



Photo by Elida Ochoa (left) showing how she makes compost.

EVALUATION SUMMARY

LEARNING FOR GENDER INTEGRATION PLUS NICARAGUA: COMBINED PHOTOVOICE AND MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE METHODOLOGIES

Lutheran World Relief (LWR) has piloted its Learning for Gender Integration (LGI) initiative in three projects around the world in Uganda, Nicaragua and India. This is a summary of the evaluation findings for the Nicaragua pilot project. With technical support from Cultural Practice, LCC (CP), a team of Evaluation and Gender specialists from LWR and peer organizations used a combination of evaluation methodologies to assess the impact of the *Gender in Production Development and Food Security in the Flor de Puncasán area, Matiguás Municipality* project in Nicaragua.

The findings presented here also draw on the endline quantitative data collected by the evaluation consultant Roberto G. Pao Kraudy. All quantitative findings in this summary were drawn from that endline report.

PROJECT SUMMARY

With funding from Foods Resource Bank (FRB), Lutheran World Relief and ADDAC (Asociación para la Diversificación y el Desarrollo Agrícola Comuna) worked with 266 men and 143 women in 15 communities, who are members of the Flor de Puncasán cooperative, to improve their food security. The Flor de Puncasán cooperative is located in Matiguás, a municipality with indigenous roots. The cooperative is approximately nine years old. Its structure includes an assembly of delegates each representing 10 members, a board of directors and several internal committees that oversee affairs related to credit, surveillance, gender and marketing, among other things.

The project aimed to increase the agricultural productivity of marketed crops, diversify farmers' household food supply, expand income sources, strengthen the cooperative's administrative and business capacity and establish strategies for equitable management of household economic resources for both men and women. The project was implemented in the municipalities of Matiguás, San Ramón and Muy Muy (Nicaragua) from April 2013 to March 2015.

This project was a part of Learning for Gender Integration (LGI), an initiative of LWR to ensure that men and women have equal opportunities to benefit from LWR's work. The goal of the initiative is to enable LWR to better contribute to full human flourishing through gender-integrated programming. LGI projects are funded by LWR and the Foods Resource Bank. Cultural Practice, LLC provided technical support to the initiative.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This evaluation combines quantitative and qualitative evaluation methodologies. The quantitative methodologies included surveys (validated through focus groups and interviews) and project record reviews. The two qualitative methodologies are PhotoVoice (PV) and Most Significant Change (MSC). PV is an empowering methodology that uses images to convey issues that are important to stakeholders. (See Wang, C., & Burris, M.A., "Photovoice: Concept, methodology and use for participatory needs assessment." *Health Education & Behavior*, 24(3), 369-387, June 1997.) MSC is a bottom-up process of generating stories about change that was brought about through the project. (See Rick Davies and Jess Dart, "The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique: A Guide to Its Use." London, U.K., and Hastings, Australia: Clearinghouse and Mande, April 2005.) The evaluation used an adapted combination of these two proven evaluation methodologies in a multi-stakeholder approach to identify and assess changes in gender roles, decision-making and food security outcomes for men and women.

PhotoVoice was used with project participants. Twelve participants were chosen from eight communities. They were equipped with cameras, trained on how to use them and asked to photograph people and things in their community that, in their opinion, showed how men's or women's roles had changed since the beginning of the project. After presenting their photos to one another, the photographers identified common themes in the photos that were important to their community. Some of these themes were concrete (e.g. new planting practices introduced by the project) and others were more abstract (e.g. confidence). They selected a few photos that they considered to best visualize the themes.

MSC was used with project staff from ADDAC. Nine staff members chose stories from the project that reflected significant changes that had taken place in the roles of women compared to roles of men in the project communities. They shared their stories with each other and discussed the major themes those changes reflected. They chose two stories that represented the most significant changes based on their self-selected criteria for what they considered "most significant".

The evaluation was intentionally designed with two similar but different methodologies for its two main stakeholder groups. PV does not require literacy while MSC is more effective with literate participants. Both methodologies respond to a question, and the evaluation team crafted questions that would allow for similar types of responses. Facilitators using either methodology guide participants through a process to identify important themes that present themselves as part of the analysis, which allowed for cross-analysis by both sets of participants. In fact, the facilitators were not responsible for performing the analysis but for guiding the two groups to conduct the analysis themselves.

The two groups came together on the last day of the evaluation for a joint discussion. The discussion created a space for both photographers and staff to engage in a conversation about the themes that seemed important to them. Both groups were able to contribute equally to the evaluation's analysis by using their photos or stories to explain why the identified themes were important. Because each group used a different methodology and therefore had different products, the power dynamic was somewhat balanced. Leveling the playing field allowed for a more nuanced representation and understanding of changes in gender-based power relations that play out in agricultural and nutritional practices and project outcomes. The final step in the analysis was the triangulation of findings using quantitative data.

Through the generous support of Technical and Operational Support Program TOPS, this evaluation provided a space to test this new approach of two combined methodologies and was the third of three evaluations of the pilot projects of the LGI initiative. Facilitation Guidance has been developed to provide the details about how to facilitate this combined methodology approach and is available at lwr.org/gender. The reports of the other two LGI project evaluations and a PhotoBook documenting the photos and stories generated through the PhotoVoice process are also available at that site.

"You also need to be very self-motivated to do this. If you don't believe in change, change will not happen." (Ms. Elida)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

FAMILY UNITY AND PARTICIPATION: SHARING RESPONSIBILITIES

Overall, the theme that emerged as the most significant change identified through this evaluation is: family union. Several stories highlighted the impact the project had on fostering family harmony, unity and respect. According to project participants, family relations improved significantly since the start of the project. Family members reported that now they are working and making decisions together both at home and on the farm. One participant said, “People are gathering together to work on family plots. I hope that this will continue to happen because that was very beautiful.”

Quantitative data from the endline also supports this finding, as there was an increase in the number of women who are now involved in decision-making at the household level. By the end of the project and compared to the baseline, 20% more women were participating in household decision-making. Families now share responsibilities at the household level. Photos showed husbands helping with house chores and taking care of the children, which are all activities that were previously only done by women. Making tortillas is considered by local people to be a women’s activity yet during the PV methodology, men and women participants presented photos of men making and serving tortillas to their families. These photos were very significant for the participants as they represented the change in attitudes and behaviors regarding gender roles and relations.

Also, there is now a higher rate of shared decision-making in the family regarding farm management. From baseline to endline, there was 12% growth in the number of female cooperative members making decisions about agricultural production on the farm. Men’s involvement rate in agricultural decision-making remained similar throughout the project. These numbers represent a reduction in a gender gap between men’s and women’s decision-making capacities.



Photo by Ananias Suarez (left) of his wife Urania and their children. Urania has begun managing the household income, and the family has since been able to afford a toilet and motorbike.

For example, Mr. Oto, an ADDAC staff member, shared a story about a family working in the livestock sector, which is a sector known for having strict gender-based roles. During the project, men's and women's responsibilities gradually became more integrated. Instead of only working in the household, women began going to the pastures and herding the animals while men started to contribute more at home helping out with chores. These behaviors were never seen prior to the project. Another example is the Suarez family where the husband Mr. Ananias and his wife Ms. Urania have started to plan farm activities together. Ms. Urania also began managing their household income. In fact, she organized the family savings so efficiently that they were able to buy a toilet for their bathroom and a motorbike for transportation.

Men's lives have also changed as a result of the project's efforts to raise awareness about gender equality. For example, Mr. Marcos has been part of the cooperative for over eight years. Before the project, he believed that working on the farm was solely a man's job. When a gender committee was formed in the Flor de Pancasán cooperative, he was invited to participate. At first, he felt embarrassed to be part of a committee on gender. However, after awareness raising activities delivered by project staff, he decided to become a member along with two other women from his community. He worked with them to create an action plan to promote gender equality. The committee organized workshops about the importance of women's participation in the production of cacao and coffee. Later on, Mr. Marcos became a masculinity promoter. In this role, he has been speaking with other men from the community about women's roles and responsibilities in their society. He defines his experience with gender work as "bajarse de la mula" (getting off the mule). In the community, men are often the only ones allowed to ride mules. It is considered a sign of power and masculinity. So, for Mr. Marcos, this phrase represents the willingness of men to give women the space and the opportunity to "ride the mule", ensuring women have equal rights and have a voice in the society.

IMPROVED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND DIVERSIFICATION: NEW LIFE SKILLS

Cooperative members showed growth in their agricultural production performance. Production performance was measured by comparing the production of coffee or cacao in quintals (1 quintal = 46 kg) per one manzana (1 manzana = 0.7 ha) between project baseline and endline. The optimal production performance was defined by the project as 92 kg or more per 0.7 ha. Cooperative members increased their performance from 51.5% at baseline to 77.1% at endline. There was greater production performance improvement in crops tended to by women compared to those tended to by men, with women's crop performance raising from 432 kg/0.7 ha at baseline to 874 kg/0.7 ha at endline.

The ratio between men and women coffee and cacao producers has increased more even after the project. Before the project, the ratio was 1.8 men to one woman in coffee and cacao production. However, data collected after the project showed that women's participation in production had increased, as the ratio was 1.2 men to 1 woman in coffee production and 1.5 men to 1 woman in cacao production. These numbers reflect that the production gap between women and men has shrunk due to the project. It encouraged all cooperative members to produce at a larger quantity and quality for both consumption and commercialization.

Several stories of the photographers were about the benefit of diversification (crops and animals) and adoption of new agricultural practices, which are the two key strategies that the project promoted. Cooperative members increased the diversification of their plots, farming at least three food products. There was a 20% growth in the number of farmers cultivating three or more food products on their plots. Farmers started planting new vegetables and fruits such as bananas, oranges, passion fruit, mangos, etc., which they acknowledged was an important contributor to the food security of their families. Additionally, they were taught how to provide better care and hygiene for their animals like poultry and pigs. For example, farmers created irrigation systems for their plants and built corrals to milk their animals in a clean environment rather than near puddles. Some farmers like Mr. Balvino even decided to build a fish farm.

Food diversification contributed to the development of a greater sense of resiliency in members of the cooperative. One photographer mentioned that if something goes wrong with one of their crops, they have diversification to help them now. With diversification, they can have other sources of food and revenue that shield them from the risks. The project gave farmers a sense of independence and empowerment.

Photographers stated that there are people now running their own farms rather than working for others. The project helped them become more independent, own land and products so they can have higher earnings and improved well-being. Ms. Levi Mesis, a cooperative member, pointed out the importance of this change. She said farmers have developed life skills that help them continue their production with higher quality and at a greater scale.

FOOD SECURITY: HEALTHIER DIETS

The project helped improve participants' knowledge of nutrition and focused on enhancing their agriculture practices in order to increase the availability of nutritional food. The Food Consumption Pattern (FCP) measures food products used by over 50% of family members three or more days a week. According to FCP, communities involved in the project increased their food consumption by 22% from baseline to endline.

There was an increase in knowledge and positive behaviors around improved nutrition due to the training and follow-up sessions. Project staff combined theory and practice to develop better practices on food security among community members. One strategy was the creation of bio-intensive home gardens with different vegetables which the whole family could participate in developing and maintaining. This strategy fostered positive behaviors, promoted food security and gender equality among family members by making everyone learn and become engaged in developing their home garden together.

Through higher and more diversified production, families now have access to healthier homegrown food products and do not need to buy them at local stores. Families said that children are now more excited about planting and eating vegetables. Before, children did not know what foods the farm had but now they know and appreciate all food products growing there. Ms. Elida, one of the photographers, stated that working together in the garden and on the farm gave families a sense of power because, as she put it, "it is like having a little market in our backyard without having to spend money outside." Project beneficiaries gained new skills on improving their food diet through growing their own products. This also created a multiplier effect. Cooperative members are now working with neighbors and relatives to exchange, sell and buy products among themselves. This initiative provides the entire community with opportunities to gain higher incomes and live healthier lives by consuming diverse organic food.



Photo by Balvino Gonzales (left) of his wife feeding fish in their pond. They learned new fish farming skills from the project, and now their family consumes fish regularly.

BETTER HOUSEHOLD CONDITIONS: FAMILY WELL- BEING

The project also contributed to the development of better conditions at the household level. Throughout the MSC and PV methodologies, participants highlighted stories related to access to water, sanitation and improved cook stoves. Families are now able to enjoy stable water access as a result of the construction of the water ram or water pumps. Improved access to water has led to better sanitation practices. Before, due to the lack of water, community members had to use unhygienic latrines. Now they have water supplied directly to their bathrooms and laundry spaces in their houses. Also, families now have improved cook stoves that are connected to chimneys to decrease the amount of smoke inside the house during the cooking process.

While the whole family benefited from these new assets, women gained more because they are often the ones collecting water from the rivers and bringing it to the house, cooking for the family and washing clothes in the lake. Ms Mayra, one of the photographers said, “Before, we had to go to the river to pick up water. That took at least one hour. Now water arrives home.” The improved infrastructure and men taking on more household chores are the two factors that have allowed women to rest and

spend more time doing other activities such as going to medical checkups, playing with their kids, participating in workshops and community events, etc. The change in access to water and improved sanitation has fostered better health and living conditions for families in the cooperative.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND LEADERSHIP: PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The project led to 14% more cooperative members assuming positions in the political structure of the cooperative. The percentage of members who know about the gender policies increased significantly, from 3.4% at baseline to 65.8% at endline, as a result of the training events that the technicians, promoters and managers developed in their communities. A common story in both the MSC and the PV methodologies was Ms. Elida's story. Elida's husband – a cooperative member – was a supportive partner who had participated in gender awareness training and kept encouraging Elida to attend the gender workshops. She was very hesitant to participate, explaining, “I'm shy about telling this story because I think I'm the one reproducing the misogynistic patterns.” When Elida's husband took care of the house and the

Photo by Julio Palacio (right) of his neighbor's family, who are building a new home together. Julio says the father now looks after his children more.





Photo by Ananías Suarez (right) of the new hydraulic pump, which helps direct water to his home. Ananías' family and other families in the community no longer have to travel to fetch water.

children, Elida felt ashamed of the fact that he was doing that. She also did not want to interact with the rest of the community or leave her house to attend any workshops. She did not want to join her husband at the cooperative. One day, after several invitations from the project staff and encouragement from her husband, she decided to attend a workshop. She liked it so much that she kept going back and eventually became an active member of the cooperative and a promoter. Elida shared her story: "I wanted to represent the change I experienced through the project. When I became an organized participant, it was a big personal change for me. I'm the treasurer of the communal counsel now. I'm also a delegate of the gender community in the assembly." Elida now appreciates her partner's support and is more involved in her community.

The project has fostered women's leadership in their cooperatives and communities. According to Mr. Ciro from ADDAC staff, before the project, all coffee and cacao promoters were men but now there are also women leading training workshops. Women were given the opportunity to lead trainings on agricultural production and management. The most challenging thing in this process was to encourage women to gain confidence to be able to lead and facilitate training workshops. According to Ciro, there are now many female promoters, including seven in cacao production, 22 in gender-related matters and three in the coffee production industry.

Members showed a slight increase in credit access, with 3% growth from baseline to endline. However, women showed greater access to credit both at baseline and endline, scoring 8% higher than men. Also, members significantly increased their knowledge about credit policies, going from 4% to 100% at the end of the project. The credit request process was made simple and fast. They also received training from project staff on how to develop a work plan and invest their money. One story was about Ms. Rosibel, a single mother of three children. Throughout the project, she had the opportunity to access credit provided by the cooperative to buy a plot of land. She worked with the project technicians to diversify her new plot so she could increase her production. The farm soon started generating high income. Rosibel increased her yields of coffee, cacao, beans and corn as well as her livestock. Her business expanded so successfully that now she is admired and known by the leadership and the entrepreneurs in her community. Ms. Rosibel is also part of her community board and works as a cacao promoter, a job mostly done by men. While Rosibel already finished paying back her first loan, she is now looking to access more credit to have a larger plot. She recognizes the work was very difficult and hard but she feels proud to have gained so much leadership.

EDUCATING NEXT GENERATIONS FOR SUSTAINABILITY: YOUTH LEADERSHIP

The project also contributed to the development of better conditions at the household level. Throughout the MSC and PV methodologies, participants highlighted stories related to access to water, sanitation and improved cook stoves. Families are now able to enjoy stable water access as a result of the construction of the water ram or water pumps. The project has also contributed to building a new generation of youth leaders in the communities. Ms. Karen, a member of ADDAC staff, told the story of Kevin, a 22-year old cooperative member. She highlighted his story as an example of significant change because young people like Kevin are taking an interest in their communities and actively participating in cooperative and community development activities.

There are now youth committees within the Flor de Pancasán cooperative where young people are preparing to become the future cooperative leaders. Kevin is already a member of the cooperative, and now he is getting a degree in agronomic engineering. He recently received credit to build a solar panel in his house. He works tirelessly to encourage other youth to join the cooperative activities as well.

Participants from both the PV and the MSC methodologies discussed the topic of generational renewal (*relevo generacional*) at length. People understood this concept to refer to the capacity of youth to continue the work of their parents and elders, including the work on gender education and agricultural production. PV and MSC participants agreed that improved children's education is seen as a significant change brought about by the project. Children are now encouraged to take care of the environment. They are also learning about gender equality by learning the importance of respecting both of their parents and collaborating with them when they are not in school.

FEATURE ON MSC

In this evaluation, the Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology was used with project staff from ADDAC. Nine staff members chose stories from the project that reflected important changes in the communities. They shared their stories with each other and discussed the themes those changes reflected. They chose two stories that represented the most significant changes based on their selected criteria.

The staff were asked to share stories about individuals or groups that responded to the following question: "What has been the most significant change generated by this project that affected women cooperative members?" Each person wrote a story or drew a picture to represent their answer and shared it with the other staff members and the evaluation team.

The group generated a total of nine stories. After listening to one another's stories, they determined a list of themes which appeared in the stories. The table below is a summary of the themes. It also shows whether each theme was expressed in the stories about men, women, girls or boys and how many of the stories were expressed in relation to each group in total. Each story featured several themes, listed below:

THEMES	WOMEN	GIRLS	MEN	BOYS
Improve conditions in the household	5	4	3	5
Economic development	6	3	4	4
Capacity building	5	2	5	3
Food security	4	4	2	4
Decision-making / Better family relations	5	2	4	2
New technology	3	2	4	2
Personal growth	5	0	4	1
Interest in learning and sharing	4	0	4	1
Access to assets	3	1	3	2
Participation in family and community	2	1	3	2
Solidarity	4	0	2	1
Shared responsibilities	3	0	3	0
Empowerment	4	0	1	1
Community recognition	3	0	2	1
Growth in agricultural productivity	3	0	2	0
Increased social awareness	1	0	3	1
Food diversification	1	0	1	0
Youth leadership	0	0	0	1

In addition to discussing the themes that were revealed by the stories, the staff also determined the two stories that they believed best represented the most significant change created by the project. The aspect of this methodology that makes it especially participant-driven is the fact that the people participating in the discussion set the criteria for what makes a change ‘significant’. The evaluator’s role is to facilitate the discussion, not to assess the significance of a given story. The group is to decide whether ‘significant’ to them means the story is representative, interesting or exemplary of what they viewed as the most important change that resulted from the project.

There were three main criteria the staff chose to determine the one story that represented the most significant change:

- 1 A story that shows family integration.
- 2 The main character of the story should be a role model for the community.
- 3 The main character of the story should have participated in some of the different initiatives that were implemented by the project.

After scoring the projects according to these criteria, two stories stood out. These stories were also described above. Below is a short description:

- 1 **TITLE:** *Organizational and Productive Empowerment of Female Farmer*, by ADDAC staff member Kevin. This story is about Rosibel, a cooperative member who is 47 years old. She is a single mother of three children who became a successful business woman, owning and managing an entire farm where she grows vegetables, fruits and livestock. She is an example of leadership and entrepreneurship for her community and cooperative.
- 2 **TITLE:** *From Not Knowing to Doing it*, by ADDAC staff member Jesslyn. This is the story from cooperative member Elida. It talks about her transition. She was first a woman who did not leave her house at all and did not want to participate in community activities. Now, she feels more confident. She became a leader in her community and a gender equality promoter in the cooperative.

FEATURE ON PHOTOVOICE

PhotoVoice was used with project participants who are members of the Flor de Pancasán cooperative. Twelve participants, six women and six men, were chosen from eight different communities. They were equipped with cameras, trained on how to use them and asked to photograph people and things in their community that, in their opinion, showed how men’s or women’s roles and relationships have changed since the beginning of the project. Then they discussed the themes reflected in those changes and selected a few that they considered to be most important.

Each of the photographers chose five of their photographs as the ones that demonstrated the most important changes that they saw during the course of the project. Each of the 12 photographers shared their top five photos along with the stories that went with them with their fellow photographers. After all the photographers had shared their photos and stories, the group discussed the common themes that appeared most often or were most important to them.

Below is the list of themes the photographers generated in their discussion as well as the number of photos that were categorized under each theme. The themes are listed starting with the one that had the highest number of photos categorized under it:

THEMES	NUMBER OF PHOTOS CLASSIFIED BY THEMES
Health and housing improvement (Food security)	15
Union and family equality	13
Productivity and economic improvement	11
Empowerment and leadership	7
Family education	6
Good agricultural practices	5
Community organization	3

The photographers chose two to five photos that best represented each theme. Later, participants conducted another round of selection during which they chose a total of six photos that represented the most significant changes across all themes. The final photos and stories were presented to the broader community for discussion. The community validated the chosen themes and photos during the last day of the evaluation.

The photos and captions below serve as a small sample of the types of photos and stories that were chosen to represent these themes.

DOING WHAT WOMEN DO | PHOTO BY JUAN RAMON, LABERINTO COMMUNITY



Story: This is a picture of Ricardo, who is a masculinity promoter. Here he is grinding corn for tortillas/guirilas (sweet corn). Ricardo used to drink a lot. Sometimes when he got money from selling crops, he would lose it when we went out drinking. Now, he gives the money to his wife so she can hold on to it while he is recovering from alcoholism. They get along well and make decisions together. The family is having more conversations and is engaged in an open dialogue.

FAMILY WITH A VISION | PHOTO BY JOSÉ ALFREDO PEREZ, AZANCOR COMMUNITY



Story: Before, only Mercedes Chavarria Ochoa (center in blue) was the only cooperative member out of the family. Now, we are all members. It is important because the whole family is organized. Here, she is telling the story to her children and grandchildren of how she managed to purchase land.



Story: This is a meeting of Azancor's Community Board of Directors. We have to be well-organized to see and respond to the needs of the population and maintain stability. Previously, only the men came to the meetings, but now the women also participate. It is very useful because it helps the Board understand the needs of the community better.

CONCLUSION

The final step in the combined methodology approach was to have the photographers present their themes and selected photos to the MSC participants and have the staff that participated in MSC present their stories to the photographers. The chosen themes and the main points discussed during this exchange shaped much of the analysis in this evaluation.

There were several overlapping themes between the photographers and the MSC participants, including family unity, shared responsibilities, economic growth, productivity, leadership, food security and family education. Two major themes that were repeated by staff and photographers were: 1) Change in attitudes and behaviors, reflected by shared responsibilities and decisions at the household level as well as in agricultural production and 2) Development of the feeling of confidence and new opportunities that led to entrepreneurship and leadership in both men and women. These changes inherently helped contribute to members' empowerment processes, particularly for women.

The stories and the photos showed the strong and genuine impact the project had on the cooperative members. Photographers were very nervous initially as they said it was their first time holding cameras. However, later on they were excited and proud to share their work with other community and family members. During the photo exhibition, photographers invited their relatives and the people whose photos were

taken. Many people travelled for hours to attend the evaluation workshops. Participants from PV and MSC were proud and happy to show their achievements and share their stories, even more than a year after the project had ended. Participants presented a poem, prepared a family speech and carried out performances to represent their stories during the exhibition even though these activities were not requested for the evaluation process.

One staff supporting the evaluation said, "This project was able to get women out from anonymity. Now women have a title: the entrepreneur, the producer, the businesswoman... women feel empowered in different areas now." The project had a comprehensive approach and change was reflected at every level from the family to the cooperative. Now the project beneficiaries feel empowered to share their new knowledge and practices with other community members and neighbors. For example, when participants were asked about the sustainability of the project, they highlighted the importance of educating their kids with and passing on the lessons gained through the project. Direct project beneficiaries continue working and applying the techniques and information that they learned. An example of this is Ana Castro, a cooperative member who mentioned that after the trainings received by the project staff, a group of people got together and started a radio program that they used to inform community members about the need and importance of reforestation.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND LEARNING

LWR MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Overall, LWR Nicaragua agreed with the evaluation findings for this project. The evaluation was particularly useful because it formally documented and supported the results and impact of the project about gender integration in agriculture. An important aspect of this evaluation was its use of innovative participatory methodologies that employed photos and storytelling as a means for project participants to evaluate their own experience with the project. From the perspective of LWR Nicaragua office, the evaluation process has been as valuable as the actual findings.

EVALUATION ACTION ITEMS

LWR Nicaragua is currently replicating its gender integration approach at the Flor de Pancasán cooperative in a new cooperative called Rio de Agua Viva. This new project involves interventions similar to those applied in Flor de Pancasán, including activities like training promoters on coffee, gender, cacao and masculinity and providing field support to cooperative members. Community members are also participating in workshops about gender roles and relations and working on demonstrative plots with bio-intensive gardens. The project is taking place in the Rancho Grande area and is being supported by the Ford Foundation. Also, LWR Nicaragua is exploring the possibility of systematizing its experience in Flor de Pancasán through comprehensive documentation of the entire project's process.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

LWR approached all three LGI projects as learning opportunities to better integrate gender considerations into our food security programming. This evaluation in conjunction with the other two LGI projects has provided a great deal of insight into how best to work with partners, communities and individuals to ensure that all project participants reap benefits. Regarding project design, LWR has learned that both sides (LWR and implementing partners) must be committed to thorough needs assessments,

interventions that simultaneously address food security and gender imbalances and monitoring and evaluation systems that provide sufficient data to analyze changes for men and women. LWR has also learned that the contexts in which communities and households function vary and these differences must be respected and taken into account by the project. Gender is one facet of those contexts and it closely interacts with other facets such as power structures, politics, poverty and education. LWR is committed to its vision of a world where every person lives in justice, dignity and peace and we know that gender-sensitive programming enables this vision.

GRATITUDE

LWR thanks its peer partners who contributed time, resources and talent to this evaluation. LWR would like to especially thank Patricia de Leon, Project Concern International (PCI), Guatemala; Morgan Mercer, ACDIVOCA, USA.

Lutheran World Relief has nearly 75 years of demonstrated expertise helping to transform some of the hardest-to-reach places in the developing world. LWR helps communities living in extreme poverty adapt to the challenges that threaten their livelihoods and well-being, and responds to emergencies with a long-term view. Our international team of experts develops the most effective tools to help people achieve self-sufficiency. We apply solutions specific to the needs of each community, such as providing access to capital for small businesses or helping farmers adapt to changing climate conditions. Our long history of partnership with local communities, businesses, and governments enables in-country professionals to lift up local knowledge and leverage relationships that drive results. And by working across issues such as gender, climate change adaptation, and agriculture, LWR continues to learn, share, and innovate with the global development community. By investing in people, their skills, and strengthening their ability to adapt, LWR enables those living in extreme poverty to build the resilience they need to thrive.



Lutheran World Relief
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, LASTING PROMISE.



This evaluation is made possible by a grant from The Technical and Operational Performance Support (TOPS) Program. The TOPS Small Grants Program Improvement Award (PIA) is made possible by the generous support and contribution of the American people through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of the materials produced through the PIAs do not necessarily reflect the views of TOPS, USAID, or the U.S. Government.