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EVALUATION SUMMARY

GENDER IN AGRICULTURE: FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE IN HONDURAS



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The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

Lutheran World Relief (LWR) contracted Learning for Impact to carry out the final evaluation of the GAPP Project in Honduras. The relevance and efficacy of the pilot model was evaluated as well as its results and the achievement of its objectives. The model was also validated and contextualized through a case study.

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PROJECT SUMMARY

The Gender in Agriculture from Policy to Practice (GAPP) project is a pilot project in the area of Gender in Agriculture that was implemented in nine municipalities of the department of Lempira in western Honduras. It was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with LWR as its partner. The project began October 2013 and ended in March 2016. The intervention sought to impact food insecurity by building the advocacy capacity of women in local public and private spaces. The objective was to test a methodology that integrates women's leadership building with 'masculinities' training for men in order to increase women's access to resources for agricultural production.¹ LWR believes that in order to increase the participation of women in public and private spaces, it is necessary to build their capacity for advocacy and leadership, and that it is also necessary for men to understand the importance of gender equity. The goal of the project was to serve 2,500 women and 420 men.

¹ Description of GAPP's masculinities, women's leadership, and policy advocacy approaches can be found at genderinagriculture.org



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Overarching evaluation questions were:

- Did GAPP achieve greater leadership for women? Did this leadership influence local policy decisions?
- Did GAPP promote institutional practices that improved women's access to financial services and public investment in agricultural activities?

The evaluation was carried out in the department of Lempira, Honduras in May and June 2016 in five of the participating municipalities that were selected based on criteria to include communities with diversities in degrees of engagement with the GAPP project, successes and challenges in the project, ethnicities, poverty, and accessibility of communities.

The methodological approach was qualitative, framed within the principles of Feminist Evaluation, which sought a balance between accountability and lessons learned. A variety of participatory methodologies were used for data collection and analysis, including: outcome mapping, appreciative inquiry, and 'most significant change.' The following techniques were used: in-person interviews or semi-structured open telephone interviews, a review of project documents, focus groups, direct observation, short questionnaires and multi-sectoral meetings. Across the five municipalities, evaluators collected information from 88 persons including women and men community members who were project participants, local authorities, leaders of rural credit institutions, and project personnel.

The evaluation was complemented with a case study in order to contextualize the "GAPP Model" components in Honduras and to validate the model.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

GENERAL FINDINGS

- The project facilitated **connections between key actors — including municipal governments, Municipal Women's Networks (RMMs), and rural credit banks** — with a goal of having a gender-focused impact on policies in both public and private spheres. Network leaders, together with the Municipal Offices on Women (OMMs), helped women approach rural credit banks to gain access to credit for their projects. They also facilitated women's access to local governments so they could lobby for the approval of their proposals and agendas.
- **Capacity building and leadership training for women and the 'masculinities' methodology** — two strategic components of the project — were consistently combined in order to change men's attitudes about women's political and economic participation. However, the link between the masculinities strategy and the women's leadership strategy is still very weak.
- The **Women's Municipal Networks**, which already existed in the municipalities, became more dynamic and **activated their advocacy role** as they positioned themselves in the public space, using strategies for building capacity and making their work more visible.
- The Project helped to reestablish the **leadership of the OMMs** on topics that had not been previously addressed, such as political and economic empowerment. This took them beyond just denouncing violence to having a more active role in implementing existing gender equity and equality laws.

All nine of the municipalities covered by the project reformulated and approved their municipal public policies on Food and Nutritional Security and included a gender focus to support initiatives that specifically favor women.

- Municipal level funds approved for women's groups as a result of GAPP efforts totaled US **\$68,768** for **99 agricultural projects** including installation of drip irrigation, land for coffee cultivation, establishment of poultry farms, production of plantain chips, bean cultivation, etc. In addition, funding was approved for non-agricultural projects, such as electric mills, bakeries, coffee roasters, tailoring, etc. During GAPP, 56 rural savings and loan cooperatives also changed internal policies & practices to facilitate women's access to financial services, surpassing the target of 45.

MORE LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN AND INVOLVEMENT OF MEN

- The leadership role of women in the networks was strengthened, as expressed by the fact that network leaders were more proactive and took more individual initiative to position women's rights in the economic arena — something that had not traditionally been done in the municipalities. They also took greater leadership in groups working on economic initiatives.
- The 'masculinities' approach was able to achieve **changes in personal behavioral** as a starting point for achieving changes in other areas of development. In the rural credit banks where the strategy was applied, it was an important incentive for making gender-based considerations more mainstream in their operations. The process planted a seed for increased **awareness about equality of rights** of men and women.
- The masculinities trainings contributed to **increasing men's sensitivity and openness towards the participation of women** in decision-making processes at the local and household level. However, it cannot be said that achievement in women's leadership is determined by the changing attitudes of the men who participated in the process, or that the changes in local policies and practices related to access to resources for production are only attributable to changes in men.

GENDER EQUITY POLICIES

- Women are participating more in the management of production projects and in advocacy for the creation of public policies with a gender focus. They also have more access to financial and investment services from municipal governments for women-led agricultural activities.
- Political advocacy was focused on food security policy with both a gender and environmental focus. Town hall meetings (cabildos abiertos) for women and the formulation of participatory budgets were effective practices, and women benefitted by having funds allocated to their specific projects.

EFFECTS

- Through its training and accompaniment strategies for individual and organizational advocacy, the project generated sustainable effects in women's leadership for gaining access to public and private resources. Changes observed in the structures of the OMMs and RMMs are particularly notable, as are the partnerships formed between these women's groups and the rural credit banks, which have created strong synergies.

Despite a relaxation of legal requirements for municipalities to allocate 5 percent of budgets to support women's interests, the RMMs successfully advocated to keep and in some instances even increase that percentage.



CONCLUSIONS

The GAPP Project is an innovative project with a great deal of potential for supporting development by changing attitudes about women's work and their roles in the agricultural sector. The concept of incorporating new elements into the traditional capacity-building approach has been a good one: on one hand, **women are trained for leadership and political advocacy** on the local level; and on the other hand, a key entity like the rural credit bank is used as a way to help women to gain access to financial resources — as **men's leadership groups in the public and private sectors** are trained on masculinity issues so they will support the women leaders.

The **rural credit banks** are seen as an important private actor and a key component in the change model that involves men as actors in gender equality. GAPP's added value is the **mainstreaming of gender policies in these banks**.

“Three years ago, I couldn't speak in front of anyone. Now I speak and I feel sure about the things that I am saying.” (Participant of a focus group with representatives from the Municipal Women's Network of Gualcinse, May 2016)



The focus of the project proved to be more appropriate for seeking **'structural' changes** (that is, changes in thinking and attitudes), than for resolving 'practical' needs (understanding these as technical capacities in agriculture or inputs and credits for production, etc.). While it seeks to put financial resources in the hands of rural women for their production activities, the GAPP model is more of a strategy for creating the conditions for **training women as agents of change** and, at the same time, for creating **changes in the attitudes of men** in order to support gender equity and equality in the rural sector, and thus, facilitate access to those resources.

The incorporation of the **'masculinities' training component** that had traditionally been aimed at men — relating to their health and other needs ranging from social to political — shows great potential as a strategy for men to contribute to equal development once they realize that their behaviors have changed.

Raising men's awareness about gender rights and about existing gender inequalities, and including them in the actions needed to decrease these inequalities, is a way to plant **seeds of change** in their family and social environments, which are then projected into society at large. However, the men who go through the trainings must overcome attitudes that are constantly being expressed in the dominant patriarchal culture and they have to confront criticism and pressures from society. This is a strong limiting factor that the GAPP Model must manage strategically in the future.

GAPP has contributed an appropriate model for promoting change in men and women, going beyond the practice of simply providing resources and assets without accompanying those resources with training and efforts to change people's attitudes.