

Economic Opportunities and Labor Conditions for Women

Perspectives from Latin America: Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil

A project funded by the Office of Women in Development, Bureau for Global Programs, Field Support and Research, U.S. Agency for International Development, under contract number FAO-Q-00-96-90006-00 Task Order 10, with Development Alternatives, Inc.

April 2003



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A Women in Development Technical Assistance Project

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This paper was strictly limited to four pages of text and is intended only to identify critical issues and the most important literature. Some readers may be left wanting more detail, so guidance is provided as to where to go next. "Privatization" is used here to mean the transfer from government to private hands of ownership and/or control of enterprises producing marketed goods and services. It does not cover broader manifestations such as jails, education, health care, and outsourcing. The space limitation precludes coverage of the rather different issues in the transition economies.

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USAID Office of Women in Development

Small Grants Supporting Women's NGOs in Program
Implementation and Advocacy

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2000, USAID's Office of Women in Development provided funding for a 16-month competitive small-grants program to support local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working to improve women's economic status in Latin America and working on women's legal rights issues in Africa and Asia. About 200 proposals were reviewed, and, in May 2001, 50 grants of up to \$25,000 each were awarded, for a total of \$1.2 million. The program was titled "Small Grants Supporting Women's NGOs in Program Implementation and Advocacy" and will be referred to in this report as the NGO Small Grants Program. These grants supported innovative activities that addressed the following three areas:

- Conservation-based economic opportunities for women, awarded in South America;
- Women's working conditions, awarded in Central America; and
- Women's property and inheritance rights, awarded in Africa and Asia.

Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru were selected as target countries for small grants supporting conservation-based economic opportunities for women. The purpose of these grants was to support income-generating activities that expand or add new processes, products, or markets to an existing project that is working effectively. Conservation-based income-generating activities involve the making and sale of products fabricated with materials harvested from local forests, rivers, and/or oceans by local communities. An example of a conservation-based income-generating activity might include women collecting and processing nontimber forest products, and who therefore have a major stake in sustainable management of forest resources.

From September 16 to 18, 2002, 36 participants representing grant organizations, local NGOs, and USAID gathered in Panama City, Panama, to participate in the conference Economic Opportunities and Labor Conditions for Women: Perspectives from Latin America, which was supported by the Office of Women in Development, USAID (see Annex 3). The purpose of this conference was to provide a forum to share lessons learned and to discuss pressing issues that affect all NGOs working within this area. Topics included business planning for sustainable income-generation activities; community organization and the participatory process in enterprise development; and gender, the environment, and small enterprises.

FINDINGS

Some of the more significant findings from the conference are highlighted below:

- The projects expanded women's economic opportunities by allowing them access to resources and knowledge.

- There were changes in participation by both women and men in the various productive activities carried out under the projects (for example, in the use of resources at different stages).
- The projects helped raise the self-esteem of participating women by facilitating access to technical knowledge not previously available to them.
- Certain stereotypes and roles changed, and there was a sharing of responsibilities by men and women. Nevertheless, these changes did not affect relationships of real power, as ownership continues to be reserved for men.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In projects that seek to establish a link between gender, production, and environment, it is critical that appropriate conceptual frameworks be developed that will incorporate the three approaches; that is, frameworks that promote an entrepreneurial attitude together with environmental and gender awareness.
- Technical issues and concerns should not take precedence over gender-based and environmental ones. Gender training should be a prerequisite for establishing a common framework for all those involved.
- To the extent that these projects generate changes in attitudes and values and improvements in quality of life, they should be provided with technical assistance aimed at identifying strategies to ensure the continuity of these achievements.
- Women's organizations need technical assistance to expand their production and strengthen their organizations. Such increased knowledge and production ensure the self-sufficiency of grass-roots women's organizations.
- Lastly, it has been clearly established that the gender approach should be studied, disseminated, and incorporated as part of the principles and methodologies of all organizations working with women. The empowerment of women through access to resources, knowledge, and skills is significant and should be encouraged so as to eliminate the discrimination to which they are subjected and to provide them with opportunities to lead rewarding lives and play significant roles in society.

CHAPTER ONE BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The reality of women in Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil, particularly in rural areas, is discouraging. Many of these women face common development problems, including a lack of health-care and educational facilities and employment opportunities. To address some of these problems, local organizations working to promote women and environmental conservation were selected to benefit from the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID's) NGO Small Grants Program.

BOLIVIA

Since 1994, Bolivia has been instituting structural reforms in its economic, political, and social sectors. During this process, gender issues have been addressed involving the physical mistreatment of women, the exclusion of women from certain areas of work, and gender equity. As a result, the Office of the Public Defender for Women (Defensoría de la Mujer) was created. Also, there is now a requirement that slates of candidates for public office consist of at least 30 percent women and that there be equal access for men and women to education, health care, and employment at all levels. Nevertheless, women's sphere of activity in Bolivia remains quite limited, as their involvement in productive activities and decision-making can be described as incipient at best.

The health status of Bolivian women began to improve as early as the 1950s. However, health conditions at the time were so deficient that even today women are part of a health crisis that is among the most troubling in all of Latin America. Bolivian women suffer from high mortality rates directly related to reproductive ailments, such as tumors and childbirth-related problems. The deficient medical coverage for women during pregnancy and childbirth compounds the situation.

Despite the fact that education for Bolivian women has improved in recent decades, women's positions are still very much unequal to those of men. The Bolivian educational system has deficiencies that rank among the highest in the region. These deficiencies are linked to three underlying factors: gender, race, and social status. It is also important to remember that the majority of rural women speak only their native language, which explains the high rates of illiteracy among women and the gap in schooling at the primary-school level.

As has occurred throughout Latin America, Bolivian women have contributed in various ways to their country's economic development, primarily in the area of domestic work and through activities carried out in the marketplace. At the beginning of the 1990s, almost 40 percent of Bolivia's economically active population consisted of women, a figure that has since continued its upward trend. The wage differential between the two sexes, however, remains one of the largest in Latin America. In 1992, women received an average income that was half that of men, a situation that continues today.

ECUADOR

The population of Ecuador at the end of the 20th century surpassed 11 million, of which half were women. Certain elements of life are common to all Ecuadorians, but there are also characteristics that are peculiar to specific social groups.

Ecuador's macroeconomic policies and economic crisis have had different impacts on different social groups. For example, women, in their desire to ensure their families' survival, may find themselves forced to take on additional economic and social responsibilities, even at the expense of their own well-being. Faced with a reduction in services and the increased precariousness of life, these women—of all ages and ethnic backgrounds—experience longer days working in the home and caring for their families while increasing their presence in the labor market to generate essential income for their households. At the same time, they participate in the work of their communities. Yet, women's work in the home, the marketplace, and the community is often invisible—neither reported nor recognized in national statistics.

The health conditions of women in Ecuador have improved slowly over the last few decades. Their principal health needs are related to both demographics and general living conditions (household sanitation, nutrition, education, etc.), as well as to the deficiencies found in the public health system itself. However, the way in which these needs are addressed is closely related to the culturally established gender patterns observed for men and women.

Women's educational status in Ecuador has improved noticeably. Women have increased their participation in school enrollment at all levels, and have now successfully achieved a position of parity with men at both the primary and intermediate levels. However, the change that has taken place in recent decades has created significant educational gaps between young women and adult and older women and considerable gaps in schooling continue to distance rural women from their urban counterparts.

Women have participated in Ecuador's economic development in a variety of ways, primarily through domestic work and activities carried out in the marketplace. For a number of reasons, however, this participation is only partially visible, since only those activities historically defined as economic are included in national statistics. In certain areas, such as agriculture, domestic labor and market-oriented activities the informal sector plays a large role and women's work often is invisible. For example, surveys, and responses made by women themselves, typically identify rural women as simply housewives. The invisibility of women's work is intensified in employment questionnaires and the census, which uses aggregated statistics. Therefore, it is estimated that close to 40 percent of Ecuador's work force is made up of women, although the exact percentage is difficult to establish. However, all available data point to a marked increase in women's participation in the work force over the past 20 years.

PERU

Women's health in the Andean country of Peru has improved appreciably since the 1950s. However, conditions in the 1950s were extremely deficient and, therefore, Peru still exhibits relatively low health indicators as compared to other Latin American countries. In Peru improvement in health status depends on the geographic areas. In the coastal urban area, health improvements have been remarkable, while in the rest of the country, primarily in the mountains, the jungle and the southern area of the high plateau (altiplano); improvements in health have evolved at a much slower rate.

The educational status of Peruvian women has improved in the last several decades. In several areas—the elimination of illiteracy and school enrollment—women have made advances vis-à-vis men, although their educational achievement continues to be significantly inferior to that of their male counterparts. For this reason, Peru is one of the countries of Latin America in which gender-based educational differences are most pronounced.

There are still strong regional differences in women's educational achievement between the coast, the highlands and the jungle. These regions not only differ geographically, but also economically, ethnically and culturally. Educational stratification continues to be highly pyramidal in nature, characterized by a broad base consisting of almost half the population that has little or no schooling.

The women of Peru have contributed in a number of ways to the economic development of their country, primarily through domestic work and employment activities carried out in the marketplace. However, this contribution by women to the national economy is only partially visible, since only those activities traditionally defined as economic in nature are included in the national statistics.

Work conditions for women are disadvantageous as compared to men, not only in terms of the quality of the work available to women and the amount of income they receive, but also because of the longer work days and the lack of physical and legal protections. In urban areas, women earn 54 percent of the income earned by men, even when equally qualified. Of the total underemployed population, 30.2 percent are male while 50.8 percent are female. At the national level, 66.6 percent of the men are adequately employed, versus only 33.4 percent of the women.

Among the labor-related conditions produced by the globalization process are increased flexibility of the labor market, the passage of laws granting greater freedom to companies and employers in hiring and firing personnel, and the reduction in public owned enterprises. Given these conditions, in poorer areas, women's employment status is more precarious as machismo plays a dominant role and women's self-esteem is not high.

BRAZIL

Brazil has a population of 149 million, of which slightly more than half (50.1 percent) are women. The population is distributed unevenly throughout Brazil's vast national territory, which is divided into five broad regions. Most of the population is located in the southeastern and northeastern regions (43.6 percent and 28.6 percent, respectively), while 15.2 percent reside in the southern region, 6.8 percent in the central-western region, and 5.8 percent in the northern region. Women are slightly more numerous in all regions.

The health status of Brazilian women has improved in recent decades, although problems of varying degrees still remain, particularly in poorer regions and among black and mulatto women. Moreover, the improvements recorded decreased markedly following the economic crisis of the 1990s.

One issue of particular concern to women is the mass use of sterilization as a contraceptive method. A number of studies have shown that this practice is related to the difficulties women have in accessing alternative contraceptives in a country where the women exhibit a strong desire to exercise their rights to control pregnancy and childbirth.

Brazil's female workforce has already achieved an average level of schooling higher than their male counterparts. Although in 1980 men had higher levels of education, by 1990 the reverse was true. Only 12 percent of Brazil's economically active women had less than one year of schooling, while the corresponding figure was 18 percent for men. Also, 30 percent of the women had more than 9 years of schooling, as opposed to 20 percent of the men.

By the end of the 1990s, this difference in education between the sexes was true in almost all regions of the country. The greatest differences occur depending on the general well being of the region. For example, the situation of employed women in the northeastern region is extremely poor as compared to that of women living in the southwest or southern regions. Available data show that women in Brazil were employed more as salaried workers than were men. They also show that women work primarily in the provision of services as clerks and salespersons in urban areas, while most men are employed as farmers and agricultural workers. However, women's occupations vary by region. In rural provinces, the percentage of women involved in agricultural activities increases: in Pará and Bahia women are farmers, while in São Paulo only a small percentage work in agriculture. As in the rest of Latin America, the high percentage of technical specialists and professionals among women is worthy of note.

CHAPTER TWO

GENDER APPROACH, ENVIRONMENT AND TECHNOLOGY, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Most of the 16 organizations that received funding under the NGO Small Grants Program have been working actively for many years in the field of development and community participation. They recognized the need for a gender approach in identifying new opportunities and addressing the challenges of their work.

THE GENDER APPROACH

There is no common conceptual framework for a gender approach among the projects participating in the NGO Small Grants Program. This lack of a common approach was due to the wide variety of geographic settings of the groups involved and the diversity of the context in which they worked. Also the groups varied in their understanding of women's work. Several of the groups specialized in economic production or research and their work did not have a gender focus.

The importance of working with a gender focus—to render more visible the link between practical gender needs (having to do with the material conditions of life) and strategic gender interests (involving changes in the relationships of power between women and men) – has been substantiated. A gender approach makes it possible to address both practical needs and strategic needs simultaneously in order to advance women's status, combat violence and improve the quality of life not only for women and their families but also for the communities in which they live.

The groups participating in the NGO Small Grants Program stressed that women's contributions to the various projects had a positive affect on family economics and on the women's entrepreneurial business skills and self-esteem. Gender training however, was provided only superficially and limited to technical subjects. No effort was made to increase the awareness of the impact of the projects on the empowerment of women. In the projects, for example, women managed new productive technologies, increased their involvement in decision-making, and gained autonomy in economic affairs and in the marketplace. All of these activities helped to eliminate the unequal power that often characterizes the traditional relationship between the sexes.

However, one of the projects, "With a Woman's Hands," supported by Peru's AGROVIDA, demonstrated explicitly impact not only on the family environment and the marital relationships of power but also on the redistribution of work within the home and even within the community. One participant made the following observation: "The fact that we are women entrepreneurs increases our worth; we have become accustomed to working and to solving economic problems in the family; our spouses feel freer and more at ease and hold us

in higher regard because we are useful to our families and to the community and because our families have improved their economic level.”

In the AGROVIDA project women are cognizant of their entrepreneurial successes and of the impact that they have had on their families. At the same time they recognize that change is a complex process. In this regard, the testimony of one woman affirms that “in principle, training in the gender approach leads women to share roles in the house, but for us this is a difficult task because it is hard for us to delegate functions and chores to our spouses and children. I am here and I am wondering what my children might be doing and whether my spouse is preparing meals. . . . It is difficult for us to change this attitude, because we were brought up this way.”

In most cases, fear persists among men with regard to women’s participation and economic autonomy. Men view the activities of their partners as being complementary but unimportant, an attitude that is a clear reflection of what occurs at the macroeconomic level, where women’s contributions remain invisible. The invisibility is partially a result of the deficiencies in national data systems and of cultural prejudices which dictate that productive work performed by women, and particularly by rural women, is not included in national statistics.

It is worth reexamining the testimony that “men feel freer and more at ease,” as it in fact reveals an underlying problem. Men feel “at ease” when the productive activities of their spouses are carried out within the household and are, therefore, considered part of the system of reproductive work (family gardens, backyard beekeeping, knitting, etc.). Although men are aware that women’s contributions to family sustenance are equal to or greater than their own, they tend to resist change, preferring to maintain existing roles and hierarchies within the home. It is this situation that gives them a sense of being “at ease.”

In short, most of the projects did not include gender training as a key component, but rather emphasized technical business skills as they are traditionally taught. Others focused on increasing women’s self-esteem through gender training but without explicitly defining what it is and how it is reflected in women’s role as microentrepreneurs. The challenge is to provide gender training to families where the woman devotes herself to entrepreneurial activities which generate income that is often greater than that contributed by her spouse but without any subsequent change in family roles. For example, the man continues to exercise control over income and the woman works a double day, one inside the home and another outside, in addition to the community activities for which she is also responsible.

One valuable lesson shared by the conference participants is reflected in the testimony of one of the women: “In our women’s association, we have received sound training on the subject of gender equity, and this training has provided us with something that is very important and that is applicable not only to women but also to their spouses.”

Machismo is one of the major problems that projects had to confront. They also dealt with problems such as the presence of men in women’s groups and women’s fear in leaving their homes. There are still very few women technicians who can provide assistance to women

producers. The distances these women technicians must travel and the time that they must schedule for training sessions also represent a challenge.

Illiteracy is a major problem. In certain groups, illiteracy reaches alarming levels (for example, 80 percent in the project implemented by Bolivia's Universidad Autonoma "Juan Misael Saracho"). Not knowing how to read or write limits women's entrance into a variety of economic areas and limits their relationship to the market. It is well known that access by women to education is one of the primary strategies for women's empowerment and the defense of their human rights.

Gender equity was only marginally addressed in the projects. There is a need for clear criteria for the inclusion of gender in formulating requests for proposals. There is also a need for each proposal to include a monitoring and evaluation plan for the gender dimension. Organizations wishing to participate in USAID programs should demonstrate both their interest and the methods used to promote change in women's conditions and standing in their communities. In addition, organizations with no prior experience should receive gender training and assistance that will enable them to develop a clearly defined framework for gender-based activities, complete with verifiable indicators.

On the other hand, there were other projects that were built on a foundation of gender equity. An example of such a project was ASMIPRUT-Brazil, an organization devoted to defending land ownership rights and promoting the sustainable use of forest resources. Within this project, there is equity in the work performed and earnings are distributed equally.

In summary, it is evident that the projects supported by the NGO Small Grants Program have contributed to the empowerment of women by increasing their access to resources, knowledge and skills. It is clear that there is a need for these women and others involved (NGOs, extension workers, technicians, rural women, men of the households, etc.) to continue to receive support and capacity building in order to promote the gender approach among all stakeholders and at different levels. The objective of this continued support is to highlight any inequalities so as to eliminate the many ways in which women are subject to discrimination and oppression.

ENVIRONMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

The conference participants placed considerable importance on technical training for women and they were in agreement as to the need to continue with training to destroy myths, beliefs and productive practices that make it difficult or impossible for women to become involved in new fields and to adopt innovative methods of production relating to the sustainable use of natural resources. Fortunately, women now have access to technical knowledge not available to them previously. This access increases their self-esteem despite the persistence of illiteracy among a significant percentage of women in Latin America.

In addition to gender, the projects had an environmental focus. This component of the project provided an excellent opportunity for developing processes of cultural change ranging from

learning to adopt alternative nutritional habits to recapturing environmentally friendly production systems and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources.

The link between high-tech institutions working with natural resources and grassroots women's organizations can produce positive results. Such is the case of Peru's Instituto Rural Valle Grande (IRVG) in a project designed to address the appropriate production and management of plants and natural essences. Cooperation between the Instituto and the women beneficiaries produced products that met European standards as well as a relationship of trust within the communities. With the participation of both the women and others in the communities, a map was prepared of local plants, together with a series of regulations governing their sustainable management and harvesting. The collective experience revealed that in this type of partnership transparency and the effective participation of the individuals and communities involved is crucial.

An observation of one of the women was "it is better to make use of a fruit than to chop down a tree." This statement is eloquent evidence of the value rural people give to natural resources. The organizations and USAID supported these rural communities in the sustainable management of natural resources. The projects that stressed conservation focused on the recovery of degraded areas, the recognition of native plants, the potential for the sustainable use of such native species, and the protection of the surrounding environment. The projects have provided training to communities in the proper use of native species.

Brazil's Instituto do Homem e Meio Ambiente da Amazônia (IMAZON) provides an example of working with communities on conservation issues. The Instituto supports "Women of the Forest," an organization created ten years ago, dedicated to the production and marketing of a number of species of native plants, fifteen of which are of significant medicinal and economic value and which were all but extinguished by the lumber industry. With the support of IMAZON, the "Women of the Forest" carry out community-level awareness activities to encourage the use of fruits as opposed to the felling of trees. In addition, through workshops they provide training in the use of medicinal plants and fruits, thus promoting the interaction of traditional knowledge with technical knowledge.

The Instituto de Investigación y Capacitación Campesina (IICCA), another encouraging example of the viability of microenterprises with an environmental approach was a Bolivian project which supports women producers who keep bees. These women generate income for their families while at the same time caring for the environment through the elimination of pesticides in the cultivation of native plants for the production of honey.

All the groups are in agreement that their work with the projects leaves them little time to reflect on project impact. They also have little time to identify areas that need strengthening such as technical training. They commented that training should include attention to gender needs, as traditional training for men is far removed from the requirements of projects in which women participate and assume leadership. For example, women said that the distances that must be traveled to attend training sessions are frequently an obstacle, as they must leave their children and their homes. In training, design planners failed to take into consideration

family dynamics and gender limitations. Consequently, the participants asked that efforts be made to ensure that technical training programs work with a gender approach.

The experience of the women targeted by Bolivia's Servicios Múltiples de Tecnologías Apropriadas (SEMTA), a project dedicated to the production of vegetables, revealed another very important consideration for training programs focusing on women. In order to compete in the economic market, it is critical that women have the skills necessary to conduct market studies and anticipate changes in consumer preferences. Male farmers are traditionally deeply rooted in monoculture crops such as potatoes and corn. The experiences of SEMTA and other projects reaffirm that women are more open to change than are men. Women cannot only more easily take up production of nontraditional commodities (medicinal plants, flowers, vegetables, seed production, honey), but are also more willing to apply new technologies to the production process.

ECONOMY

The most effective argument for convincing men as to the importance of women's participation in producing for the market is the proven profitability of such activities and their benefit to the family. It should be pointed out that the approach used in most projects focused on family, rather than gender, as gender was perceived as synonymous with family. A statement by one of the women participants is illuminating: "In the beginning, our husbands were a bit afraid, because we were not carrying out our usual family activities and also because we were going outside the house to carry out marketing activities in the street; however, they soon felt reassured by the profits that we brought home to the family." This comment reflects the problem that comes when women because of financial necessity work in market-oriented production activities. However they do so within a framework in which domestic chores are almost never shared and family decision-making is still in the hands of the men.

According to the groups participating in the NGO Small Grants Program, if women's productive activities are successful (they have overcome the risks inherent in introducing their products to the market and increased their profit levels) men soon will follow their example. This opportunistic attitude on the part of the men is partially a result of the misconception that a family works as a unit without gender-based divisions—one difficulty in equating family and gender.

These examples offer a number of lessons learned for application to future projects. One lesson is that there must be a clear recognition of the health of women microentrepreneurs and their need for time to rest. There exists the possibility of projects overburdening women with the introduction of new activities unless the issue of the redistribution of household chores in the family is properly addressed. Another lesson is to consider ethical standards for incorporating new members into the business. The risks and the labor involved at the outset are more arduous than when market niches and products have been created.

The constraint in terms of women's access to land limits women in their productive activities. There has been an accelerated land titling process throughout Latin America during the 1990s. The obvious questions that need to be asked are: To what extent are women's rights to land being respected and promoted? Is it possible to encourage women to take on new economic activities when there are institutional and structural issues, such as limited access to land, that impede them?

Women's limited access to credit was mentioned repeatedly by the conference participants—a severe problem when credit is often the key to success in productive projects. Many women are prevented from obtaining a loan for the sole reason that they are women. Governments, the banking industry and international development cooperation agencies need to further strengthen policies designed to promote credit activities for women, and particularly initiatives designed to benefit women producers who want to become women entrepreneurs.

There is a need to modernize procedures of the legal aspects of projects so that they are able to comply with the requirements imposed on small enterprises by authorities. It is reported that in some countries' bureaucratic barriers tend to discourage initiatives to promote small and microenterprise development and that high levels of taxation promote tax evasion. Such barriers force women producers into the informal sector.

Forming a business is a significant step, as it inevitably leads to an awareness of a new group identity. Women need to know what it means to run a business, fiscal responsibilities, labor standards and rules, accounting, costs, etc. Women who have gone through this experience agree that it is not easy to develop a small enterprise and achieve success when faced with open markets, fickle competition and the economic crisis affecting all of the countries participating in the program.

Despite these limitations, women, with their extensive experience as consumers, show little difficulty in relating to the market, an ability that gives them new outlooks and new skills for managing their products, adapting to changes in consumer demand and promoting marketing strategies, all within a complex and competitive context that demands high-quality products and a knowledge of market dynamics. Much of women's success depends on their ability to be flexible, particularly when they are producing crops with short productive cycles. This flexibility allows them to make appropriate changes dictated by seasonal change and market requirements.

One example of this flexibility involves off-season production or production during seasons affected by weather problems. In some of the projects, women learned to produce in greenhouses in order to continue to meet market demand during seasons affected by adverse weather conditions.

The experiences of Peru's Asociación de Mujeres Urbanas Rural de la Cuenca Moche, a group that the NGO Small Grants Program's grantee organization, AGROVIDA worked with, are particularly valuable. This association demonstrated the value of established, strong entrepreneurial linkages between organizations of rural women producers and women involved in marketing activities in urban settings. The women of AGROVIDA itself provide

another useful example. Most often rural producers produce first and then determine to whom they are going to sell their produce. In AGROVIDA, things are done the other way around: the project beneficiaries first studied the market and then successfully produced and sold their products.

Another positive effect of the projects was that they influenced the production and consumption of organic products in their communities. This in turn has led to changes in household nutritional habits, with families now consuming more vegetables than before the projects.

The mentality of women producers who set themselves up as microentrepreneurs is important. In a number of the projects, women considered themselves “marginal to the market” because they produced primarily for family consumption and only sold their surplus. They produced on a small scale and marketed close to home. This mentality is a constraining factor for women who wish to become entrepreneurs with an understanding of competition and marketing. Experience shows that it is impossible to compete selling only family surplus with a mindset that does not address market demands.

Some of the groups have managed to penetrate the market and meet existing demand with a constant supply of high-quality products. However, there have also been cases in which the group’s productive capacity falls considerably below consumer expectations, with the result that the groups have left their clients feeling dissatisfied.

Despite the limitations and weaknesses that need to be addressed, it is undeniable that projects for women producers and microentrepreneurs have produced positive results in terms of the economic empowerment of women and improvements to the physical conditions existing in their homes. The challenge lies in how to ensure that these successes do not reinforce traditional gender roles and impair the health and quality of life of these women.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Some of the projects use traditional forms of community organization in setting themselves up as a production group. The women in these projects report that, when they organize as a part of the community, “the community values our existence and takes us into consideration, and we now influence not only the decisions made by the community but also those made by local authorities.”

Many of the projects are receiving support from well-established organizations that have close relationships with the communities. However, although these organizations have proven technical capacities, most lack experience in managing a gender approach. Nevertheless, the exchange of productive and organizational experiences among all the project stakeholders has been useful to the community. The communities have also benefited from the project strategies for expanding markets. In addition, the demonstrated success of the projects in terms of production is of great educational value for the communities.

In Peru, some participating organizations, responding to work-related migration, have created a system of “itinerant training.” This system ensures that women producers receive training that will enable them to become microentrepreneurs in the communities in which they are temporarily working.

It is critical that the organizations have in place clearly defined norms governing work and association. For example, some projects have their members sign an agreement that guarantees the produce grown is organic and a second agreement is made where the women agree to deliver their product to the association of which she is a member.

One difficulty involves promoting assistance-oriented activities or development programs in communities that have already had assistance-based experiences. The assistance-based experiences have supported the provision of short-term “aid” rather than empowering individuals to seek lasting responses to real needs. They have also developed expectations and attitudes within the communities that are neither realistic nor pro-active and stifle individual initiative.

Some projects have recognized the community as a market. Whereas previously they sold all of their production outside the community, they now make available to the community a portion of what they produce—fruit, vegetables, etc. This community marketing provides economic benefits and promotes changes in consumption habits.

Many organizations feel that the correct approach to providing technical assistance is to complement the knowledge and work of the community. The advisors do not have the knowledge but rather the advisors exchange views with the communities and a dialogue takes place to the benefit of both the organizations and the communities. An example of this dialogue is reflected in the agreements signed between grassroots organizations and entities affiliated with certain universities.

To counter the concept of machismo some projects initially promoted the idea that a women’s project will benefit the family. However, what appeared to be an initial strategy in reality eventually became a central strategy. This strategy results in additional work for women as new productive activities are added to their domestic work but with no changes in family roles. Increased presence of women in productive activities within the community is no guarantee that changes will occur in women’s status or in the power relations between men and women.

In the poorest communities, project sustainability is at risk as earnings are consumed within the family unit rather than reinvested in the business. There is thus a challenge for planners to identify more profitable activities using innovative forms of administration.

In isolated communities, the maintenance and repair of project equipment is a constraining factor, as there is a lack of technical knowledge of machinery. Some of the projects have faced problems such as the lack of electricity and they have created appropriate technologies for using machinery without electricity by modifying the equipment to use batteries designed by the technical team.

CHAPTER THREE KEY DISCUSSIONS

In order to explore in greater depth the ideas that emerged from the project experiences, several sessions were held to address two central topics:

- The continuity and sustainability of income-generating activities
- Linkages: gender, environment and the small enterprise

There were several shared themes that cut across the three sessions:

- Entrepreneurial challenges
- The logic of the marketplace
- Project sustainability
- Business skills and the principles of community participation
- Myths and poor practices in the links between gender and environment

The principle concerns, discussions and ideas from the sessions are captured in the following notes:

- The Market
 - Is it necessary to create the market? Or does the market determine the product? Both options are valid and these organizations work with both. There is knowledge of market preferences. Two options are available: the first is to create the market for a product, while the second is that the market defines our product. It is a dynamic, two-way process, much like “the production of honey through the bee’s use of eucalyptus flowers.” Another determining factor for successfully entering the market involves the quality of the product: “It is the market that creates demand. The quality of the product is defined by the consumer, by his or her acceptance or rejection.”
 - Comparative advantages: “It must always be asked by producers: What are the comparative advantages of these products? This will make it possible to identify the particular market niche on which to focus investment.”
 - Produce with market logic: Men’s relationship to the market is traditional in nature: they produce and then see who will buy their product. This logic impedes flexible and profitable growth. Women relate to the market based on their experience as consumers. As consumers, they follow the market, either creating supply or downsizing in accordance with the market.
 - The role of the intermediary: Strategic partner or exploiter of both male and female producers? “The timing and complexities of markets create this dilemma, as it is essential that we develop new alliances to ensure economic survival.”

- Project viability: Projects that intend to market goods should conduct a feasibility study prior to developing a business plan. A critical goal is to have the capacity to respond to the demand generated or expected to be generated. As a rule, these projects are small and they must understand what capacities they have before entering the market. (See below: Attitudes and Cultural Change.)
- Market study: “One weakness is the lack of a marketing strategy in these projects. It is necessary to study markets in order to develop such a strategy but, unfortunately, projects rarely include provisions for such studies.”
- Sustainable projects: “Projects should be construed as processes in order to ensure that they mature and develop successfully. The lessons of projects of short duration can strengthen these processes.” The concept of sustainability involves, on the one hand, economic sustainability, and, on the other, cultural sustainability. (See below: Attitudes and Cultural Change.)
- Creativity: Experience indicates that the ability to react swiftly and flexibly to changing market demands has been a key factor in product development and in ensuring project success. Time and resources should be invested to ensure appropriate adaptation, in order to improve product quality and update products in accordance with market changes and preferences.
- Production and labor costs: “Determining the exact costs of these products is a problem for the producers. It is the result of a culture, both organizational and productive, that fails to include all of the various factors involved in the production process, particularly the cost of women’s labor.”
- Attitudes and Cultural Change
 - Women as entrepreneurs: For organizations providing business education and technical assistance, the principal challenge is to “make the producer see him or herself as an entrepreneur.” The market demands a change in mentality, a change that will allow the producer to address problems and to develop a vision of productive activities that is consistent with market realities and cycles.
 - Methods and work approach: The provision of training in developing a business plan is essential. One difficulty is that the organizations may not have experience with this type of training. Bringing about a change in their methods and approach to work is a part of institutional strengthening.
 - Discussion:
 - “The environmental conscience of communities is inadequate.”
 - “The community is all-knowing and its environmental practices are always positive in nature.”

Historically communities have developed a wide range of contradictory ways of relating to the environment, some positive and others harmful. The relationship of people to their natural environment has changed dramatically in recent decades. Gender and environment training should focus on identifying both the errors committed in the past as well as the successes of sustainable development policies that have led to community benefits. In the same manner, projects should promote the importance of seeing, analyzing and recreating the surrounding environment in the communities: “The project has rediscovered the reality of the river, the forests, the pastureland, all of which has enabled us to see reality and its conflicts.”

- Environment and market: “There exists an increasingly strong link between the environment and products in the market. The problems of pollution and disease resulting from the degradation of the environment have created new demands, as exemplified by organic products.”
 - Shareholder partners: Those women who take the step to becoming a partner in a group of entrepreneurs bring with them social capital in the form of cultural values and expertise—for example, their knowledge of medicinal plants, knitting, the community, etc. For the new enterprise, this knowledge is an extremely valuable contribution that enables women members to achieve the status of full-fledged shareholders.
 - Alliances for success: How to change one’s mentality in order to assume an attitude of “positive sums”? Everyone can win. This is not a situation in which one person wins while the other loses. Therefore, it is possible to create alliances to ensure success in the market. In addition, with idealism, enthusiasm and the willingness to assume obligations, it is relatively easy to establish an association of entrepreneurs. What is required is a responsibility to the enterprise.
- Gender and Environment
 - Myths and misperceptions: False ideas and poor practices continue to be the norm as regards the relationship between women and the environment (e.g. “by their nature women care for the environment: man is by nature a predator and degrades the environment”). This leads to the failure to take advantage of women’s potential in the area of sustainable development and in addition suggests that men, by their nature, are incapable of change.
 - Sociocultural change: Gender relationships change in accordance with context and the sociocultural conditions of communities and families. These changes should be taken into consideration in order to ensure appropriate progress by the project. Women are key components of environmental efforts, as they have the ability to introduce cultural change in the family by observing daily practices that respect the environment.
 - Environmental awareness and gender awareness: It is not possible to speak of sustainable development without taking into account these two factors on a joint and

equal basis. If the men and women of a community have equal rights and equal obligations, then there can be equal access to, and use of, the available natural resources. Environmental problems can affect women and men differently. For example, environmental impacts (lack of water or fuelwood) often affect the household setting where women primarily work, care for their children and older adults and tend to community obligations.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The achievements and obstacles experienced by the projects are an integral part of work that was done before the grant's program began. In addition, most projects have been in existence only a short time. Accordingly, it would be premature to attempt to precisely quantify or qualify the contribution of USAID's NGO Small Grants Program in terms of evaluating the existing projects and providing future support.

Environmental problems affect men and women unequally. Accordingly, projects need to recognize gender differences from the daily perspective of women; that is to say they need to be aware of how the challenges presented through sustainable environmental development affect women in their daily activities.

Equity defined as justice between men and women is not the same thing as equality which implies equal rights despite being different. It cannot be ignored that women are historically burdened with a disadvantageous situation vis-à-vis men that prevents them from gaining access to training and technical assistance on an equal footing. Therefore, there is a need for affirmative action focusing on women and taking into consideration their special situation as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters.

Women often fear decision-making, as women's decision-making is mediated by the will of men. Men perpetuate a practice that involves granting women the power to make "small" decisions, namely those related to the home, while men retain the right to make "big" decisions (buying, selling, investing, disposing of property) and to act in the public arena (representing the family, participating in politics, etc.).

If no attention is paid to the approaches being used in the projects, there is the risk of supporting, involuntarily, the mistaken notion that women are responsible—"by their nature," and "as a result of their natural function as caretakers"—for caring for natural resources, evoking the myth that "men soil and degrade while women clean and restore the environment." These myths are dangerous and constitute obstacles to sustainable human development—in women, in families and in the community. The persistence of patriarchy and machismo suggests the desirability of working with carefully designed strategies in order to break down men's resistance to accepting women's rights, their role as producers and their relationship to the market. It is important, however, that men not view these projects as "destabilizing the culture and society."

Environmental awareness activities need to be intensified at the community level, in view of the considerable resistance to affecting changes in natural resource management and agricultural production. At the community level, there is an urgent need for the rational management of water and the protection of aquifers. There is an awareness that understanding the need for change in the roles played by both women and men in society is a slow process for families and communities that begins with women themselves.

In view of the short duration of the projects, there is concern for the future of these projects and how they will respond to the expectations created in the communities when there is no further support forthcoming. Therefore, consideration needs to be given to the length of the commitment to project support as well to as the careful selection of counterparts in order to ensure continuity and sustainability. In this context, sustainability refers also to social sustainability. A crucial component of this social sustainability is the community trust in the organizations promoting these projects. These projects achieve sustainability if they have genuine participation by women.

There is a need to define participation. Participation is not the same thing as informing the individuals involved of the project; participation is not consultation; it is not sharing in the “costs”; it is not appearing in photographs taken during events. Participation is acquiring knowledge, skills, rights and capabilities to act jointly with those who make decisions; it is having access to resources; it is enjoying the benefits of one’s labor; it is giving and receiving under conditions of equality.

Promoting producer groups is a very delicate task, as one runs the risk of frustrating and weakening the self-esteem of the individuals and organizations involved. In particular, it is difficult to ensure success within a context of political complexity, open markets and free trade, high levels of competitiveness and foreign investment.

The women in these projects have shown a more open attitude with regard to change and learning, as they are willing to enter into nontraditional areas (medicinal plants, flowers, vegetables, seed production, and honey). They are willing to apply new technologies to the production process.

One important finding involves the ways that women relate to the market. Women have extensive experience as consumers, which gives them different viewpoints and skills for managing their products. They also take the initiative to market their products within their own communities.

Women implement their projects in an extremely complex and competitive context that requires high-quality products and an in-depth knowledge of market changes and dynamics. Therefore, the economic activities carried out by women must be flexibly managed. For example, women become involved in the production of commodities having short productive cycles so they are able to efficiently address seasonal change and market requirements.

The experiences presented demonstrate the importance of designing and strengthening entrepreneurial linkages between organizations of rural women producers and urban market women. Small projects may not generate a large impact, but if they are linked to strategic, regional processes the results can be multiplied. Linking small projects to regional plans and proposals is one way to contribute to national development processes.

Women producers have successfully modified the paradigm that has traditionally served to guide most rural producers which is to produce first and then determine to whom to sell the

product. These women have learned that they must first identify and familiarize themselves with the market and then produce and sell successfully.

These projects have influenced the production and consumption of organic produce at the community level. Positive changes have taken place in family nutritional habits, as more vegetables are being consumed now than before the startup of the projects.

For future projects, it will be necessary to address the legal aspect of the enterprises. Most women's groups had neither the documents necessary to legalize their businesses nor an awareness of the procedures needed to do so.

It is important to strengthen the identity of the groups when they are making the transition from community associations to enterprises. The groups must recognize that they are a business with partners, fiscal responsibilities, a regulated system of work, accounting, costs, etc. It is difficult for a small enterprise to develop as a successful activity in the prevailing context of globalization, competitiveness and economic crisis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The situation of the women who participated in the NGO Small Grants Program is representative, a microcosm, of the realities and issues of the public agenda of the countries from where they came. According to the conference participants, their countries need to implement policies that promote the elimination of economic and social inequalities and contribute to both economic and gender equity as well as environmental conservation.

These projects provide us with a number of indicators for determining how best to improve the quality of life of the women involved. The following is an analysis of the achievements and challenges learned from the projects.

- Links among the three dimensions
 - The projects opened up opportunities for economic participation by women because they enabled women to gain access to resources and knowledge to change their reality.
 - Changes were observed in the participation of both men and women in the various productive activities carried out under the projects (ownership and use of resources at a variety of stages).
 - Changes have taken place in the roles of men and women in those projects in which both participated. Now responsibilities are shared. Nevertheless, these changes have not yet had an impact on the relationships of real power. For example, ownership continues to be reserved for men.

- Women have developed strategies as producers from their participation in community development processes.
- The projects have raised the self-esteem of the women participants by providing access to “technical” knowledge not previously available to them. Access to knowledge translates into power for bringing about change. It also enables women to contribute to family sustenance with the income earned from their work.
- Factors affecting the achievement of gender equity
 - Women’s tasks in any enterprise must be accompanied by a redistribution of chores between men and women in the home in order to avoid the creation of a triple workday; business, home, community.
 - The projects represent an opportunity for training and educating poor women for whom access to opportunities for formal education and economic participation is extremely difficult.
 - The projects need to include indicators that make it possible to measure changes in attitudes in men and women. Such indicators can be included in the project design so that project results can be verified and evaluated.
 - Quotas for participation by women can be put in place to ensure equal opportunities for both men and women. Such affirmative action paves the way for the institutionalization of participation by women.
 - Women’s participation is linked to the economic survival of the family. There was no mention in the projects of changes in values and attitudes among men. Projects need to incorporate the strategic interests of women, such as their access to the ownership and management of their own resources. Projects in addition, need to address the problem of gender discrimination with men.

Recommendations for the Design and Implementation of Future Projects

- In projects that seek to establish a link between gender, economic growth and the environment, it is critically important that an appropriate conceptual framework be developed for such an integrated approach, i.e., to promote an entrepreneurial approach that is gender-sensitive and environmentally sustainable.
- In projects gender equity and environmental awareness should be equally as important as solving technical problems. Therefore, gender training must be a first step in any project to establish a common framework for all those involved.

- The projects generate changes in attitudes and values and improve the quality of life of those who participate. The participants need technical assistance to identify strategies that will ensure the continuity of these achievements.
- Women's groups need technical assistance to expand their production and strengthen their organizations. This support can be provided by non-governmental organizations thereby ensuring the self-governance of grassroots women's organizations.
- Alliances need to be established with other support organizations. These alliances can contribute to project continuity.
- The scant attention paid by the projects to gender equity highlights the need to have clearly defined criteria for including gender in all requests for proposals for grants supported by USAID. The proposals must also include mechanisms for the evaluation and monitoring of the criteria. Organizations in their proposals should demonstrate their interest in gender issues and the methods they have used to promote changes in the status of women in their communities. They also need to incorporate gender indicators in order to verify results.
- Finally, the gender approach should be disseminated and incorporated into the working methodologies and principles of organizations that work with women. Women have been empowered through the NGO Small Grants Program as the projects have provided access to resources, knowledge and skills otherwise unavailable to women. Training in a gender approach should be provided to all project stakeholders including, business advisory organizations, field technicians, grassroots women and the men in the families involved. The purpose of a gender approach is to highlight at a variety of social and political levels the existing inequalities in order to eliminate the many forms of discrimination and oppression to which women are subjected.

ANNEX 1

**PROGRAMA DE PEQUEÑAS DONACIONES
PROYECTOS DE GENERACIÓN DE INGRESOS SOSTENIBLES
BOLIVIA, ECUADOR, PERU**

LA CONTINUIDAD Y SOSTENIBILIDAD DE ACTIVIDADES DE GENERACIÓN DE INGRESOS: TEMAS IMPORTANTES PARA LOGRAR LA META

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Antecedentes

Las pequeñas donaciones concedidas en este programa tienen objetivos de generación de ingresos dentro de un marco de referencia conservacionista de los recursos naturales y de impulsar la equidad de género con las personas y en las comunidades involucradas. Su enfoque es de asistir a grupos asociativos de mujeres en distintas partes de Bolivia, Perú, Ecuador, y Brasil, desde la Amazonas hasta la Sierra Altoandina, mejorar sus capacidades para ganar un ingreso sostenido basado en la venta de productos tradicionales.

Cada uno de los diseños de los proyectos enfoca la creación de condiciones para incrementos sostenidos en los ingresos de las poblaciones beneficiarias por medio del mejoramiento de la confección de productos competitivos por un lado, mientras se aseguran las bases organizacionales estables que posibilitan las ventas continuas de productos competitivos e ingresos sostenibles provenientes de las ventas, por el otro.

Los proyectos también enfocan maneras de mejorar la oferta de productos finales y el potencial de desarrollo del mercado por medio del mantenimiento continuo de la base de materias primas naturales en plantaciones o en ambientes silvestres, mejoramiento de las técnicas de producción y procesamiento, y aseguramiento de la constancia de calidad de productos finales. Los proyectos han trabajado con distintos tipos de frutas, vegetales, miel de abeja y plantas medicinales y aromáticas para la venta en mercados domésticos, locales, y regionales. Ejemplos de técnicas mejoradas que aumentan la producción y productividad de productores rurales incluyen la producción de vegetales en carpas solares (invernaderos), aplicando fertilizantes y pesticidas orgánicos (elaborados por ellos mismos), sistemas de riego e irrigación que aprovechan eficientemente la baja oferta de agua en diferentes zonas andinas así mejorando la producción, ventas, e ingresos de los productores. Sistemas productivos mejorados en la producción casera de miel de abejas en colmenas diseñadas especialmente para acomodar los requerimientos biológicos de distintas especies de abejas.

Por medio del incremento de la oferta y la disponibilidad consistente de las existencias de materias primas, los proyectos (productores de las poblaciones objetivas) cuentan con la posibilidad de producir más productos indefinidamente, y, por consiguiente, posibilitan el incremento sostenido de ingresos de las y los beneficiados.

Desde el Desarrollo de la Base Productiva a la Generación de Ingresos Sostenidos

Durante los viajes de monitoreo a los proyectos, era obvio que todos enfocaban inicialmente el desarrollo de los aspectos técnicos para puntualizar temas de la producción y oferta consistente de productos. El énfasis principal fue apuntado en cuestiones del mejoramiento de sistemas de producción y aumentos en la productividad de la mano de obra y los recursos naturales que se utilizan como materias primas. Se construyeron los invernaderos, sistemas de irrigación, y las colmenas. A los beneficiarios se les dio capacitación en la preparación de fertilizantes, pesticidas, y fungicidas orgánicos. Estos esfuerzos técnicos iniciales fueron consistentes con los diseños de los proyectos.

Cabe notar que muchos recipientes de las donaciones fueron organizaciones cuyas misiones principales abarcan el manejo de los recursos naturales, protección del medio ambiente, desarrollo comunitario y socio-económico. Por lo tanto, se sabía de antemano que el fuerte de estas organizaciones seguiría lineamientos más técnicos que empresariales. Por lo tanto, muchos no estaban bien preparados en lo que se refiere a la organización y desarrollo de empresas, que es la clave para lograr la continuidad y sostenibilidad del flujo de ingresos generados por las “actividades económicas” que estaban siendo apoyadas por el Programa de Pequeñas Donaciones.

No obstante las fortalezas o debilidades relativas de estos distintos grupos, en las entrevistas en situ demostraban su interés y/o su necesidad de tener más orientaciones sobre los aspectos de desarrollo empresarial de sus proyectos. Por medio de la información provista por las ONGs durante las visitas de monitoreo, se determinó que las deficiencias en la parte empresarial de los proyectos se deben a varios factores.

- Enfoque prioritario en el mejoramiento de las técnicas de producción antes de la organización para la venta de los productos;
- Falta de tiempo en los proyectos para alcanzar los objetivos comerciales; y,
- Falta de conocimientos técnicos en el área empresarial del personal de algunas de organizaciones recipientes de las donaciones.

Finalmente, se percató que la actividad de vender un producto esporádicamente no es lo mismo que llevar adelante una empresa. O sea, una entidad organizada para llevar a cabo la actividad de ventas y la generación de ingresos continua e indefinidamente, que cubran los costos de la actividad, así produciendo una utilidad económica para los socios.

Los Próximos Pasos

En vista de que la creación de las condiciones para la generación de ingresos sostenidos, es decir, la formación de una empresa, es tan importante para el éxito de las donaciones otorgadas en América del Sur, se decidió incluir en la Conferencia de Panamá un componente que trataría los temas de la organización y planificación empresarial para asistir a las ONGs, recipientes de las subvenciones, tomar o consolidar los próximos pasos

organizando sus actividades económicas más formalmente. Esta actividad se denominó “La Continuidad y Sostenibilidad de Actividades de Generación de Ingresos” y se dividió en dos temas críticos que se presentaron en dos sesiones.

Primera Sesión

Principios De La Planificación De Negocios. La primera sesión delineó pautas importantes que se tienen que tomar en cuenta para definir un negocio en términos de: el producto o servicio que ofrece; en qué segmento del mercado se va a insertar; cómo se va a obtener el producto final que se va a vender; la definición de quién lo produce; cómo se va a organizar la empresa para la producción y venta eficiente y rentable de los productos o servicios; y, finalmente, cómo se va a asegurar el control transparente de fondos y la distribución equitativa de los ingresos a los socios. Los encargados de la presentación, tomaron como base conceptual el enfoque que los principios de la planificación de un negocio, están contenidos en los distintos componentes de un Plan de Negocios y que un buen plan, bien concebido y presentado, llena los requisitos de un estudio de factibilidad.

Cada sección del plan plantea uno o más de los principios básicos de planificación de una empresa:

- debe tener muy claro lo que va a ofrecer el negocio a un mercado. La visión del “qué y cómo” del negocio se debe resumir en términos globales en una descripción del negocio;
- debe conocer la industria y el segmento dentro de la cual se ubica el negocio;
- debe conocer cómo y quiénes son la competencia directa o indirecta;
- debe conocer el tipo de consumidor que comprará el producto o servicio, su perfil socio-económico, dónde se ubica geográficamente, y la demanda para el producto;
- debe analizar cómo se comercializará el producto de acuerdo con su estructura de costos; y,
- debe analizar distintas opciones productivas, sus costos comparativos, el valor agregado, y el punto de equilibrio.

Descripción del negocio que se pretende llevar a cabo

El primer principio para una buena planificación empresarial es preparar una descripción del negocio y cómo se va a llevar a cabo para producir ingresos sostenibles. La descripción del negocio es principalmente un resumen de los elementos básicos de la “actividad económica” que se pretende llevar a cabo y es un paso inicial en la conversión del negocio de una serie de ventas esporádicas, sin mucha formalidad u organización, a un concepto más empresarial, organizado, y sostenible en el tiempo. La descripción del negocio presenta un concepto con la visión de crear las condiciones organizativas que permitan el sostenimiento de las ventas y, por consiguiente, la entrada de ingresos consistentes sobre el tiempo para los socios (dueños) de una empresa. La descripción refleja el objetivo de organizar las ventas de productos o servicios con el respaldo de un plan formal y bien concebido. La descripción del negocio es

un ejercicio importante que obliga pensar claramente sobre los principios básicos de una empresa organizada e incluye la siguiente información:

- Descripción breve de los antecedentes del negocio, ¿cuáles son los principios básicos por los cuales se organizó o se piensa formar, cuáles son sus propósitos principales (metas y objetivos)?
- ¿Qué razón de ser tiene en el fondo? ¿Cuál es su misión?
- ¿Qué productos o servicios produce o fabrica el negocio?
- ¿A quién pertenece el negocio (los que producen el producto u otros dueños/empleados/acopiadores)?
- ¿Cómo está organizado el negocio para lograr sus metas; quién maneja/dirige el negocio o representa al grupo de socios?
- ¿quién o cómo pagan los gastos de la empresa? ¿Cómo acopian los productos que van a vender?
- ¿Qué pasa con el dinero de la venta de productos? ¿Cómo se contabiliza y distribuyen los ingresos?
- ¿Cómo y quiénes son los proveedores?
- ¿Quiénes son los compradores del producto? ¿Cuál es su perfil socio económico?
- ¿Dónde (a que distancia) queda la sede de producción de su mercado principal?
- ¿Por qué tendrá éxito el negocio?
- ¿Cómo se diferencia el producto de la competencia?

En fin, una descripción del negocio es un rápido análisis de una organización empresarial que además incluye información sobre los principios de planificación

Análisis de la industria en que radica la empresa

El segundo principio es que el plan de negocios debe proveer información sobre las características de la industria en la que se encuentra, las empresas que la conforman y la estructura de la competencia.

Sin embargo, primeramente se tiene que distinguir entre una industria y una empresa. Una industria es el conjunto de muchas empresas que conforman un sector industrial. Cada empresa se encuentra en una industria con varias otras empresas a nivel comunal, local, metropolitano, regional, nacional, o internacional, que son potenciales competidores.

La empresa debe tener un buen conocimiento sobre los siguientes puntos:

- ¿Cuáles empresas conforman la competencia y qué productos competitivos fabrican o servicios proveen?, ¿Dónde se ubica la empresa?
- ¿Qué cantidad de producción y ventas tienen en su conjunto y en qué nicho de mercado?
- ¿Qué nivel de tecnología existe en las distintas empresas en diferentes segmentos de la industria?

- ¿Hay eficiencias en las empresas más tecnificadas que permitan costos de producción más favorables que los suyos?
- ¿Cuáles empresas compiten por el mismo tipo (perfil socioeconómico) de clientes, los mismos proveedores de materias primas, y la misma mano de obra? ¿Qué obstáculos puede presentar esta situación al desarrollo de la empresa? (Trate de entender algo sobre la estructura de costos de diferentes empresas con diferentes condiciones para así entender más sobre su competitividad);
- ¿Qué rumbos ha tomado la industria en los últimos tiempos; particularmente han entrado nuevas empresa en la industria? ¿Cuáles han sido las tendencias principales en términos de tecnologías, disponibilidad de materias primas, mano de obra, y otros factores de producción?

Análisis del mercado en que la empresa venderá su producto o servicio

El tercer principio de la planificación de negocios es que es imperativo tener un análisis del mercado meta de los productos o servicios. Es preciso estudiar cuales son los factores básicos que definirán el mercado para el (los) producto(s) o servicios de la empresa. Es decir, quiénes son las entidades o personas—que es el perfil de los compradores de los productos de la empresa—y dónde se ubican. El estudio de mercado trata de determinar el nicho, o segmento, del mercado donde más le conviene tratar de competir. Este nicho se puede definir como un “mercado meta”, que es el grupo de clientes potenciales con características, necesidades, y expectativas que el producto de la empresa debe satisfacer.

Análisis de la comercialización del producto o servicio

El cuarto principio es la necesidad de saber el “cómo” de la comercialización del producto? ¿Cómo va a llegar del lugar de producción/manufactura a los consumidores finales y cuál es el costo del trámite? Hay que conocer cuántos intermediarios estarán en la cadena de distribución e información, que es una excelente herramienta para asegurar que haya suficiente inventario de productos para satisfacer la demanda en determinado momento.

Análisis de las operaciones

El quinto principio es la necesidad de analizar las operaciones del negocio, es decir, el proceso por el cuál las materias primas y el trabajo y creatividad de los empleados o socios se convierten en los productos del negocio. El análisis debe describir las diferentes etapas del proceso de producción que, en su conjunto, agregan valor al(los) producto(s) del negocio, y debe tomar en cuenta costos del proceso productivo en relación al precio de venta requerido para cubrir los costos de producción y comercialización. La competitividad de los productos en el mercado, depende de esta cifra. La calidad del producto final tendrá un impacto sobre costos y precios al consumidor, así es que es necesario tomar decisiones sobre las expectativas del mercado en relación a calidad y al precio final.

Segunda Sesión

La Organización Y Participación Comunal. La segunda sesión presentó dos temas centrales en términos de la organización del negocio a nivel de cada socio y a nivel de la comunidad. La producción de los socios se hace, en muchos casos, en forma individual. En vista de que la producción es limitada, y de que hay ciertos costos de la comercialización que sería mejor compartir, así reduciendo el costo marginal por unidad vendida, vale la pena asociarse para la venta del producto. Es más, si el grupo de asociados analiza la situación, es posible que decidan comprar los insumos para los asociados a través de la asociación a precios descontados, así reduciendo el costo de producción.

Teóricamente, si se pueden reducir los costos de producción por un lado y los costos de comercialización por el otro con la asociación de los productores, cada socio del grupo tendrá la oportunidad de ganar más con el modelo de organización asociativa que lo que podría ganar individualmente.

Pero, y hay un gran PERO en la teoría de asociación como modelo para la generación de ingresos sostenibles, y es que una asociación no es necesariamente una empresa. El solo hecho de formar una asociación no asegura que el negocio que pretende llevarse a cabo produzca beneficios que justifiquen los costos. Como se destacó anteriormente, la generación de ingresos sostenibles tiene que estar basada en actividades económicas bien organizadas y planeadas. Para alcanzar a ser “empresa”, una asociación tiene que estar bien organizada para:

- Hacer un buen asesoramiento y seguimiento que asegure la calidad y standard de la producción
- acopiar los productos de los socios;
- venderlos en un tiempo adecuado;
- recibir y contabilizar los ingresos en una manera coherente y transparente;
- cubrir todos los costos de la asociación para prestar los servicios a los socios; y,
- distribuir los ingresos que quedan después de pagar los costos en una manera equitativa, de acuerdo con la consignación (volumen) que ha entregado cada socio.

Para que este esfuerzo valga la pena, el ingreso en dinero o en especie que percibe cada socio debe cubrir todos los costos, sobrepasando los beneficios que podría recibir trabajando solo.

Asociaciones son conformadas por individuos que tienen algunos objetivos en común, pero muchas veces tienen ideas muy distintas en cuanto a la organización de la actividad económica de la asociación; es decir, como alcanzar el objetivo. Por esto, es importante reconocer que asociaciones de individuos, para alcanzar sus propias metas de sostenibilidad, deben agruparse en organizaciones oficialmente constituidas que obliguen al socio individual a someterse a la voluntad del grupo bajo reglas claras del juego y con instrumentos de control ampliamente discutidos y definidos por ellos mismos. Esta formalización disminuye la posibilidad malentendidos, y solidifica la posibilidad de alcanzar la continuidad de la generación de ingresos.

Si las asociaciones se organizan de acuerdo a los principios mencionados en esta pequeña monografía, tendrán una mayor probabilidad de alcanzar sus metas empresariales de continuidad y sostenibilidad de ingresos.

ANNEX 2
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Economic Opportunities and Labor Conditions for Women: Perspectives from Latin America

U.S. Agency for International Development

Conservation-based Economic Opportunities for Women

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Economic Opportunities and Labor Conditions for Women: Perspectives from Latin America

U.S. Agency for International Development

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ANNEX 3
PROJECT SUMMARIES



USAID Office of Women in Development's Small Grants Supporting Women's NGOs Project

Conservation-Based Economic Opportunities for Women: South America

Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru were selected as target countries for grants supporting Conservation-Based Economic Opportunities for Women. The purpose of these grants is to support income-generating activities that expand or add new processes, products or markets to an existing project that is working effectively. Conservation-based income-generating activities involve the making and sale of products fabricated with materials harvested from local forests, rivers, and/or oceans by local communities. An example of a conservation-based income generating activity might include women collecting and processing non-timber forest products, and who therefore have a major stake in sustainable management of the forest resources.

Bolivia

Asociación de Artesanos del Tropicó de Cochabamba (ARTETROPIC), Bolivia **July, 2001 - October, 2002**

ARTETROPIC is a newly formed umbrella organization that functions as the technical advisor and marketing agent for seven "jipi japa" fiber weavers associations in the Chapare region. Targeting the women producers/artisans, this grant is assisting ARTETROPIC members in planting, extracting, processing, weaving, and packaging the fiber. The organization plans to arrange for technical assistance in improving fiber quality as well to increase its value. In order to guide production and inventory management for its seven member groups, ARTETROPIC will assist the women in identifying buyers and products desirable in the marketplace.

A technical advisor is working with all the weavers groups on the development of jipi japa plantations that will provide a more constant and easier-to-collect supply of raw materials. By improving the quality and marketing of jipi japa products, the goal is to help increase employment and income opportunities for Chapare women.

Centro de Investigación y Documentación para el Desarrollo de Beni (CIDDEBENI), Bolivia **May, 2001 - September, 2002**

CIDDEBENI, an NGO formed in the late 1980s, works with several indigenous groups in the Beni, in the eastern lowlands of Bolivia. This grant is financing the continued support of an effort to introduce indigenous groups to new honey extraction techniques, as the traditional extraction process resulted in the destruction of bee colonies, hives, and the trees where they were found.

Drawing on research completed in an earlier phase, the grant is supporting efforts with the Siriono indigenous group to utilize more environmentally-friendly production and extraction techniques and develop their traditional honey business into a more efficient, formal village-based enterprise, eliminating the need to spend three months a year in the forest searching for and collecting the honey in the wild. The grant is financing the construction of 1,000 hives, equipment needed for the honey extraction process, and training of indigenous people who tend the hives and harvest the honey. Women, who traditionally have been responsible for extracting the raw honey and selling the final product on the market, will retain their primary role in this work.

**Instituto de Investigación y Capacitación Campesina (IICCA), Bolivia
July, 2001 - July, 2002**

IICCA's work focuses on encouraging rural women to start honey production enterprises from non-native species of honey bees as a supplementary revenue source. This grant is subsidizing the first year of work in this effort. Activities in this first year include the installation of six apiaries with 20 manmade hives for each (15 of which are provided by the project); and the training of women by the project Technical Specialist. Another important environmental goal of the project is to revitalize native plants--many of which provide excellent sources of food for the bees--by planting them in a five-mile radius of the apiaries.

The participants are learning how a bee colony functions, how to operate the apiaries using basic beekeeping techniques, and how to extract honey from the hives with minimum disruption to the habitat. The women's husbands are also participating in the project by building the fences that enclose a space for each apiary.

To date, the women participating in this activity are very receptive to beekeeping and honey production as an alternative source of income. Based on the current project activity, the project beneficiaries will actually exceed the number anticipated in the early stages of the project.



**IICCA teaches
beekeeping and honey
production techniques
to rural women.**

**Servicios Múltiples de Tecnologías Apropriadas (SEMTA), Bolivia
July, 2001 - July, 2002**



SEMTA was established 22 years ago to serve the social and economic development interests of low-income, mostly indigenous people in La Paz. This grant is supporting an on-going SEMTA project, started in 1996 with other donor assistance, to increase incomes of members of a women-based greenhouse vegetable producers association through the production and marketing of organic greenhouse vegetables. Since the start of the project, the association has grown from 8 to 38 members, including 6 men--indicating that the initial marketing and income generation efforts have generated additional confidence in the practice and business of greenhouse, organic vegetable production.

This grant is providing the salaries for a SEMTA Technical Coordinator/Project Manager and three promoters. The community promoters, who are also members of the association, are expected to support the continued growth and sustainability of this enterprise. These personnel are providing training and follow-up monitoring in organic fertilizer and pesticide preparation; installation of simple, low-cost, drip irrigation; organic production techniques and certification requirements; and other gardening activities. They are also monitoring staggered production programming of different vegetables to help avoid gluts and scarcities of produce and level out production by members year round, thereby also evening out income flows. The grant is funding about one-third of costs incurred for greenhouse construction, equipment, and marketing-related expenses. The members of the association are financing the additional monetary and in-kind costs of production.

**Universidad Autónoma "Juan Misael Saracho", Bolivia
June, 2001 - July, 2002**

Universidad Autónoma is working in southern Bolivia to address the problem of over-extraction of medicinal, aromatic, and other kinds of indigenous wild plants and flowers by supporting efforts to propagate these species in nurseries and re-introduce them into the wild. There is a large and growing demand for these plants that are collected and sold by rural women in the urban markets and to other processors. If the supply of these plants can be assured, the business is a potentially profitable and sustainable source of income for the vendors.

The grant is financing the salaries of two women—a Forestry Engineer and an Agronomist—who are working with eight communities to identify the plants and the ecological areas where they are located, their density, and how to grow them most successfully. With the assistance of a Peace Corps Volunteer community worker, the two grant-supported personnel are also conducting promotional efforts in the communities to generate interest in protecting and preserving these plants, as a continuous supply is critical to the income generation objective of the project. Community outreach is being conducted through "mother's clubs" and various other community groups where wild plant collectors generally congregate.

In addition to the on-site research and promotional work with women at the community level, this grant is supporting the development of a nursery and other technology-based sources of supply needed to ensure that there will be enough new plants to protect the survival and natural integrity of the varieties native to the region. The objective is to continue generating enough supply in the wild to permit a constant, sustained source of income for the target beneficiaries who are predominantly women.

Brazil

**Amazon Institute of People and the Environment (IMAZON), Brazil
May, 2001 - September, 2002**

For almost a decade, women involved in the project Mulheres da Mata—"Women of the Forest"—have been working to protect Amazonian forests by researching and promoting local use of non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Currently, with institutional support of IMAZON and through this grant, the Executive Team of Mulheres da Mata has been able to both plan and implement activities more systematically, and also to expand the scope of their work.

As part of their effort to promote the use of NTFPs, their four-person team is conducting hands-on workshops providing information about NTFPs, such as pricing and product diversification. The workshops also provide practical training on the use of fruits and medicinal plants. Those attending workshops include women and men living within rural forested areas, as well as people living in surrounding urban areas who depend on forest resources. The team intends to use grant funds to increase the number of workshops offered, and also to refine their structure based on feedback from participants.



One of fifty nurseries for native plants to be planted in degraded areas.

The grant is also helping to fund two second-edition publications on fruits and medicinal plants. These books, "Fruit Trees of the Forest in the Amazonian Life" and "Recipes Without Words: Medicinal Plants of Amazonia" will be distributed to Brazilian NGOs, unions, associations and schools working on the management and marketing of NTFPs.

Associação Intercomunitaria de Mini e Pequenos Produtores Rurais da Margem Direita do Tapajós de Piquiatuba a Revolta (ASMIPRUT), Brazil

May, 2001 - May, 2002



Painting cotton fabrics with latex produces "ecological leather" which is used in handcrafted rubber accessories.

ASMIPRUT works to defend land ownership rights of communities near the Tapajós River and also strives to encourage their sustainable use of forest resources. As part of this effort, this grant is supporting ASMIPRUT's work to help those who work on handcrafted rubber accessories learn more marketable processes and products. The objective is to add value to an extractive product as a means to increase family income.

In addition to smoked rubber handicrafts, the local population is learning through hands-on workshops to process "ecological leather"--a natural cotton fabric covered with latex, the resin of a rubber tree. While men work on the "leather" itself, women are using it to sew garments and accessories. The grant has funded both material and technical support in this work, including the development of a business plan.

Young members of the community have expressed interest in and a commitment to this project and have been supported by the elders. In addition, a promising market for "ecological leather" is evolving in Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo and abroad, increasing the likelihood that this will be a sustainable source of income for the communities with which ASMIPRUT is working.

Movimento Fraterno das Mulheres Lutadoras de Anapu, Brazil

May, 2001 - September, 2002

Movimento de Mulheres de Anapu has been working since 1995 to help reverse some of the harmful effects of development efforts in Anapu, a municipality of the Amazon, focusing primarily on environmental sustainability and gender equity issues. This grant is supporting their effort to recover degraded agricultural areas by re-introducing native plant species.

A male and female agricultural technician are working with 50 families, explaining conservation concepts and techniques and helping the families organize the production, processing and marketing of some fruit products. Both technicians have strong ties to the local community and are committed to ensuring that the land stays under the control of those who live and work in the forests. The goal is to involve both men and women in the efforts to conserve their land, which in turn will help prevent further migration and forest degradation.

The work has so far resulted in greatly increased knowledge and understanding among producers that the degradation of forested areas leads to further impoverishment. Producers-especially women--have expressed interest in new methods for managing resources. The project is also benefiting from the collaborative efforts between the young technicians and the elder leaders in the families, each offering a wealth of diverse expertise to the work of this project.

Ecuador

Fundación Antisana, Ecuador

May, 2001 - July, 2002

The Antisana Foundation is working in a high-altitude ecological preserve to reverse the detrimental impacts of deforestation and land depletion that have occurred over the past several decades. This grant is supporting the Foundation's work to encourage agricultural and agroforestry practices among the local population that will preserve the stability of the land, improve water use, and create sustainable income generating opportunities through improved home-based gardening and small animal husbandry production.

The grant has financed a Project Coordinator and Community-based Promoters who are working with populations of eight communities near Quito. The target groups are being trained to prepare and use natural fertilizers, as well as organic pesticides and fungicides. In addition, installation of drip irrigation enables continuous production of various vegetables throughout the year. To date, this project is on schedule in its goal of training people to have additional sources of sustained income, that, in turn, is based on family farm production practices that use sustainable, environmentally-friendly techniques.

Fundación Ecológica Arcoiris, Ecuador

May, 2001 - May, 2002

The Arcoiris Foundation, located in southern Ecuador, works to protect the environment, primarily through agroforestry and environmental education programs. This grant is supporting the Foundation's activities in the Sozoranga zone that assist a coffee producer's association operated by women coffee producers on two levels.

The first level is to rejuvenate coffee plots with new plants, better tree, soil and shade management, and use of strictly organic practices. Coffee and shade tree seedlings from project- sponsored nurseries will be ready to be transplanted into small plots in February and March 2002. In addition to protecting the environment, these measures are expected to increase the supply of locally produced organic coffee.

The project, on a second level, is working with the producers' association to improve their coffee roasting and milling through value-added processing and to assist them to make the contacts needed to establish sales year-round. This part of their coffee business was designed many years ago to ensure a steady income for the producers' association and its individual members (all women). This project is continuing to assist the women in this long-term process. In addition to technical personnel, the project has financed a hand-operated depulping machine and other equipment such as tanks and basins for coffee fermenting, drying, and selection.



Examples of cards made from recycled paper produced by the Arcoiris Foundation.

A supplementary Foundation activity also supported by the grant is the production of recycled paper. The target group of this activity is primary school children, who are learning to make the paper and simple cards with dried flower designs. In addition to offering a small income generating activity for the young children involved, this activity is also succeeding in its goal of inculcating a sense of environmental responsibility at an early age.

Peru

Asociación de Promoción Agraria y Defensa de la Vida (AGROVIDA), Peru **June, 2001 - May, 2002**



A steel reinforced catchment tank is installed to irrigate plots in Motil, one of the communities supporting crop and market diversification.

AGROVIDA was started in 1990 in the coastal area of Trujillo with community-based programs benefiting women and families, including "mother's clubs," saving's clubs, and maternal and child health clinics. The health programs spread to Otuzco in the Andean Highlands, about three hours from Trujillo. Because of the high level of commercial activities carried out by women in both the coastal and highland communities, an economic network was established to move them away from their potato monoculture and to diversify small farm production to other more profitable crops that have higher demand and better prices in the markets. This grant focuses specifically on bolstering the economic opportunities in two communities about an hour from Otuzco. The women there have received training in organic farming and in creating diversified, self-sufficient farm units that

include traditional production of potatoes for home consumption, as well as vegetables and small animals.

One of the central problems for all agriculture in the high Andes is the lack of rainfall. Under this grant, a 373-cubic meter reinforced cement catchment tank was built and tubing installed to irrigate about 10 hectares of plots in Motil, one of the communities supporting crop and market diversification and reducing reliance on natural rainfall thereby enabling year-round production scheduling. While much of the actual land preparation for the demonstration plot (about 1 hectare) was done by the women, each family, including the men in large part, contributed to the construction of the irrigation system and the required manual excavation work. Beneficiaries were enthusiastic about the prospects for increased year-round production and their ability to schedule their production to maximize their incomes.

Asociación para la Investigación y Desarrollo Integral (AIDER), Peru **June, 2001 - June, 2002**

About 10-15 years ago, settlers from the Peruvian uplands and mining areas were relocated to the abundant forests in Pucallpa on the eastern fringes of the Andes Mountains. Each settler was given a parcel of land, which they began to clear using traditional slash-and-burn methods to plant corn and other grains. The result has been almost total clearing of the forests in the settlement areas. About 10 years ago, AIDER began to work with the settlers to develop apiaries. Honey production and sales offered an income-generating activity for area women, although with the continued cutting of the forest, sources of pollen and nectar for honeybees were dramatically reduced. The decreased production of honey jeopardized the livelihoods of the colonies themselves.

AIDER has begun a land reclamation program to replenish the nutrients in the soil in deforested areas. This grant supports the soil restoration and is also supporting increased honey production and income diversification. Sixty hectares of depleted forest land on thirty small farms have been plowed and planted with Kutzu and Guabo, prolific flowering plants that act as superb pollen suppliers for the apiaries and excellent nutrient fixers for the soil. Kutzu can be used as forage for cattle, guinea pigs, and pigs, offsetting other farm expenses. The seed of the Guabo is also a valuable commodity. Finally, the honey, which is the primary income activity supported by the project, is valued at about \$75 per hive per year. Project beneficiaries have on average four to six hives, giving significant supplementary income to each family unit.

Conservation-Based Economic Opportunities for Women: Bolivia and Brazil

AIDER is also assisting the project participants with honey processing, packaging, and sales. This demonstration project will show other area residents the efficacy of the land reclamation system and hopefully will be replicated throughout the region.

Centro de Investigación de Recursos Naturales y Medio Ambiente (CIRNMA), Peru June, 2001 - October, 2002

CIRNMA was founded as an agricultural and livestock research program in 1992 but, over time, increasingly began to link its research to business development. Recently the organization has incorporated a for-profit business that turns out financially viable Andean products, including sweaters, alpaca meat products, and the grain quinoa. This grant supports CIRNMA's alpaca business initiatives through ongoing assistance to 120 women in six project sites in the Acora District of Puno, where women's groups have been formed to produce improved knitted and woven garments and accessories.



Women's groups have been formed in the Acora District of Puno to produce improved knitted and woven garments and accessories.

CIRNMA has determined that the quality of yarn, the colors, and the designs of the products—mostly alpaca sweaters for export—are the determining factors in commercial success. Accordingly, two levels of training are being provided: 1) to improve the quality of yarn from shearing and fiber selection to spinning; and 2) to enhance product designs, business organization, and marketing. Six very simple yarn spinning machines have been purchased by the project and are being provided on a loan basis to each community group for training in "new" spinning techniques. The resulting yarn will be thinner since buyers are looking for lighter-weight sweaters. Training manuals have been prepared on fiber selection and classification and advanced knitting skills. Technical assistance is also being provided to improve sales and incomes through improved products and a newly organized community-owned intermediary that will sell the women's products collectively.

Fundación Peruana para la Conservación de la Naturaleza (Pro Naturaleza), Peru June, 2001 - September, 2002

Pronaturaleza is a well-established organization in Lima that operates a number of projects that focus on natural resources conservation, biodiversity, and environmentally friendly utilization of forest resources for employment and income generation. This grant supports work with traditional women weavers of sheep's wool and alpaca fabrics in four communities in the high Andes, about three hours above the city of Cusco. Over the past generation, the use of natural vegetable dyes, which generally have subdued tones, has given way to the bright colors of chemical, commercial dyes. Many tourists, however, are looking for naturally dyed products, which they find more valuable. Due to this demand, the project is reintroducing traditional technical and botanical knowledge about natural dyes at the community level.



Traditional women weavers show yarn dyed with natural dyes.

The grant supports training by a Biologist and Nursery/Greenhouse Specialist for about 60 women and men in identifying traditional plants, preparing dyes, and learning new dying techniques. The project has also furnished three simple polyethylene greenhouses to be used as nurseries that provide a constant source of seedlings to transplant, to assure a continued supply of raw materials for dyes. The greenhouse operation will concentrate on varieties with the greatest

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demand and those with most difficulty regenerating on their own in the wild. Technical assistance will be offered in identifying new markets and opening stalls in new artisan markets. The women plan to sell their products in the tourist markets near Cusco.

Instituto Rural Valle Grande (IRVG), Peru June, 2001 - June, 2002

IRVG was founded in 1966 to provide technical education and development support for the agricultural sector in the Rio Cañete Valley and the Province of Yauyos, south of Lima. Their headquarters house a campus and boarding school for young agriculturalists. One of the IRVG's major development objectives is to foster agribusinesses that benefit small farmers with increased incomes. This grant is assisting women and their families from two communities to extract and market dry herbs, essential minerals, and medicinal plants native to the region.

IRVG has promoted the project through existing community-based groups such as "mother's clubs" and Reforestation Committees run by the national government. To date, 56 families have entered the enterprise, with women providing the organizational base for the planting and collection activities. Medicinal Plants Management Committees have been established in each of the towns. Training has been provided through the Committees in plant usage, drying, packaging, and other subjects. Handouts and a guide to the properties and uses of medicinal medicines have been produced. IRVG has held meetings on business and marketing opportunities and is able to offer diverse contacts in agribusiness. One possibility is for the groups to become the principal supplier of natural medicines in dry leaf form or essential oils to a new pharmacy chain that is being started in metropolitan Lima. IRVG is supplying the services of its in-house laboratory for testing and verifying the chemical properties of the different medicinal plants. This information is being used to obtain the Health Registry to formally do business in broader, more lucrative markets. IRVG is also providing an essential oils distiller to the community enterprise, which can increase the value of the products exponentially.



Women and their families from two communities learn to extract and market dry herbs, essential minerals, and medicinal plants native to the region.

Taller de Promoción Andina (TADEPA), Peru June, 2001 - June, 2002

TADEPA was started over 20 years ago by students and professors as an adjunct to the University in Ayacucho to share academic and technical resources with peasant communities throughout the highland areas of Peru, which could help them overcome the various kinds of production and productivity problems experienced on their small chacras ("subsistence farms"). TADEPA elected to focus its efforts on soil and water conservation, deliberately being technically centered and politically neutral. As a result, TADEPA has maintained ongoing working relationship with its partners in the rural areas and the local government, despite political differences so widely prevalent in the area.

This grant is working with about 100 women and their spouses in 10 communities in the Huamanguilla district to diversify small-farm production to include aromatic and medicinal plants. The selection of borage, dandelion, and mint was based on information provided by marketing contacts in Lima and the IRVG (another NGO Small Grant recipient). Rather than the products being collected in the wild, they are now being cultivated as a crop with a formal income-generation objective. Consistent with TADEPA's overall mission, the project is providing

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training in organic production, and the grant has enabled the installation of drip-irrigation demonstration systems on 7 of the 10 plots. The grant will also supply 10 fresh air dryers to train community members to dry the leaves of the different plants. TADEPA is assisting with the development of output projections, cash flows, marketing plans, and business organization. They have also begun to assist the communities in the organization of an association that will collectively sell the products to intermediaries.