

Increased Economic Growth and Food Security in Colombia

Project Overview and Connection to the Partnership Program:

The Increased Economic Growth and Food Security in Colombia project was managed in partnership with GESTANDO—a Colombian incubator of co-operative businesses—and was funded directly through the CCA Partnership Program. The project worked with approximately 2,208 members belonging to 17 co-operative organizations²⁸ within three Colombian departments:²⁹ Meta, Cundinamarca and Boyacá.

Similar to many of CCA's programs the cross-cutting theme of gender was interwoven throughout GESTANDO's programming. However, the GESTANDO project in particular included a substantial number of activities with an explicit focus on promoting gender equality within the beneficiaries' communities and co-operatives. These concentrated gender programming efforts generated thorough and comprehensive results through which CCA has been able to determine the positive impacts of ongoing gender initiatives amongst participating co-op members in Colombia. This information has been useful as the GESTANDO project has been scaled-up and expanded into a new initiative in Colombia entitled *Improving the Economic Performance of Agricultural Cooperatives in Colombia* (IMPACT).

Adherence to CCA's Gender Strategy:

In accordance with CCA's commitment to gender equality, the GESTANDO project made

gender considerations central to the project's success. Women are among those most affected by rural poverty in a country struggling to emerge from many years of civil unrest and armed conflict that has been targeted within



Co-op board member Susana Fino plays with her son

rural areas. Consequently, many women suffer disproportionately from family violence, have a lack access to appropriate resources, have fewer economic opportunities and are not recognized for their important roles in agricultural production. As such, women's interests and needs were seen as crucial elements to be incorporated within the programming.

Project Development and Gender Activities:

The project team conducted a gender baseline analysis that resulted in the completion of a Gender Analysis Framework. The team then integrated the gender considerations that had been identified into the overall program design to ensure that any changes to gender relations could be tracked and monitored over the life of

²⁸The project worked with a total of 17 beneficiary entities, but only ten were included in the final gender evaluation that was conducted to assess the results to date of the Partnership Program.

²⁹ Colombia is geographically divided into 32 territorial zones known as Departments.

the project. This process was facilitated by the collection of sex-disaggregated data.

Throughout the development of the project a number of gender activities were identified and undertaken including workshops and various gender trainings. These activities included:

- Hiring a gender specialist;
- Gender monitoring visits of the beneficiary entities;
- Gender mapping of the value chains;
- Gender awareness education training (for the GESTANDO Management Committee, CEO and staff);
- Capacity building training regarding the incorporation of gender equity into the project (for project staff);
- Training on basic gender concepts, regulatory frameworks and gender-based violence (for beneficiaries); and,
- A series of workshops on gender identity and masculinity (for beneficiaries).

These activities generated a great deal of feedback as participants were given the opportunity to share their views regarding the impact of the training during focus groups lead by the consultancy group *GRIMORUM Consultorías y Soluciones Ltda.* During the final gender evaluation of the Partnership Program one woman from the co-operative Coopsollanos noted: *“We noticed that now that there are more activities (for women), thanks to the project, women like to participate more often and they attend more [events]”*.³⁰

Project Outcomes and Results:

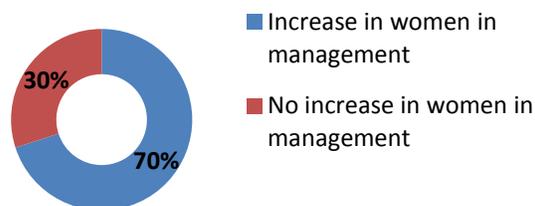
The gender activities that were carried out generated many positive results according to the participating beneficiaries. On average, members reported being more sensitized towards the gendered inequities that exist within their organizations, homes and communities. Specific advances included:

- Increased women’s participation particularly in new areas of the organizations;
- More women in leadership positions;
- A redistribution of labour between men and women members; and,
- A greater awareness of women’s rights, responsibilities and economic contributions to the organizations.

Overall, **100% (10 of 10)** of the organizations and members that participated in the project trainings experienced some sort of transformation that can be categorized as either organizational (i.e. aspects of the organization changed), or personal (i.e. attitudes and actions of individual members changed) in a move towards greater gender equality within the co-operatives and associated communities. These two broad categories were further sub-divided into more specific types of changes. Several of the more notable examples are highlighted below:

Organizational Changes

70% (7 out of 10) of the organizations saw more women join the general membership of the co-operative. The same number of organizations also saw more women become involved in management (i.e. Boards of Directors).

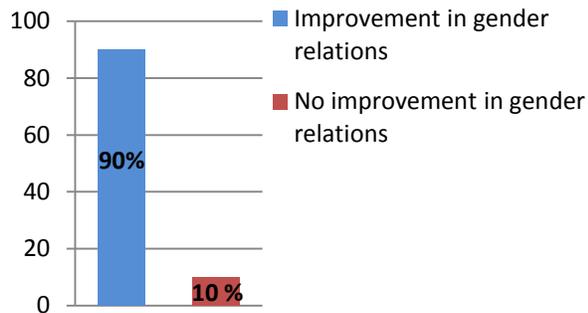


Other noteworthy organizational changes that took place across the beneficiary entities include: improved gender relations within the co-operatives and increases in women’s participation in operational positions (i.e. as committee members, administrators, etc).

³⁰ GRIMORUM. (2014). *Evaluación de Género sobre los Resultados del Proyecto ‘Aumento en el Crecimiento Económico y Seguridad Alimentaria en Colombia’-‘Partnership’*. Bogotá, DC: Author.

Personal Changes

90% (9 out of 10) of the participating organizations' members saw gender relations improve within their families and their communities.



Furthermore, members also experienced a number of other important personal advancements concerning gender, namely: enhancements to women's personal empowerment and autonomy, increases in the awareness of gender and human rights issues, and the enrichment of women's leadership capabilities. Collectively, these advances represent direct challenges to *machista*³¹ cultural norms that dictate men's and women's roles within their homes and communities, and levels of participation within the co-operative.

Challenges and Recommendations:

While many of the primary barriers to gender equitable participation within the co-operative organizations are being overcome through education and awareness, ongoing challenges still remain, including:

- Continued gender stereotyping of roles within the co-operative structure;
- Lack of knowledge concerning gendered violence;
- Risk of women taking on a triple-burden of labour;

- Women feeling subordinate to men in their contributions to the production process;
- Lack of women's participation in certain types of training (i.e. finance, computer skills); and,
- Men occupying top-level decision-making positions.

Going forward, participants emphasized the importance of continuing to provide comprehensive gender training to all members. Women felt that they benefited the most from exchange opportunities where they were able to learn from the experiences of women in other co-operatives, and they suggested future training could benefit from a focus on women's self-esteem and personal care. Overall, the vast majority of organizations that received training from GESTANDO have taken ownership of gender issues within their workplaces and communities resulting in widespread personal and organizational change for the members.



Fruit farmer Sandra Sanchez

³¹ *Machismo* is defined as the "Latin American word for the mystic of 'manliness'. It denotes a configuration of attitudes, values, and behaviors...[i]t includes breaking the rules, violence, sexual potency, and contempt for women" (p. 151). (As cited in: Garcés, E. (2008). *Colombian Women: The Struggle Out of Silence*. Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books).