



TOWARD EQUITY SERIES

8 SHARING SECRETS 8

Sistematization
from a Gender Perspective

CANTERA
ROCÍO RODRÍGUEZ
Central American REDNAS
with the collaboration of
ANA ELENA BADILLA

WORLD CONSERVATION UNION
Mesoamerican Office - Social Policy Program
ARIAS FOUNDATION FOR PEACE AND HUMAN PROGRESS



TOWARD EQUITY SERIES

SHARING SECRETS

Sistematization
from a Gender Perspective

CANTERA
ROCÍO RODRÍGUEZ
Central American REDNAS
with the collaboration of
ANA ELENA BADILLA

WORLD CONSERVATION UNION
Mesoamerican Office - Social Policy Program
ARIAS FOUNDATION FOR PEACE AND HUMAN PROGRESS



This logo reflects the basic principle that should be present in any vision of sustainable development: equilibrium between human beings and nature, regardless of sex, age, ethnic group, or economic status.

Reproduction of this text is permitted for non-commercial uses only, especially for educational purposes.

All rights reserved. Reproduction for sale or any other commercial purposes is strictly prohibited without written permission from the author.

128
R696s

Rodríguez Villalobos, Rocío

Sharing secrets: Systematization from a gender perspective / Rocío Rodríguez Villalobos, CANTERA, Central American REDNAS.

--1^a ed.—San José, C. R. : UICN : ABSOLUTO, 2.000.

42 p., 28 x 21 cm. --(Toward Equity Series, module 8)

Originally published in Spanish under the title
"Compartiendo secretos: Sistematizando desde la equidad".

ISBN 9968-743-42-9

1. Gender Equity. 2. Project Method.
3. Methodology. I. CANTERA. II. REDNAS Centroamericanas.
III. Title. IV. Series.

Graphic design:
Eric Hidalgo Valverde
ABSOLUTO S.A. Tel-Fax: (506) 234-9675

Translation:
Patricia Odio
Johana Oliver

Printed by:
MASTER LITHO S. A.
San José, Costa Rica.
June, 2000

IUCN. Tel: (506) 236-2733 Fax: (506) 240-9934
P.O.Box: 1161-2150 Moravia, Costa Rica. E-mail: lorena.aguilar@orma.iucn.org

The Spanish version of this publication was made possible thanks to the financial support provided by the Dutch Embassy. The English version was possible thanks to the financial support of the Social Policy Programme.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD.....	1
PURPOSE OF THE MODULE.....	3
INTRODUCTION	5
I. OUR FRAMEWORK	7
1. Understanding our practice as the basis for transforming it	11
2. Learning from and sharing our experience	12
3. Creating inputs for theorizing and generalization.....	13
4. Systematization with and from a gender perspective: a window to gender equity	13
5. Differences between systematization, evaluation and investigation	15
II. PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR A GENDER-BASED SYSTEMATIZATION	17
1. Qualifications for leadership and coordinating team	17
2. Qualifications of to those contributing their experience to the systematization process	19
Interest in learning from experience	19
Sensitivity to let the experience speak for itself	20
Analysis and synthesis skills	21
3. Institutional receptiveness and assimilation of the systematization proposal methodology	22

4.	Institutional receptiveness to and assimilation of the gender perspective	22
5.	Management's position	23
6.	Conformation and coherence within the work teams	23
7.	Searching for an integral institutional strategy	25
8.	Creating our own way of thinking	25
III. HOW TO INCLUDE THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN SYSTEMATIZATION		27
1.	Definition of the systematization objective	28
2.	Defining the object of systematization	29
3.	Definition of the systematization axis	30
4.	Historical reconstruction	31
5.	Data arranging and classification	33
6.	Critical interpretation	34
7.	Elaboration of conclusions and lessons learned	37
8.	Elaboration of the communication products	38
	Conclusion	40
IV. BIBLIOGRAPHY		41



FOREWORD

The Social Program of the World Conservation Union Regional Office for Mesoamerica (IUCN-ORMA) and the Arias Foundation's Center for Human Progress began this project in March 1997, thanks to the special interest and financial support of The Netherlands. Our objective is to unify gender and environmental efforts by providing technical assistance for regional organizations and rural development projects interested in incorporating a gender equity perspective into their programs.

The challenge was to offer more than just conceptual support regarding the definitions and implications of gender. We sought to provide tools and instruments for integrating a gender equity perspective at every level of the work cycle. Our ultimate goal was to ensure that projects achieved greater equity in regard to participation by women and men in the decision-making process as well as in accessing services, goods and resources.

Our satisfaction in presenting this series is twofold. First, over the years we have concluded that even though many initiatives in the field have a positive attitude towards incorporating a gender equity perspective, they have not been able to find practical methodologies for doing so. In this series, called "**Toward Equity**", we have made an effort to offer concrete suggestions and recommendations for incorporating a gender equity perspective into every stage of the project cycle.

Second, the modules have been prepared and validated by countless numbers of project technicians in the field. These publications have been enriched by their invaluable contributions, and we send them our most profound thanks.

In some cases our recommendations were originally designed by a person or group of people in each country and then widely disseminated, discussed and validated in different parts of Central America (Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras). This is the case of the modules on Proposal Design, Participatory Appraisals, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Participation and Empowerment and Systematization.

The recommendations contained in the other components of this series were based on participatory research. This is also true with regard to the modules on indicators and on equitable project administration and management.

- MODULE 1** A GOOD START MAKES A BETTER ENDING
Writing Proposals with a Gender Perspective
- MODULE 2** SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND
Creating Participatory Appraisals with a Gender Perspective
- MODULE 3** IF WE ORGANIZE IT WE CAN DO IT
Project Planning with a Gender Perspective
- MODULE 4** TAKING THE PULSE OF GENDER
Gender-Sensitive Systems for Monitoring and Evaluation
- MODULE 5** IN UNITY THERE IS POWER
Processes of Participation and Empowerment
- MODULE 6** EYES THAT SEE...HEARTS THAT FEEL
Equity Indicators
- MODULE 7** PRACTICING WHAT WE PREACH
Toward Administration and Management with Equity
- MODULE 8** SHARING SECRETS
Systematization from a Gender Perspective
- MODULE 9** UNVEILING GENDER
Basic Conceptual Elements for Understanding Equity

The ideal moment to use these modules is at the beginning of a work initiative or process. But they can also be applied whenever existing projects decide to introduce changes in processes that have already begun.

We hope that this series will be of value to all of those who are working in rural development projects and, like us, would like to make equity a lifelong commitment for the construction of a new society.

*M.Sc. Lorena Aguilar
Bch. Guiselle Rodríguez
World Conservation Union*

*Lic. Ana Elena Badilla
M.Sc. Lara Blanco
Arias Foundation*

PURPOSE OF THE MODULE

I Our framework

This section presents basic conceptual elements for understanding the proposal for gender-based systematization.

II Personal qualifications and institutional requirements needed for a gender-based systematization

This section deals with the personal qualifications and institutional requirements needed to undertake gender-based systematization.

III How to include a gender perspective in systematization

This section indicates the steps to follow in a gender-based systematization.

INTRODUCTION

Module 8, prepared by the Center for Communications and Popular Education CANTERA¹ and Rocío Rodríguez, with the collaboration of the National Networks (REDNAS) of the Toward Equity Project, is part of IUCN and the Arias Foundation effort to mainstream systematization from a gender perspective as an ongoing process within rural development organizations and regional REDNAS projects.

The proposal is divided into three sections:

- The framework outlining the basic concepts behind systematization from a gender perspective.
- The personal and institutional qualifications required for systematization.
- A methodological proposal to facilitate systematization from a gender perspective.

The proposal's major input is represented by the vast experience of CANTERA and the ALFORJA Network on the subject of systematization, as well as the valuable ideas extracted from Oscar Jara's book "Systematization," all of which was complemented by the REDNAS' contributions regarding mainstreaming of the gender perspective.

The preliminary version of the document was presented at the meeting of the Regional Implementation Committee for the "**Toward Equity**" Project, coordinated by IUCN and the Arias Foundation. That meeting was held in San José, Costa Rica, on November, 1997, and representatives from both organizations, as well as from the national facilitation authorities, IFN and the REDNAS attended.

Subsequently, during the first months of 1998, a theoretical-practical workshop on systematization was conducted in each one of the countries, with the participation of the various organizations that conform the REDNAS. One experience was selected per country to be systematized, and at the end the document was thoroughly reviewed and adjusted, to include theoretical and methodological elements, particularly those related to a gender perspective.

1 _____ CANTERA is a Nicaraguan non-governmental organization specialized in development and the dissemination of a popular education methodological concept with a gender perspective. It is affiliated to the Coordinating Network for Popular Education ALFORJA, which in turn, unites public education centers in México (IMDEC), Guatemala (SERJUS), El Salvador (FUNPROCOOP), Honduras (CENCOPH), Costa Rica (CEP), and Panama (CEASPA).

The module includes reflections related to the above-mentioned experiences, along with others that arose during the "Intensive Workshop on Systematization from a Gender Perspective," carried out by CANTERA in Nicaragua, in April, 1999. Contributions were also made by the regional REDNAS during the validation workshop conducted in San José, Costa Rica, in July 1999.

We hope this module will be a useful training tool for staff involved in rural-development projects implemented by the regional REDNAS, as well as for other organizations interested in learning from their experiences with systematization from a gender perspective.

I OUR FRAMEWORK

*Building
gender
inequalities*

The transformations required for equitable rural development are carried out by women and men, distinguished by gender. Gender indicates biosocio-cultural groups, historically based on the sexual characteristics that physically classify human beings. Once classified, each gender is assigned different sets of roles, activities, social relationships, behavioral patterns and standards (Lagarde, 1992). This includes a set of economic, social, legal, political, and psychological i.e., cultural determinations and characteristics, that define for a given period of time, society and culture the specific contents of being a man or a woman (Lagarde, 1993.)

This is the basis for our differentiation; each society or culture has assigned different values and meaning to these sex differences and has formulated ideas, conceptions and practices about being a man or a woman. This set of social, economic, political, cultural, psychological and legal characteristics and standards, assigned differently to each sex, is what we call gender (Lagarde, 1994.) Thus, there exist two genders: feminine and masculine. In other words, we are taught to be a man or a woman, depending on physical characteristics, particularly the external genital organs.

The identities that women and men build for themselves determine and condition what they should feel, do, think and even imagine according to, not only gender but also other factors such as class or social group, age and religion. That is why each individual experiences gender differently.

In the case of the feminine gender, being a woman means “to exist for others.” To work for, to think about, and to tend to others. More emphasis is placed on other than on the woman and her own life. Thus, subordination, shyness and fear are characteristics inherent to the feminine condition. Women are considered unable to stand on their own two feet and deal with their life; incapable and wavy of trying new things. Their ability to think, theoretical and technological skills, and their social representation and authority are highly questioned (Lagarde, 1994.)

In the case of the masculine gender, being a man means “to exist for himself.” Contrary to the construction of the feminine gender, men live more for themselves than for others. That means that a man’s existence is the center of his life. Masculine characteristics include constant competition because they must show

that they exercise the power; the need to have space and enjoy social recognition; discovering new things and taking risks are encouraged; their work is visible and generates economic compensation; they possess objects and resources; and they must make the decisions.

The gender conditions inherent to women and men cannot be ignored in the systematization processes. They must be considered throughout the process if we intend to mainstream the gender perspective.

Our systematization perspective is based on a dialectical methodological concept. This concept involves a way of appreciating reality, a way of approaching it to better understand and recognize it but most of all to transform it. Reality is seen as a historical process, built by men and women, who through their particular ways of thinking and behaving change nature and make history.

Reality is a totality whose, various parts or components cannot be explained and understood separately; they must be considered as a whole in their formulation and interaction. Each element is understood as part of the whole that defines it, creating interdependence between the parts and the whole. The parts (economic, social, political, religious, cultural; individual, family, community, national; objective, subjective) are separated in an artificial manner; the whole is not the simple sum of the parts, but the internal articulation of all its multiple relationships.

Another characteristic of reality is its changing nature: It is in constant mutation and transformation; it is neither static nor homogeneous. The origin or genesis of these changes lies in the tensions and contradictions occurring within the reality. This relationship of permanent confrontation between opposing or differing alternatives gives way to continuous change within social processes.

From the point of view of the dialectical methodological concept, it is absurd to approach experiences as if they were isolated, permanent, static facts, that can be recognized and explained with absolute objectivity. To the contrary, the social reality is understood within its own dynamics. Therefore, in order to understand the social reality, we must see ourselves as subjects that helped build that same reality. In this way, rural development practices related to specific social groups and to the behavior, feelings and interpretations of specific women and men, are part of both the social dynamic and social and historical practice.

Project specialists and community members are the actors who create the social reality. Therefore from the point of view of a dialectical methodological concept, it is not possible to simply describe phenomena as if we were mere spectators observing a performance that has no effect or bearing on us. We must embrace the reality that was built socially, recognizing that we intend to transform it, and that as a result of that transformation we change as persons, in terms of our ideas, dreams, wishes and passions. Thus, we are subjects as well as objects of knowledge and transformation.

From this perspective stems the essential relationship between practice and theory. Theory allow us to interpret practice, but we cannot stop there. Rather, we must return to practice with a deeper understanding of the processes and contradictions, and with additional resources to guide our actions in the direction we choose so that we can successfully change reality.

This framework allow us to contemplate the reality we want, fully aware that the existing reality is neither the only option, nor one that must be perpetuated. This effort requires our maximum creativity.

Considering the above, systematization contributes to develop our own subjectivity letting us make history through our efforts to promote a greater cohesion between what we think, say, feel and do as women and men. In summary, this is a human, historical and dynamic vision of reality. Obviously this concept must, guide the methods or paths chosen for the systematization exercise, a subject we will discuss in the third unit.

Systematization and the gender perspective

Systematization involves the critical analysis and interpretation of a social process experienced by the women and men of the organizations and projects, and carried out by them. It is therefore essential that we recognize the extent to which gender has intervened as a social filter in their efforts, their decisions, the paths followed, the resources used and the alternatives selected.

Thus, the power relationships existing among project participants, the social groups involved and the patriarchal system, the strategic alliances established and the opposition faced, must confront the course of action taken and the impacts attained. The implications of the project's contributions will make it possible to determine whether this represents an equity-oriented track, whether the project has changed any of the restrictions inherent in the lives of women and men, or whether, to the contrary, those efforts have strengthened, legalized and reinforced the patriarchal order.

The contribution that gender-based systematization processes can make is fundamental to intergender equity, a condition *sine qua non* for rural development.

If the effect of the gender power structures becomes visible to the participants in the transformation-related experiences, more horizontal interventions can be designed from the start that will generate the conditions for building equality-based power forms.

Consequently, as far as the systematization processes is concerned, the gender perspective represents a deeply democratic commitment and challenge. By criticizing and understanding the actions undertaken, we can visualize new paths for those who dream about a more egalitarian future. A future in which, instead of playing obsolete functional roles that restrict equity and solidarity, the genders will promote the demonstration of human capacities and the construction of a more just social order for women and men of all ages.

Systematization, thus, becomes a means of achieving gender equity, as its basic components indicate.

Two
systematization
components

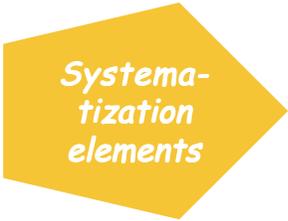
- The systematization process itself, which considers actions taken; and
- The systematization results, which serve to communicate the conclusions and findings of the process.

Both components are equally important, given that:

- The process makes the participants reflect on the actions taken, increases their role regarding in decision making, and strengthens the projects' interpretative abilities; and
- The products have a direct effect on the participants' proposing and transforming skills, by providing better arguments and elements to achieve gender equity.

Based on the above, we are able to identify at least three basic elements justifying systematization:

1. Understanding our practice as the basis for transforming it



Systematization elements

Systematization represents an intentional effort to understand our practice and transform it. This entails understanding what was done, how it was done, the various stages of the process, the determinant elements and why they occurred, why an experience or practice took place, and whether these were the changes expected from the transformation toward gender equity.

In addition, systematization should also recognize whether the changes are permanent or occasional, which elements were important in the establishment of power relationships, whether they were discontinued and why, which were determinant to the establishment of new courses of action, and to what extent women and men participated during the various stages.

In this way, we can identify the project's periods of consolidation and strength, related to opportunities and conditions for women and men to enjoy equal access to and control of benefits, as well as periods of crisis, breakdown and weakness that clearly reflect the asymmetry of power relationships. In both circumstances, systematization makes it possible to recognize the elements that determined those periods.

Therefore, systematization aims to improve the practices, activities and knowledge of those committed to changing reality, to analyzing the cohesion and implications of our actions, to overcoming gaps and weaknesses, and to emphasizing the elements that can transform reality and bring us closer to achieving gender equity.

The above involves overcoming activism and the everyday recurrence of procedures that have always been done in a certain way but no one has analyzed in terms of results. Unless critically analyzed, those procedures constitute a waste of resources and energy that otherwise could be dedicated to achieving our goal, i.e., the construction of equitable relationships.

In summary, systematization allows rural development projects to understand how they reached their current situation and the reasons behind their own course of action, so that they can understand their actual efforts as well as those they must take in the future.

2. Learning from and sharing our experience

Project practices should empower rural spaces to meet the present and future needs of women and men of all ages within a given geographical area through the effective use of available material, human and environmental resources and the equitable distribution of collectively generated benefits.

Efforts by rural societies and their territorial units to change so as to broaden the population's development possibilities, based on specific policies aimed at overcoming social, economic, institutional and ecological imbalances, in accordance with equity criteria, should be focused on the people. Furthermore, the process is not isolated but rather linked to other economic, social, political, and cultural aspects of rural society, that determine and shape the needs of women and men both today and for the future (Blanco et.al., 1999.)

"To learn" and "To share" are two verbs of utmost importance for those involved in gender equity issues. By learning about processes developed by other groups and projects, we can see how they have dealt with their own critical issues, and which will place us in a better position to face with inequalities.

These days there is much talk about "lessons learned." However, frequently, the experiences we hear about are summarized in chronological descriptions, flatly told, that more often than not turn into a forceful defense of the actions taken. In order to really share these experiences, the lessons learned need to be transmitted through methods such as systematization, which serves not to judge, assess, or compare experiences, but rather to better understand the decisions involved in complex social processes.

Such an exchange could contribute significantly to analyzing the reality and proposing actions aimed at achieving gender equity. This is possible when systematization is undertaken in projects as a strict and permanent exercise, as is the case with planning, appraisal, monitoring and evaluation.

A very important aspect of the systematization process arises out of the need and urgency to share experiences, arises, that make it communicable. Making our actions communicable, help us learn as does trying to understand other people's experiences by comparing them to our own. By making these experiences communicable, we can insert them into a broader group process, thereby giving them historical sense. Sharing experiences through systematization is an open invitation to continue thinking in terms of changing reality.

3. Creating inputs for theorizing and generalization

Full understanding of reality is a *sine qua non* condition for change; therefore it is imperative that we create knowledge, starting with everyday processes. If projects are directed toward women's and men's access to goods and services, we must be well informed how such change takes place and the progress made, starting with specific productive sectors' practices.

We face the challenge of creating knowledge that can effect change in the patriarchal structures. Creating such knowledge strict calls for a theoretical exercise to establish analytical categories, to classify and arrange empirical elements, to compare analytically the activities with the theoretical basis and assumptions that feed them.

Systematization of gender-focused experiences and dissemination of the lessons learned, help modify patriarchal knowledge and create more democratic practical knowledge, creating a dialogue that questions the established knowledge base. Within this process the experiences of the specialists and communities involved in rural development projects represent our most important source of knowledge, which converts our efforts into an educational process.

A clear understanding of our practices is essential in order to extract and share our experiences, and to build a theory that responds to the reality of the rural environment. That theory should encourage adequate use of available resources as well as equitable distribution of development benefits, considering the needs and diverse interests of women and men.

Overall, gender-based systematization efforts, can constitute important factors in recognizing how gender construction affects creation of knowledge, the establishment of the social contract, and the prevailing social order.

4. Systematization with and from a gender perspective: a window to gender equity

When discussing systematization and gender perspective, two types of systematization processes can be distinguished:

- Systematization of an experience, that does not take into account the gender focus, but nonetheless incorporates it in the proposal and in the systematization process itself.

Two
types of
systematization
process

- Systematization of an experience that does take the gender focus into account and also incorporates it in the proposal and the systematization process itself.

When systematizing an experience of the first type, we can say that our task consists of "systematizing from a gender perspective," that is, taking the gender approach into account in the systematization proposal and its implementation. Throughout systematization process, we will discover that gender has played a significant role, even though it was not expressly taken into consideration.

The central focus of this type of systematization will be to make visible the existing gender reality that is, the complex network of existing inter -and intra- gender power relationships and exposing them to criticism, analysis and interpretation in the hope that the lessons learned will guide our efforts to include the gender perspective in a future proposal.

On the other hand, when systematizing a process that has indeed taken the gender approach into account and, thus, incorporates it in the systematization proposal and implementation (second type), we can say that we are "systematizing with and from a gender perspective."

This type of systematization represents an easier task, because the players involved in the systematization exercise, are already acquainted with the topic, perhaps have even undergone specific training. In those cases, successfully incorporating the gender focus throughout the experience and its adoption by women and men will effect on how easily the ease with which the systematization is carried out.

Both types of systematization involve making the gender reality visible and generating lessons learned that will make possible to include the gender perspective in new proposals. The second type will examine in depth the findings related to formal and informal gender-mainstreaming processes through analysis of the contradictions, moments of tension, and success generated by gender-focused actions. In this type of experience, the gender perspective is taken up again during systematization when it is analyzed and interpreted with the objectives that were agreed upon by consensus.

We must recognize that in our workplaces strict planned systematization exercises are not carried out on a permanent basis, much less with a gender perspective. Thus, within our proposed

framework, the dialectical methodological concept, is a useful theoretical and methodological tool for systematization with and from a gender perspective.

For projects that do not include the gender perspective in their design and implementation, gender-focused systematization can open a "window" or opportunity to unveil the unjust gender reality. By exposing the gender reality to group analysis and deconstructing it, we can use the findings to construct the reality we desire and dream about.

5. Differences between systematization, evaluation and investigation

One of the difficulties experienced in the systematization exercise is related to distinguishing its limits from those of the evaluation and the investigation phases with which it is often confused.

These processes belong to the same family, they share the common objective of understanding reality to generate certain interventions, and knowledge is their field of action. Each of these phases is essential, and their permanent development within the projects improves the quality and impact of our efforts, making the objectives and end results mutually nourishing. The order in which the phases are carried out is not that important; what is more important is trying to make the end results mutually reinforcing.

The following table displays certain specific characteristics of each phase.

Systematization	Evaluation	Investigation
- The objective is to critically interpret about the logic behind the process.	- The objective is to measure the results attained through the experiences, compare them with the diagnostic, the objectives and the established goals.	- The objective is to create scientific knowledge, about an unknown aspect of reality.
- Focused on the dynamics of the processes.	- Focused on the results.	- Focused on the verification of the hypotheses.
- Seeks relationships between theory and practice.	- Seeks the relationship between the objectives and goals and the results attained.	- Seeks the relationship between the facts, the processes and the conceptual structures.
- The person under-taking it must have been involved in the experience that is being systematized.	- The person undertaking it does not necessarily have to have been involved in the process.	- The person undertaking it does not necessarily have to have been involved in the event being investigated.
- Indicates the lessons learned from the processes undertaken.	- Indicates the gaps existing between the activities planned and accomplished.	- Indicates new forms of knowledge about specific matters.

II PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR A GENDER-BASED SYSTEMATIZATION

The proposed framework seeks to facilitate serious and strict systematization processes that mainstream the gender perspective, yet are flexible and creative, not "recipes." Taking the dialectical methodological concept as a starting point, we have developed and worked on a systematization method that mainstreams gender as an integral, permanent and essential element of the entire process. Based on our experience we can offer the following recommendations for persons and institutions wishing to undertake a systematization with and from a gender perspective.

Personal qualifications

The success of gender-based systematization is largely dependent upon the professional and personal qualifications of the people involved in and coordinating the process. Considering that the people who have been involved in the experience should undertake the systematization, we can establish the following differences among the persons involved in the process:

- Those who guide and coordinate the methodological process;
- Those who contribute their experiences and knowledge throughout the systematization process. For instance, the people who benefit from the experience, the implementing organization, the financial institution, etc.

1. Qualifications for leadership and coordinating team

Systematization calls for a small team of individuals whose involvement and responsibilities make them suitable to lead and coordinate the process. It might also be a good idea to include an outsider who has not been involved in the experience to assist with facilitation and methodological orientation. This person should by no means replace the leadership of those who have been involved in the experience, since that would contradict the intention of the process. The goal is the collective assimilation of multidimensional learning experiences and their discovery, assimilation, articulation and transmission by those involved in the process.

Considering the person invited to assist as an expert coming "to do the job for us" might be counterproductive and damaging to the systematization objectives. Even though that person might make useful institutional contributions, the collective articulation and assimilation of the learning experiences cannot be guaranteed since the participants will not be able to appropriate the process. This would mean running the risk that systematization be seen as a merely technical exercise rather than as a live, dynamic process that seeks the individual and collective growth of its participants. New theoretical-methodological inputs to enhance institutional practices and conceptions would not be developed either.

A small team should be formed, led by one or two persons closely linked to the experience from its very conception and design. The option remains to include an additional person to assist the team in accordance with the needs identified by the institution and determined by the nature of the systematization itself. The team should not be conformed exclusively of men, even if they are sensitive and committed to gender equity, as they would not be able to handle adequately the women's strategic interests.

We can make the following basic recommendations about the professional and personal qualifications of the team members:

- Command of gender perspective theory and methodology and experience mainstreaming gender in development projects and programs.
- A personal commitment to gender equality and equity, which implies embracing new principles, attitudes and behaviors.
- Recognition that the changes involved in assimilating the gender perspective entail a personal process of constructing and reconstructing gender identity and receptivity to future changes.
- Adequate command of the dialectical methodological concept of popular education and a commitment to it in everyday life, both public and private.
- Ability to accompany the process without taking charge, which task does often times demand a lot of patience and creativity.

Although it would be ideal for all persons involved in the guidance and coordination of the systematization process, to meet the above qualifications, on many occasions the people contributing their experience and knowledge will not possess the same degree of

theoretical management capabilities as the leaders. In spite of this, their role is essential, given the fact that they must extract lessons learned from the experiences that will contribute to their future enhancement. Thus, the coordinators should appreciate the contributions made by all the people who have been involved in the experience, showing respect and trust regarding their capability and skills, because without them one cannot even speak about systematization, let alone gender-based systematization.

2. Qualifications of those contributing their experience to the systematization process

With regard to the second group mentioned above- those contributing their experience to the systematization process- there are three important qualifications that will contribute to the success of the experience: an interest in learning from the experience, the sensitivity to let the experience speak for itself, and analysis and synthesis skills.

Interest in learning from the experience

It is wrong to believe that every person willing to systematize has the ability to "learn from the experience." Instead, the patriarchal system and the vertical approach that prevail within the educational system and other social institutions, such as the family and the church, conceive of us as passive, empty objects that need to be filled, rather than teaching us to question reality. Whether within the family, school or church, in traditional education we receive knowledge previously acquired by others who are considered intellectually superior. From this point of view, those "above" know what those "below" need to learn.

These notions make us accomplices of the formal and informal systems that seek to educate us in the broadest sense of the word, but that very seldom consider, those same teaching/learning processes worthy of study or a source of knowledge. As a result of the passiveness assumed in these processes or a genuine desire to accumulate the knowledge offered, because it is often difficult to develop the skills necessary to nourish "the interest in learning from experience."

The accumulation of knowledge is a means of attaining power, which is why men have historically reserved for themselves the right to access and control natural and social sciences and their respective institutions. Thus, the research and education have become a means to attain the power derived from knowledge and its transmission.

In contrast, systematization focuses on the processes and experiences as objects of study themselves, which entails a totally different emphasis. This understanding education implies breaking not only with traditional thought patterns, but also with the way that we live our gender identities. Due to the close relationship between knowledge, power and masculine gender, these changes are generally more difficult for men. They are not easy for women either, however, since women assume a similar relationship with respect to knowledge and power throughout their lives.

In this sense, learning from experience must take an integral approach, considering the objective and subjective scope of the experience, as well as the way in which the patriarchal system has shaped and conditioned it. It is important that we learn from our actions and their effect on others: men on women, women on men, women on women, and men on men.

Jara (1998) points out that to develop an interest in learning from experience, we must "break away from the traditional thought and education patterns that, have often deformed us". Our very first "deformation" began with the imposition of the gender schemes deemed appropriate for women and men, which affix a particular seal to the experiences we want to systematize. Therefore, if we are aiming for gender equality and equity, we must identify such schemes and break them.

Recognizing that we are part of the experience we wish to systematize and that we experience it through our gender condition and position, we must ask ourselves: How does our way of thinking, talking and acting, as women and men, have a negative or positive effect on the promotion of gender equity in all of the experience's scopes and settings? The answer to this question will lead us to very important findings.

Sensitivity to let the experience speak for itself

The second qualification of the person contributing his/her expertise to systematization, is the sensitivity to let the experience speak for itself, a task that is made difficult because of our educational "deformations" and gender conceptions. Thus, we must learn not to impose our criteria and prejudices, but rather to enhance our observation and perception skills, particularly with regard to the complex inter- and intragender power relationships.

In any analysis of reality there will always be hidden elements, scopes and shades to discover, which will be made easier by a curious attitude and a questioning disposition. Experience teaches us that it is best to open our hearts and minds with a humble and receptive attitude about what we might learn with regard to gender-related aspects, this receptive attitude will free us from discriminatory prejudices and practices, and allow us to consider the distinct manner in which women and men have lived the experience and how it has been positively and negatively affected by those distinctions.

Our everyday life is influenced by a complex network of gender relationships revealing a reality that usually remains hidden. Women may have lived and interpreted an experience quite differently from the men, and by incorporating gender analysis into systematization we avoid the risk of homogenizing the experience and limiting the lessons learned. Therefore, those involved in systematization need to develop personal and methodological skills that enable them to hear the voice of women in particular.

Analysis and synthesis skills

The imposition of gender schemes implies that men possess greater capacity than women to undertake analysis, abstraction and synthesis, a premise that is absolutely unacceptable from the point of view of a gender-based systematization. That notion contributes to the fact that the analytical and synthesis skills of those undertaking the process are more focused on the objective elements of the experience. For this reason it is important to include the subjective dimensions and to expose them to analysis and synthesis, taking into account the practical needs and strategic interests of gender.

It then becomes essential for those planning to undertake systematization to have an adequate command of not only the gender-related theory, but also the techniques for extracting integral analysis of the experience, from the point of view of equity between women and men. Nevertheless, stereotyped gender models constitute one of the greatest obstacles to achieving this end.

Learning to systematize from a gender perspective entails rejecting those models and opening ourselves to other alternatives as women and men. We must start by analyzing who we are and how we came to be that way, which demands an unwavering commitment to gender equality and equity.

The above does not mean that systematization can be undertaken only by people who have adequately assimilated the gender focus. The coherence between practice and theory and the facility for analysis and synthesis may be acquired during the process itself. Gender-based systematization gives us the opportunity to broaden our horizons, break with traditional schemes and roles, overcome prejudices and stereotypes, and discover new possibilities as women and men and for the relationships between the two.

Institutional
qualities

"Systematization cannot continue being a claim or an isolated quixotic effort made by one or more persons within our workplaces; it must be defined with the overall institutional strategy" (Jara, 1998).

3. Institutional receptiveness and assimilation of the systematization proposal methodology

To undertake systematization from a gender perspective the methodological proposal must be assimilated at all levels of the organization or project, and there must be political will to promote internal reflection and critical analysis of experiences. The extent to which the methodological proposal for systematization is assumed by the institution will affect the degree of success and the corresponding allocation of time and resources.

When institutional will is lacking, it is very unlikely that the lessons learned from the systematization experience will be turned into collective learning and integrated into the organization's or project's global plans. But even in the case of somewhat unfavorable institutional conditions, systematization enhances the future practices of the organization or project, as well as people who will carry them out.

4. Institutional receptiveness to and assimilation of the gender perspective

Another critical element of systematization is the political will to open broader spaces for critical reflection and for putting forth proposals on gender relationships within the different institutional scopes, environments and levels. Although it may not be necessary to implement a fully enforced institutional gender policy, there must definitely exist a legitimate interest in commitment to and awareness of the need to mainstream the gender component. It is also unlikely that all of the institution's staff will possess the same degree of

knowledge about and commitment to gender equality and equity. But it is worth aiming for a common denominator, sensitizing and training women and men.

5. Management's position

In order to guarantee that the gender focus is mainstreamed into the entire systematization process, all management bodies within the institution must clearly understand the significance of this approach. Absolute reluctance makes it practically impossible to undertake a gender-based systematization and may lead to serious institutional contradictions, personal frustrations, and even personal confrontations.

Among rural development and other organizations, with the exception of women's organizations and some mixed organizations, leadership continues to be heavily exercised by men, who still reject gender mainstreaming as a transversal axis of institutional strategy. There are women in leadership positions who also show strong resistance and fear.

If a gender-based systematization proposal does not originate with the management, but with a work team conformed by institutional personnel or even outside agents, the institutional dispositions that will contribute to the successful implementation of the process and the financial costs involved should be evaluated. When the institution's endorsement is lacking, even if it does not imply direct opposition, the level achieved by the systematization might fall below the level expected.

On the other hand, systematization might be just the window to gender equality and equity and an opportunity to initiate institutional awareness about the need for this approach to be included in the future with greater decision and intent. There are instances when it is necessary to take risks to open new paths within organizations and projects.

6. Conformation and coherence within the work teams

It might be counterproductive if only the management structures are aware of the usefulness of gender-based systematization. Without basic knowledge about the methodological proposal and a minimum commitment to gender equity, the work teams undertaking the systematization will face the risk of failure and internal confrontations.

Therefore, education on the gender-based systematization method, as well as gender training and sensitization, should be fully incorporated into the institutional strategy for program and project implementation and should become a tool through which team members' personal and collective growth is fostered.

It must be recognized that this vision of work and collective growth, where mutual collaboration and support prevail, continues to be a goal seldom achieved. Instead, common practices within organizations and projects are characterized by the accumulation of experiences that lack a homogeneous approach and correspond to styles that promote individualism, competition and disloyalty.

Precisely for that reason, institutional proposals on gender-based systematization must not be perceived as an extra burden for the work teams and a new source of division and conflict. Balance must be struck among the various actions that make up the experience, which often are lived as activism and the institutional need to generate knowledge and lessons learned for collective enhancement.

Sharing knowledge and lessons learned encourages cohesion among the work team and assimilation of a more integral and strategic approach. And if this involves the analysis of unjust gender relationships, including those existing within the team itself, the team members will acquire new theoretical, methodological and political tools to induce change in the various ambits of everyday life. This effort represents an opportunity for the improvement and harmonization of human relationships within organizations and projects.

Thus, due consideration should be given to the diverse and often contradictory experiences, expectations, principles and values of the work teams. Elements of gender awareness and its conceptual handling and practical application are never alike, and it is very likely that those will become more evident in women than in men. These imbalances may become a source of tension and conflict unless the specific needs of women and men are taken into account. To level out methodological concepts and knowledge, it would be very valuable to have an institutional policy aimed at fostering the professional skills and human values of the team members.

It is equally important that all those involved in the process have a receptive attitude about critical reflection on the power relationships existing between men and women. It would be better to leave individuals without such an attitude of the team.

7. Searching for an integral institutional strategy

Although development organizations and projects increasingly talk about and strive to achieve an integral work approach, little progress is made internally. Therefore, greater emphasis must be placed on the systematization of working experiences, similar to that given to planning, implementation, evaluation and investigation. The relationship among these efforts must also be recognized, particularly that between monitoring, evaluation and systematization.

The gender perspective should be an axis cutting across all of the institution's activities. It will do little good to include this perspective into systematization, if we continue applying patriarchal approaches in the diagnostics, planning or evaluation phases.

As a matter of fact, in most rural development organizations and projects, rather than being a transversal axis of all activities, gender continues to be the responsibility of a "sub-team" of people, mostly women, concerned about and committed to gender equity. This is the reality we must start from when implementing gender-based systematization.

Thus, we are faced with a very important challenge that emphasizes the urgent need to systematize experiences seeking to mainstream gender as the transversal axis of institutional strategy, in order to achieve an integral and integrationalist approach based on greater ethical consistency at an internal level.

8. Creating our own way of thinking

Mainstreaming gender into institutional policy marks a new phase in gender development and facilitates the construction of a more integral work strategy. It also gives us a chance to pause and learn from the accumulated experience, particularly with respect to the search for equity in relationships between women and men. When we systematize programs that address awareness-raising, credit, technical-training, health, etc., with and from a gender perspective, we are better able to identify the elements that have facilitated or hindered the various stages of the process. This also provides us with better theoretical and methodological lessons to enhance our work strategies.

Through the gender-based systematization of experiences, we are creating our own way of thinking, influenced by the institution's commitment to gender equity, which is promoted through not only programs and projects, but also the organization's culture, values, and internal life.

III

HOW TO INCLUDE THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN SYSTEMATIZATION

We must recognize that the topic of systematization is of vital importance to those involved in development projects, whether related to education, forestry, conservation, credit, etc. Problems can arise when trying to define the systematization method to be used; therefore we must recreate or appropriate a method that responds to the interests and objectives of the experience.

There are different approaches and methods for developing systematization practices, that respond to the specific nature of the various projects and their distinct objectives. Espinoza Vergara (1999) summarizes some routes and models followed by certain organizations and specialists, but none of them incorporate the gender perspective.

Gender-based systematization seeks the adoption of a policy that promotes the changes that will lead to more equitable relationships between women and men. It also implies demonstrating through the reconstruction analysis and interpretation of the experience, the effect of power relationships, inequalities, and the mechanisms or actions that contributed to their transformation.

We understand systematization as the conceptualization and formulation of lessons learned, starting from the critical interpretation of the experience. That interpretation calls for interrelating the objective and subjective visions of those who participated directly or indirectly in the experience, the immediate processes with their contexts, practice with the theoretical assumptions that inspired it, and the relationships between genders.

Our methodological proposal involves an eight-step systematization process:

1. Definition of the systematization objective.
2. Definition of the object of systematization.
3. Definition of the systematization axis.
4. Historical reconstruction.

*Systema-
tization
concept:*

5. Data assembly and classification.
6. Critical interpretation.
7. Elaboration of conclusions and lessons learned.
8. Elaboration of communication products.

1. Definition of the systematization objective

By defining the objective, we try to identify what we exactly want to achieve from the systematization:

- Define why we want to systematize.
- Determine the sense, the product expected to be obtained from the systematization.
- Explicitly include in the drafting of the objective, the search for equity, given that it is one of the principles governing systematization.

The objective should answer the question: Why do we want to systematize? The response is usually related to the organization's strategic interests.

The following questions can be of great help in formulating the objective:

- Is the objective defined in clear and precise language?
- Does it constitute a viable objective for the project and the people involved in the systematization?
- Will fulfillment of the objective guarantee useful inputs for our work or for future institutional policy?
- Does the objective precisely define the end result expected from systematization?

This last question helps us to focus on the language being used. It is always helpful to begin the wording with an infinitive verb, such as to rescue, to recognize, or to recover, and to add the phrase "in order to". This guarantees that the expected result and its future usefulness are defined.

For instance, the Center for Popular Education and Communication CANTERA will systematize its gender-related courses with and among men, taking into account the need to propose new methods for raising awareness on the subject of gender and masculinity. The objective of this effort is "to recognize, appreciate and fine tune the most important elements of masculinity and popular-education courses that contribute to raising awareness about and changing gender relationships in order to contribute with methodological proposals for approaching the issue of masculinity with and among men".

The Program for Potable Water, Sanitation and Community Organization, PASOC (Nicaragua), decided to create mechanisms to integrate the gender perspective into its work in a coherent way. As a result, PASOC will conduct a systematization with the objective of "identifying the methodological aspects of community organization and management that have made it possible to apply the gender approach, in order to generate lessons learned and inputs that will improve those efforts".

2. Defining the object of systematization

This step involves selecting the specific experience(s) to be systematized and clearly delimiting the time and place. A definition of the object of systematization should, among other things:

- Delimit specific aspects of the experience to be systematized.
- Determine where the experience to be systematized will take place.
- Define the exact time span of the experience to be systematized.

The object of systematization should answer the questions: What experiences are we going to systematize? Which time period within the experience will we look at?

For example, the Center for Popular Education, whose objective was to recognize, appreciate and fine tune the most important elements of masculinity and popular-education courses..., define the object of systematization as follows: "The methodological courses on masculinity and popular education imparted in Nicaragua during the period 1994-1997."

The development organization whose systematization objective is to identify the methodological aspects of community organization and management that integrated the gender approach, defined its object as follows: "Training sessions on the gender perspective imparted to potable water and sanitation committees, CAPS, support groups and work groups from aqueduct and sanitation projects in specific communities in New Guinea between 1995 and 1997."

As can be seen, the definition of the object can vary considerably. The important thing is to specify clearly the experience or experiences that will be systematized, where and when they will be covered.

3. Definition of the systematization axis

The axis determines the focus the systematization will take. It tells us which aspect will be used for reconstruction and critical interpretation of the experience. To guarantee that the gender perspective is included in the systematization, the axis should be on: gender relationships, expressed according to the experience in question.

Some characteristics of the systematization axis are:

- Determines the systematization's focus in order to avoid dispersion.
- Serves as a guiding thread running throughout the experience and making reference to its central aspects.
- It is a common point of reference around which revolve the guidelines for historical reconstruction, data assembly, critical analysis, and the elaboration of conclusions.
- Articulates the various elements involved in systematization and helps to make the process work.
- Represents an emphasis or central approach, with a political interest at stake.

The axis integrates methodological as well as policy components and is related to the strategic interests and objectives of the organization implementing the systematization.

For example, seeking to recognize, appreciate and fine tune the most important elements of masculinity and popular education- courses the Center for Popular Education, defined the following axis for systematization: "Methodological and educational elements, that have helped dismant masculine paradigms and encourage changes in the attitudes, values and behavior of the men who participated in the experience."

The rural development project interested in improving its methodological proposals in order to guarantee the application of the gender perspective formulated its axis as follows: "Methodological elements that have hindered or favored the achievement of greater equity in men's and women's participation, as well as improved relationships between them in CAPS, support groups, and work groups".

As these examples indicate, the systematization axis can be defined in different ways. One single experience can even be systematized from various axes, depending on needs or interests.

The axis defined must be coherent with the objective and the object; at the same time, the axis must also be consistent with the mission and objectives of the organization promoting systematization.

Once the object, the objective and the axis have been defined, all three should be critically reviewed, verifying the characteristics of each one, and ensuring coherence among all three. A change in anyone of these aspects would call for modifications to the other two.

4. Historical reconstruction

The next step calls for us to review the experience history, and determine what happened, stressing the descriptive elements and arranging them in chronological order.

During this phase we will:

- Define the data gathering mechanisms.
- Facilitate orderly reconstruction of the experience.
- Identify the important stages or periods of the experience.
- Facilitate the design of reconstruction guides or matrixes.

The level of detail with which reconstruction is undertaken, the procedures used, and the time spent, depend more than anything on the duration and complexity of the experience being systematized (the object), but also on the degree of precision defined by the axis.

Since it is likely that the actors experienced facts and events in an intense way, we must keep an account of the different interpretations, particularly those made by women and men based on their own subjectivity, which should unveil the gender relationships exactly as they occurred within the experience. The history of those directly affected by the experience can be reconstructed through testimony, stories, narratives, interviews, songs, socio-dramas, and other techniques.

During this phase it is important to report the manner in which the actors have interacted, as well as any changes or ruptures that have occurred in the daily lives of the women and men.

It may be useful to draw up a timetable that reflects the facts and their corresponding graphic representation. Existing records make it easier to arrange the timetable, which should include events from the local, national, and international context related to the experience.

Some teams prepare matrixes to make general reconstruction of the experience easier. One way of doing it is to list the major actions, indicating next to each, its objective, the national context for that topic, the gender-related behavior, and the implementing organization's vision of the experience. This procedure will also make it easier to undertake critical analysis of the process.

For example, during reconstruction, CANTERA took into account institutional background, national gender policies, the dynamics of the courses, parallel activities that arose out of workshop discussions, and institutional brainstorming on the subject.

As for the courses, the following was undertaken: a) reconstruction and arrangement of the overall design: modalities, topics, thematic axes periods, sequence of content and explanation of its relationship; b) explanation of the indicators used both to evaluate the results as well as to investigate the impact.

In its historical reconstruction, PASOC produced detailed account of the educational activities taking into account the project gender policies, as well as those of the collaborating agency, and the local context.

As can be seen, the form and aspects to be considered in the historical reconstruction depend on the type of systematization being carried out. Most importantly, reconstruction should provide an overall vision of the project.

It is quite possible that an initial periodization of the experience will surface at this point; that periodization will indicate the various stages of the experience, and will be recognized as such by those involved.

5. Data arranging and classification

Once an integral vision of the process has been obtained, an attempt must be made to classify the data according to the basic aspects or components that meet the demands of the systematization axis. This arrangement and classification need not to follow a chronological order.

For example, CANTERA proposed the following way of arranging its experience:

- *Established objectives.*
- *Basis of the experience: theoretical, methodological and political budgets, previous experience.*
- *General logic surrounding the course development, arrangement of the courses within the systematization period: design, objectives, content, etc., and characteristics of the participants attending each of the workshops.*
- *Achievements and difficulties, taking into account the evaluations.*
- *Actions arising out of the workshops and the institutional dynamics.*
- *Repercussions of the process.*

PASOC, which define its axis as the methodological elements that made it possible to mainstream the gender perspective, arranged and classified its data as follows:

- *Activities oriented toward identifying problems.*
- *Efforts to incorporate women into the program.*
- *Achievements.*
- *Weaknesses.*
- *Inclusion of the gender perspective as a component of community organization.*
- *Gender sensitization at the organization's highest management levels.*
- *Gender sensitization activities involving the project's target population and communities.*

In summary, data assembly and classification should make it possible to reconstruct with precision the various aspects of the experience, considering the components as part of a process. As in the examples, the systematization axis, the actions and the results, as well as the intentions and opinions of both the promoters of the experience and the participants should be taken into account.

6. Critical interpretation

This stage involves in-depth reflection on the experience, taking into account the following:

- The objective and subjective interpretations of the women and men who participated in the experience.
- The position of the key elements that facilitated or weakened the experience.
- Identification of the experience's meanings.
- When tensions and contradictions occurred.

- How the experience relates to history, gender relationships and the context.
- Identification of pertinent topics that arose out of the experience.

This is a key stage of systematization because it is when we try to go beyond the experience to better understand and interpret it. That involves an orderly manner so that we can explain what took place throughout the process. This is an analytical exercise that attempts to identify the tensions or contradictions that arose during the experience in order to better relate theory to practice and practice to institutional policies, interpretations of the facts and their meanings, changes that occurred from a gender perspective, among other factors.

One of the basic interpretation tools is a list of key questions related to the experience and the formulation of topics for further study that arose during the experience.

At this point, the key question is: Why did what took place happen? How do we explain what happened, given existing power relationships?

Our critical interpretation, should include an explanation of how the project did or did not contribute to women's empowerment and to more equitable relationships between women and men. It should also explain whether the project helped improve women's position and condition, and whether it contributed to the gender construction of feminine and masculine identities being reconsidered. In addition, it should also account for whether or not the project activities improved women's access to decision making, resources, services and information.

Reference should be made to how power relationships were expressed in the experience, and to the changes in the gender relationships between those involved in the experience.

If the project is a gender-based project, then the critical interpretation should refer to the equity-related actions and achievements. If the project or systematized experience did not include the gender perspective, then the critical interpretation should indicate the fundamental gaps in that regards, perhaps even pointing out actions that could have been undertaken to attain equity.

For example, CANTERA, which systematizes its experiences with masculinity training, posed the following questions:

- *Individual and collective lessons learned from the courses:*
- *What have they learned and how? Methodological and theoretical knowledge acquired.*
- *Changes in masculine identities: self-perception, self-esteem, trust, tolerance of differences.*
- *Behavioral changes: What has and has not changed in the following spheres: personal, family, conjugal, friends, work, and community? How come some things change and others do not?*
- *Democratization of power: conceptualization of power; spaces conceded, attitude changes, sense of equity.*
- *Which points or aspects of the experience working with masculinity are most important or relevant?*
- *What are our doubts, fears, concerns, or criticisms about masculinity-related work?*

PASOC, on the other hand, asked the following questions:

- *Why was the task carried out as it was?*
- *Why did the events occur?*
- *Which changes were incorporated into the educational model between 1995 and 1997 and why?*
- *Which didactical materials were used?*
- *Out of the didactical materials used and created for the program, which were most useful to the promoters?*
- *How was religion-based resistance overcome? Which methodological aspect or element of the educational model permitted change?*
- *How did gender relationships change and why?*
- *How did the institution and the context influence the process?*

These questions demonstrate the diverse interpretative approaches that can be applied in systematization as well as the various forms of analysis, identification of contradictions and synthesis. At times, given the contradictions found during interpretation and analysis, issues surface that, when discussed may make significant contributions to the process.

In addition to the questions indicated above, we can also add many more questions specifically related to gender relationships. It might be helpful to refer to the conceptual framework in module 9 of this series, which indicates certain factors that should be considered during critical interpretation.

7. Elaboration of conclusions and lessons learned

This phase of systematization allows us to:

- Prepare a synthesis of the systematized process.
- Determine the lessons learned that will make it possible to improve practice itself and the relationship between women and men.
- Determine which of the lessons learned that can be broadly applied, explicitly recognizing those that did or did not contribute to gender equity.
- Prepare assertions or hypothesis resulting from the experience.

Reflection and analysis lead to the formulation of theoretical and practical conclusions. These conclusions should be related to the systematization axis, provide answers to the objectives proposed from the beginning, and indicate specific answers about gender relationships. If the experience was developed with and from a gender perspective, as in the case of the examples presented, such contributions should be included throughout the analysis.

The theoretical conclusions that arise out of the analysis of the experience should be compared against existing theories or proposals on the subject of systematization so that both can be mutually enriched. In addition, based on analysis of the experience, hypotheses can be developed that might prompt new theoretical contributions.

The conclusions from the experience should be taken into account in order to improve or enhance the future efforts of both the implementing organization and other institutions.

For example, CANTERA formulated theoretical conclusions and recommendations regarding the methodological, theoretical and pedagogical contributions of its dialectical methodological concept that may effect changes in masculine identities in various public and private environments. These contributions will have an impact on educational processes oriented toward personal and institutional change, the methodological consideration of "taboo" topics, the collective creation of new masculinity-related concepts, and the relationship between masculine power and gender equity.

PASOC will have to formulate conclusions about the methodological elements that promote gender equity within a community project and will have to provide contributions that will influence policy changes, at the level of both the implementing organizations and local government.

8. Elaboration of the communication products

This phase consists of two activities:

- Elaboration of the final document.
- Elaboration of materials in order to share the experience with the participants as well as any others who might be interested.

It is extremely important to document and record the systematization process and the lessons learned. The materials produced will make it possible to share with other persons and groups the lessons learned during and the concepts that arose out of the systematization. We must keep in mind that the various materials can all contain information on different topics related to the project or experience.

We should stress the importance of the systematization's communication factor. In order to influence in diverse realms, it is recommended that various products that communicate the experience be prepared. Recreating the experience with some of the actors may make it easier to establish new relationships and work methods within the organization or project, as well as within organizations involved in similar projects.

When considering and planning how to communicate the experience, all types of creative resources should be taken advantage of, such as theatre, cartoons, videos, graphics, short stories, radiograms, etc.

The following elements must be defined for each communication product:

- The target population.
- The objective pursued.
- The specific content.

Once a decision has been made about the products, a work schedule should be prepared that assigns responsibilities to those involved in the elaboration of the different materials. To ensure high-quality materials, the systematization team members should review the drafts.

Product communicability is one of the central elements that justifies systematization efforts. That is why it is very important that the intended audience. This experience also represents a lesson learned for the project to be taken into account when the materials are being prepared.

The methodological proposal that we have presented here should be considered as a basic platform for undertaking systematization. In each particular case, specific aspects will prevail that impact the expected results.

Conclusion

As we have seen, systematization is an innovative, creative, transforming task. It involves a course of action that lets us look at what we do from a different angle and that contributes to our thoughts on how we will continue. Our proposal for systematization with and from a gender perspective entails a qualitative leap in the task of unveiling power relationships and their impact on our actions.

We sincerely hope that our contribution will encourage other people, particularly the staff of projects and organizations involved in sustainable and equitable rural development, to start promoting spaces for criticism and reflection which, as a whole, will contribute to improve our endeavors in this area. We are absolutely certain that this practice will also help to improve and enhance the methodological guidelines we have proposed, which, in turn, will result in their validation and strengthening.

IV BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barrechea, M., González, E., Morgan, M.

Taller Permanente de Sistematización: La Producción de Conocimientos en Sistematización. Lima, Perú, August, 1998.

Blanco, L., Rodríguez, G. and Brenes, I.

Propuesta para la Construcción de las Políticas de Desarrollo Rural del Ministerio de Agricultura de Costa Rica, como parte del Foro Nacional de Concertación. Unpublished manuscript, Agenda Política de Mujeres: San José. 1999.

CANTERA

La Sistematización: concepción y método (Workshop Report). Managua, Nicaragua. 1995.

CANTERA

Curso Intensivo de Sistematización (Workshop Report). Managua, Nicaragua. 1997.

Espinoza, M.

Apuntes Básicos sobre Sistematización de Experiencias. (part of a book by the same author, forthcoming). Managua, Nicaragua. May, 1999.

Ghiso, A.

De la Práctica Singular al Diálogo con lo Plural. FUNLAM, Medellín, Colombia. August, 1998.

Hleap, Js.

Sistematizando Experiencias Educativas. Universidad del Valle: Cali, Colombia. S.F.E.

Jara, O.

Para Sistematizar Experiencias. ALFORJA, 3rd edition. San José, Costa Rica. 1998.

El Aporte de la Sistematización a la Renovación Teórico-Práctica de los Movimientos Sociales. ALFORJA/CEAAL, San José, Costa Rica. August, 1998.

Sistematización de Experiencias (Workshop Report). Multidiversidad Franciscana: Montevideo. September, 1998.

Martinic, S.

El objeto de la sistematización y sus relaciones con la evaluación y la investigación. CIDE: Santiago, Chile. S.F.E.

Lagarde, M.

La regulación social del género: el género como filtro de poder. Consejo Nacional de Población. S.F.E.

Género e identidades genéricas. Metodología de trabajo con mujeres. FUNDETEC, UNICEF. 2nd edition. Ecuador. 1994.

Osorio, J.

Cruzar la Orilla: Debates Emergentes sobre los Profesionales de la Acción Social y Educativa. Santiago, Chile. April, 1998.

- MODULE 1 A GOOD START MAKES A BETTER ENDING**
Writing Proposals with a Gender Perspective Proposes a series of preconditions that contribute to the design of a project proposal containing the basic ingredients needed to facilitate the incorporation of a gender equity perspective.
- MODULE 2 SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND**
Creating Participatory Appraisals with a Gender Perspective Basic recommendations for carrying out participatory appraisals with a gender equity perspective.
- MODULE 3 IF WE ORGANIZE IT WE CAN DO IT**
Project Planning with a Gender Perspective Taking the step from appraisal to action using planning techniques that respond to the needs expressed by women and men.
- MODULE 4 TAKING THE PULSE OF GENDER**
Gender-Sensitive Systems for Monitoring and Evaluation Basic guidelines for designing an evaluation and monitoring system that reveals gender inequities.
- MODULE 5 IN UNITY THERE IS POWER**
Processes of Participation and Empowerment Examines the issue of power and its effect on development initiatives. An innovative presentation of carefully selected techniques for analyzing power and approaching the construction of new and more equitable and democratic forms of participation.
- MÓDULO 6 EYES THAT SEE...HEARTS THAT FEEL**
Equity Indicators Proposes methodology for defining indicators with men and women in the communities. Presents a set of indicators to identify and assess progress toward more equitable relations, and actions that enable a project to develop along paths that are more democratic and just.
- MODULE 7 PRACTICING WHAT WE PREACH**
Toward Administration and Management with Equity Considerations that can help organizations develop more equitable forms of administration and management.
- MODULE 8 SHARING SECRETS**
Systematization from a Gender Perspective Proposes methodology for a participatory systematization of the experiences and outcomes of initiatives in the field using gender relations as the focal point for analysis.
- MODULE 9 UNVEILING GENDER**
Basic Conceptual Elements for Understanding Equity Presents elements for a basic understanding of gender theory, along with a glossary of the terms most frequently used in the Toward Equity series.