

REDUCING THE GAP: GENDER IN AGRICULTURE FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE IN WESTERN HONDURAS

In Honduras, poverty and food insecurity are widespread. These conditions affect women in particular, partly because women have less access than men do to resources for agricultural production.

The Honduran Government adopted national policies to reduce this gender gap. But these policies did not have significant impact because municipalities were either implementing them ineffectively or not at all.

Beginning in 2013, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), a Feed the Future partner agency, and Lutheran World Relief teamed up with women's networks in a project designed to increase local implementation of the national policies. The networks, which were in nine municipalities in western Honduras, represented more than 3,000 women.

The project, Gender in Agriculture from Policy to Practice (GAPP), built the capacity of women to act as advocates for implementation of national policies in their respective municipalities. GAPP also worked with men to inform them of the advantages of gender equity and equality and engage them as additional advocates. Throughout the project, USAID ensured that women led the process and had the capacity to continue to organize, work together and engage government in promoting gender equality.

Because of this capacity building, the Candelaria Municipal Network on Women (MUDESCA), consisting of 32 community-based women's groups, was successful in negotiating with the municipality of Candelaria to open a Municipal Office on Women. The women secured funding from Candelaria to finance agricultural initiatives for such products as coffee, maize and beans. The municipality signed an agreement with MUDESCA to mandate that one of the five annual town hall meetings be dedicated to addressing women's needs.



Ilsian Coronada Diaz with radishes she grew in her home garden in the community of Las Haciendas, located in the municipality of Candelaria. Photo Credit: Morgan Arnold.

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women have stronger leadership skills to advocate for more investment in women's agricultural activities.

Elena Menjivar, a member of the network, participated in the program and credits the training for providing her with the negotiation and advocacy skills to put ideas about equality and gender equity into practice.

At a rural credit institution, Lenca rural credit bank, it was difficult for women to get loans. They had to provide a property deed as collateral, and many of the rural women lacked such deeds. But after men at the bank took part in GAPP-organized discussions about gender equality, they became more conscientious about changing the bank's internal rules. They no longer require women to provide a property deed to obtain a loan.

Such changes have occurred throughout the municipalities where GAPP operated during its 2.5-year life span. Municipal-level funds approved for women's groups as a result of GAPP efforts totaled \$68,768 for 170 projects, and 56 rural savings and loan cooperatives also changed internal policies and practices to facilitate women's access to financial services.

Through USAID, Feed the Future's participation in GAPP promoted change in Honduras and helped local civil society partners to advocate inclusive development in their communities and ensure that agricultural development benefits both women and men.

"I learned a lot because I was able to replicate the modules that I studied with groups from the [training]."

"And with all of this, I was able to expand my knowledge about the laws that protect us and issues related to agriculture that are of great interest to us as women."

- Elena Menjivar, Member
Candelaria Municipal Network on
Women (MUDESCA)