Program and the Environment Program also participated in the different processes; and so did inter-governmental and international organizations. Based on its experience in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Inter-American Fund for Agricultural Development presented key documents concerning the role of women in management of dry lands. The Agency that assumed greater leadership on this subject, as well as in the subject of the participation of civilians, was the Sudan-Saharan Office of the Development Program; this Program provides humanitarian support and promotes activities for development of dry lands in Africa since the last part of the decade of the sixties. As of 1992 it also provides support to countries in Asia, Latin American and the Caribbean. From the initial stages and the stages of INCD negotiations, it promoted specific activities to strengthen the role of women in the future Convention, beyond declaring its good intentions.

Echoing what was called "the Rio mentality", which stimulated the participation of different NGO's in international negotiations of sustainable development, civilians participated actively in the negotiation processes of the Convention. 84 organizations and networks of civilians were accredited during

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the first INCD session, eight of which included the subject of women in their programs. Most of the different NGO delegates to the sessions were men, making it evident that equality between men and women in the NGO's themselves was far from being a reality. Nevertheless, some women, especially African representatives, made their voices strongly and insistently heard so that women would be kept in mind in every process of the Convention and in the implementation of the same. The perseverance of participating women, as well as the effective lobbying of NGO's, had a special effect on the importance that the UNCCD gave to the participation of women at all levels of development of dry lands. The fact that the subject of women was constantly on the table, made it possible for the leading roles of the Convention processes to be better distributed between men and women. It was surprising that the most prominent international NGO's specialized in environmental or women's issues were absent.

Ten years have gone by since the approval of the UNCCD. Bearing in mind the enormous challenges represented by the establishment of an innovative environmental management system, based on participative gender and development focuses, goals achieved have been important. It is expected that the implementation of the Convention in ratifying countries be quite advanced.

Up to the present time it has been possible to observe positive results in the National Action Programs that have been executed in African countries, in Latin America and in the Caribbean. Nevertheless, much remains to be done; the challenge is to turn from rhetoric to concrete actions, both in national plans as in the work of the NGO's, and also in UNCCD organisms.

It would be convenient if member countries could become institutional leaders in this area, instead of becoming individual actors, so that the subject of gender can receive uninterrupted attention. This could be achieved by including a Focal Point in the UNCCD Secretariat, or by establishing a Special Work Group in the area of gender equity.

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The Committee of Implementation Revision of the Convention (CRIC) could plan a revision based on different themes that would monitor UNCCD commitments related to women's roles, taking advantage of the juncture of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of this important Convention.

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