SANREM CRSP RESEARCH BRIEF
Sustainable Agriculture & Natural Resource Management Collaborative Research Support Program
2002 No. 8

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ABOUT SANREM CRSP

SANREM's mission is to assist in the analysis, creation and successful application of decision support methods, institutional innovations and local capacity approaches to support participatory sustainable agriculture and natural resource planning, management and policy analysis at local, municipal, provincial and national levels.

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TYPOLOGIES OF PRODUCTION AND POWER: HOUSEHOLD LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES AND GENDER ROLES IN AN ANDEAN FRONTIER ECONOMY

What is the relationship between household production strategies and gendered division of labor, control of resources, and decision-making authority? How does the cultural valuation and public recognition of gender roles shape the balance of power within households and communities?

Rural households and communities have often been assumed to be homogenous entities that are uniformly impacted by development and whose members have equal relationships to the environment. Recent studies show that households and communities are characterized instead by complex patterns of social differentiation, not only in terms of wealth and status, but also in terms of the diversified mix of livelihood strategies they rely upon to meet their needs.

Production strategy analysis is an interdisciplinary research approach that elucidates how different household livelihood portfolios draw from specific patterns of resources mobilization and social organization. The resulting typology maps the relation of household economics to natural resource management and community power dynamics.

Within households, the approach recognizes there are significant behavioral and perceptual differences between how women and men view and use the environment. Yet, it refutes the eco-feminist postulation of women's innate privileged link to nature (Shiva 1989), by explaining such differences in terms of the tasks women and men perform, the resources they access and control, and the decisions they are able to make.

This brief illustrates an application of production strategy analysis in the SANREM CRSP Ecuadorian site, carried out by Iowa State University's rural sociologist Cornelia Butler Flora and her colleagues, in collaboration with development professionals from the international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) Heifer Project International and Terra Nueva and the Ecuadorian NGO COMMUNIDEC .

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BACKGROUND

The area is located within the buffer zone of the Cotacachi Cayapas Ecological Reserve, north of the Ecuadorian capital, Quito. The region includes various land use strategies. Production strategies include annual crops (maize, beans, cassava) perennial crops (sugar cane, plantain, fruits), pasture-livestock operations, and agro-industrial enterprises.

Formerly an agricultural frontier region, it is mostly populated by settlers who came in search of farmland and employment. This influx was facilitated by construction of an improved road in the 1950s that linked the area to commerce and consumption centers. Easy transport to Quito has also allowed some households access to the informal urban economy and to improved educational opportunities.

The creations of large sugar cane plantations along the Ecuadorian coast has prompted peripheral areas, such as Nanegal, to shift from exporting raw cane to producing value-added commodities. Local households focused on two semi-refined products that are consumed by low- and middle- income classes and that are labor intensive but require low capital investments: brown sugar cakes (*panela*) and sugar cane liquor (*trago*).

METHODOLOGY

A participatory population and agricultural census, carried out by community members themselves, provided data on livelihood strategies and household composition. These data served as the basis for constructing a typology by using multiple classification analysis.

The gender division of labor, resource distribution, and decision-making patterns within the household were explored in the course of in-depth interviews with men and women from representative household types. Participatory research tools, such as collective drawings and socio-dramas,enabled researchers to elaborate a matrix of idealized gender roles and elicit the cultural values attributed to tasks performed by men and women.

Production strategy typology

Landless wage laborers (*jornaleros*)

Most have low educational levels, and belong to small households in their early developmental stage. Because they are paid for piecework, participation by women and children is needed to ensure efficiency. Yet, men can sell labor more easily than women and control the income. When they are hired, women receive lower pay than men. These households have the lowest access to resources and the highest degree of gender inequality.

Landless sharecroppers (*partidarios*)

They have lived in the community for over 15 years and their households are larger. They have temporary access to smallplots of land (about 2ha total), and grow short-cycle crops which are dictated by the landowner and are labor intensive. Women and children participate in all farming tasks, especially in planting and harvesting. Women do not get land as sharecroppers, but plant food crops for consumption on land allocated to their husbands.

Owners of remote steep land (*montaneros*)

They have small households just beginning their development cycle. Their holdings are large (over 40ha) but mostly in steep, remote lands. They may grow maize, raise beef cattle, or rent land to sharecroppers. Men and women may also work as day laborers or property caretakers. Households reside off the land, to enable children to attend school, a decision often influenced by women. Women have more control of property, but are subject to pressures stemming from the absence of men (who are working at distant farms).

Small-scale diversified producers (*diversificados*)

They have medium size households, with at least 2 adult men, which enable them to grow labor- intensive sugar cane and short-cycle crops (maize, beans). Their holdings include parcels in different areas and range between 5ha and 15ha, including uncultivated slopes, pasture, and cropland. They use chemical inputs and occasionally hire laborers. Women are engaged in food crop and small livestock production, and contribute to land decisions.

Small-scale cattle producers (*ganaderos*)

Most immigrated as adults and their households average more than 3 men. Their livelihood strategies and land holdings are similar to those of *diversificados*, but are more focused on livestock. Women are responsible for milking and caring for cows; they sell the milk and control the revenues. Men market the beef and make most livestock management decisions, which rarely include efforts to improve dairy production. These households also raise sugar cane and food crops, using machinery and chemicals. They may rent land to sharecroppers, and work off farm outside the community.

Producers of sugar cane liquor (*tragueros*)

They are either born in the area or have been there for a long time. Their holdings range between 5 ha and 30 ha, but part of it may be steep forested land. They derive most of their income from sugar cane, but also produce annual crops and raise cattle. They own or operate sugar cane mills and stills, and process cane from their own fields or from other farmer's fields. To be profitable sugar cane production and processing requires the involvement of the entire household. Women participate in cane cultivation, distill liquor, and market products, controlling the revenues. They have more work but also greater income than women in other household categories.

Commercial (medium diversified) farmers

These are wealthier farmers who have over 30 ha of land, own at least 15 heads of cattle, and operate sugar mills and stills, from which they make over 10,000 liters of liquor per year. These households may own homes or have members working in Quito. Women market products at the local level, while men trade outside the area. Women control not only their own resources, but also a wide range of household decisions.

Actual and ideal gender roles

Each of these diversified production strategies relies on

social ties to obtain necessary information and/or resources. Access to social capital is greater for those households that have been in the area the longest, such as *tragueros*. Reputation and trust are key in sharing mills and marketing liquor. Relatives and friends help day laborers find work and landowners to identify good sharecroppers. *Ganaderos* and commercial farmers are involved in crucial networks of exchange and migration.

Women play key roles in building and maintaining social networks by participating in informal exchanges (of food, gifts, favors, etc.) and in non-paid community work. Do women' s contributions to household livelihood translate into cultural recognition and formal power in community?

Cultural recognition of gender roles

In the course of collective exercises female and male roles were defined differently than during individual interviews. In public settings, women were largely identified as homemakers and men as breadwinners. Both these ideals are unrealistic since men do not earn enough to support a family and household enterprises cannot prosper without women's contribution. Women and men also disagreed about what women do. For instance

• Women see themselves participating in all tasks of cane production and in processing it into liquor. Men see these activities as exclusively male.

• Men did not recognize women's work in the home and were unaware that children participate in it. Women recognized their own activities and help by children, as well as husbands' help in the home.

• Women recognize that they make decisions in all areas of household affairs, especially in relation to social and religious life. Men believe they make their own decisions in areas of household economics and community life and do need to consult with women.

Gender participation in community leadership

Women occupied over one third of elected position in 1996. On average, women in leadership positions were younger and more educated than the men. Notably, women from *traguero* and *ganadero* households (where women's work and social capital are key to enterprise success) have the highest representation in elected positions.

In general, the study shows that attainment of leadership corresponds with access to social and material resources, but more than wealth it is diversity of productive strategies that predicts participation in formal power structures. *Jornaleros* and *partidarios* are underrepresented, as are also *montaneros*. The lack of political representation of those with most control over fragile lands has important implications for sustainability.

CONCLUSIONS

Gender imbalances are the outcome of social inequalities produced by differential access to resources. Where land access is constrained, women tend to be marginalized into reproductive activities. In household types that have greater access to land, women play important productive roles (i.e. in livestock production, sugar cane processing) and, most importantly, are directly involved in local marketing of products.

Households with less diverse livelihood strategies have a more marked gender division of labor. In some cases women sell their labor as part of their husbands' labor contracts. Often women must go through men to secure land or labor or have no say on production strategies which their income depends on. In commercial farmer households, which are the most diversified of all, women are visible economic actors and decision-makers.

Yet at the collective level, women's work is invisible. Cultural recognition of women's work is tied to the social construction of gender, which defines appropriate behavior for men and women. The non-correspondence between actual and ideal roles contributes to maintaining the relations of power established between women and men.

Given the importance of social capital in production strategies and the central roles women play in its maintenance, community structures and networks where women are most involved, such as churches and schools, may provide an ideal vehicle for the promotion of sustainable natural resource management practices that also enhance women's control of resources and quality of life for themselves and their families.

References

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This brief draws from articles by Cornelia Butler Flora, Fernando Larrea, Martha Ordonez, Sandra Chancay, Sara Baez, and Fernando Guerrero in *Bridging Human and Ecological Landscapes: Participatory Research and Sustainable Development in an Andean Hillside Frontier*. Edited by Robert Rhoades, Kendall/Hunt, Dubuque, Iowa, 2001.

SANREM is a Collaborative Research Support Program (CRSP) supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development Cooperative Agreement No. PCE-A-00-98-00019-00 and managed by the University of Georgia. The project brings together researchers from eight US universities who partner with host country universities; local and national government officials; international agricultural research centers; and non-governmental organizations.