GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN RURAL EXTENSION SERVICES: A CASE STUDY FROM THE HONDURAS-PAAR PROJECT

Executive summary

This report documents the impacts and implementation of the gender methodology being applied by the Fund for Upland Producers (Fondo de Productores de Ladera- FPL), a component of the Rural Land Management Project (Proyecto de Administracion de Areas Rurales- PAAR) in Honduras. Through a comprehensive program of training to services providers, the PAAR has mainstreamed gender into the delivery of extension services. This, in turn, has led to increased efficiency of extension services through higher and faster adoption of extension methods and to improved gender relations in communities. A greater gender awareness process of project design and implementation has been instrumental in achieving these results.

I. Introduction

The Rural Land Management Project (PAAR) in Honduras aims at: i) modernizing the system of rural land registration; ii) strengthening forest administration; iii) improving agriculture and forestry practices in upland farms in order to stabilize income and decrease forest encroachment; and iv) rationalizing the national protected areas system. A focus on gender has been incorporated in the Fund for Upland Producers which provides rural communities with agricultural and rural development technical assistance and extension services.

Technical assistance is provided by NGOs and private consulting firms that are contracted by PAAR. Technical assistance is provided in a broad range of productive and domestic arenas including agriculture, animal husbandry, credit cooperatives, community organization, environmental education for children, home improvements (e.g. fuel-efficient stoves and ovens, creating divisions within the home and constructing storage areas) and traditional home economic activities (e.g., handicrafts, baking, sewing and making pickles and preserves) ostensibly for income-generation.

II. Gender Mainstreaming throughout the project cycle

Project Design

Gender has been an integral component of the project from the design phase of the PAAR. The project Staff Appraisal Report (SAR) acknowledges both the importance of, and limitations to, women’s participation in agricultural extension and forestry projects. The social assessment conducted prior to the project identified key gender issues regarding access to land, access to rural...

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1 The case study is based on information gathered during two missions to Honduras between March and April 2000. During the first mission, a consultant reviewed project documents and observed two gender training workshop sessions: an explanation of the PAAR gender methodology to service provider staff and the application of the given methodology in a client community by service providers. During the second mission, five rural communities, located in the departments of Francisco Morazán, Olancho and Yoro, were visited. The fieldwork methodology consisted of focus groups conducted with male and female community members and separate focus groups with provider staff representing all levels of each organization. The case study has been elaborated by Maria Elena Ruiz Abril and Ronald Strochlic.

2 Honduras, Land Administration Project, Staff Appraisal Report, 02/28/97
extension services and natural resource management. It recommended gender training for project staff, service providers and beneficiaries.

Additionally, the PAD mentioned a gender strategy for FPL to provide opportunities to men and women farmers in the project area. In particular, the strategy would include: (a) marketing the project to men and women through appropriate communications materials and channels; (b) selecting TA providers with the capacity and experience to successfully reach and work with male and female community members; (c) providing gender analysis training for TA providers; (d) establishing gender-related performance indicators; and (e) including a male and female representative of farmer groups in the Uplands Fund Committee.

Project Implementation

The project has a Social, Gender, and Ethnic Groups component which has a coordinator working primarily on gender issues. The gender specialist not only has clear terms of reference but also extensive experience applying gender analysis to agricultural extension work. Although no specific budget line exists for gender, social and ethnic activities, the component coordinator has been successful in forging alliances with the project’s other coordinators in order to secure funds for gender activities.

The PAAR has systematically trained agricultural extension services providers in gender issues applying to their work. The training modules (referred to as gender methodology from now on in this report) are presented to staff through a series of workshops. The extent to which the information presented in the workshops is transferred to new staff or staff not attending the training varies and depends on each firm’s commitment to gender. All workshop proceedings are documented and thus facilitate the transfer of knowledge. Some providers organize in-house trainings, meetings or discussions to teach their colleagues about the methodology while in other cases, staff learn by on-the-job training and by attending workshops in target communities. In other cases, some service providers have offered workshops for other FPL service providers. In addition to the above, some service providers have acquired additional materials on gender to complement the PAAR methodology and improve their understanding of gender issues.

Differences in the implementation of the methodology appear to be a function of several factors, including: i) the degree of exposure to gender ideas and/or training prior to implementing the PAAR methodology; ii) how service providers have learned the methodology (i.e. direct training from the PAAR gender coordinator, training from other staff members from their firm that attended the workshops; or, training by other service providers implementing the methodology); iii) how long they have been applying the methodology; and iv) their general level of openness to new ideas, particularly with respect to gender.

An important aspect that facilitates the application of the methodology, is the fact that it is non-threatening because it focuses its discourse around the concept of family. The methodology builds on the fact that men and women recognize the importance of family as the cornerstone of their communities and few would oppose a more central role for families in community and agricultural development. The concept of providing TA to families (as opposed to men only) has been assimilated by most extension agents as well.
III. Value added brought by gender to the PAAR

The PAAR's focus on gender has led to a series of outcomes that increase the ability of communities to fight poverty. In particular, it has contributed to (a) better targeted, more efficient and sustainable extension services; (b) less rigid gender roles that may in turn lead to better intra-household resource allocation; and (c) women's empowerment.

Improved ability to target services. Extension agents report that this methodology has improved their ability to deliver extension services by: (a) helping them identify the appropriate beneficiaries of their services; and (b) targeting increased and more appropriate extension activities for women, as the agents increase their awareness of the role of women in agriculture and rural development.

Improved assimilation of technical assistance. Virtually all providers feel that their work is more successful as a result of the expanded definition of targets of technical assistance. Perceived benefits include: (a) higher rates of adoption of extension methods promoted since more community members participate in the TA; and (b) projects are more likely to be completed (and are often completed more quickly) as men and women work together. In

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**Box 1. PAAR Gender Methodology**

The PAAR gender methodology is eminently participatory and promotes the involvement of men and women throughout the entire process. The methodology consists of five steps:

*Phase I: Identification of the Gender Division of Labor.* During a workshop, local men and women, divided up in groups, fill a matrix with information on their daily tasks specifying which tasks are performed by (i) men only; (ii) by men with assistance from women; (iii) by men and women equally; (iv) by women with assistance from men; and (v) by women only.

*Phase II: Identification of the Supply of Extension Services.* During a workshop, the service providers identify the range of extension services they can offer the community.

*Phase III: Identification of the Demand for Extension Services.* During a workshop, local men and women, divided up in groups, identify the types of extension services they would like to receive and determine services that should be offered to men only, to women only and to both men and women.

*Phase IV: Micro-Planning for the Delivery of Extension Services.* Service providers and community members jointly identify the details and logistics of extension service delivery. Details include services to be offered, delivery methods (i.e., seminars, talks, demonstration plots, field trips, etc.), times and dates, and individuals responsible for organizing the different aspects of service delivery.

*Phase V: Monitoring and Evaluation.* Service providers track a set of cross-cutting indicators documenting gender progress in the implementation of their services.

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addition, a number of providers also observed that women who attend training sessions can clarify or share information with their husbands, a fact that was affirmed by men. Several extension agents also noted that now women are less shy and speak more freely with them. This development also makes their work easier and more successful. As one of the service providers noted, “of course we like using this methodology – it increases the market for our services and makes our work much easier. When men and women work together, the work is completed more successfully.”

**Improved project sustainability.** The engagement of men and women in the planning and execution of extension services and the adaptation of extension services to men’s and women’s agricultural and non-agricultural needs and interests, will likely contribute to a higher application of the methods and information imparted in the future. In addition, the teamwork promoted by the gender methodology has resulted in greater collaboration among individuals and a sense of common purpose for both men and women. This may constitute a solid social basis for future projects and initiatives.

**More efficient allocation of resources through more flexible gender roles.** Rigid gender roles are known to cause inefficient allocation of resources between men and women in the household and thus, hamper the ability of a household to fight poverty. The PAAR’s focus of gender has led to changes in gender roles that may result in better allocation of intra-household resources in the future. As a result of their increased realization of how hard women work, a number of men – although by no means the majority – report that they now assist their wives with domestic activities such as cooking, child care and cleaning, which they did not do previously. Both men and women also reported a greater degree of male insertion into traditionally female spaces. As for women, increased access to technical assistance has resulted in increased women’s participation in agricultural activities.

**Increased valuation of women’s domestic role.** In large part as a result of the gender division of labor exercise, men consistently reported a newfound realization of how hard their wives work. In almost identical terms, men in each community noted that their wives typically get up much earlier than them and go to sleep much later. Many also observed that whereas they generally return from the fields in the early afternoon and rest for the remainder of the day, their wives remain busy with housework until late at night. They also report a much greater awareness of the value of women’s non-productive work and its contribution to the household. A number of women observed that whereas they previously believed that their domestic labor was of no value to the household, they no longer feel that way. An increased awareness of the value of women’s labor may also translate to an increased emphasis on the value of education for girls.

**Increased women’s empowerment.** Due to their participation in technical assistance activities, women have an increased sense of empowerment and independence. While they have traditionally participated in community affairs as members of different committees, these numbers appears to

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3 For example, rigid views of gender roles that emphasize women’s roles as mothers, may limit girls’ education or women labor market participation with negative consequences for the well-being and income generating-ability of households.
have increased. Many women observed that their husbands would previously not have given them permission to attend meetings on their own, nor to receive technical assistance; particularly, from male extension agents. However, they claimed that since the invitation to attend the meetings and receive TA was extended to men and women, their husbands were more willing to let them participate. As a result, a number of women stated that they would be more likely to attend such meetings in the future; with or without permission from their husbands. Several women also commented that they are happy to be receiving the training and TA because they had previously “never been included in anything outside the home”.

### Box 2: The case of SERTEDESO

SERTEDESO (Servicios Técnicos de Desarrollo Sostenible) is one of the service providers working with the FPL in 24 communities in the Department of Yoro. Of its 23 staff members, three are female extension agents, while another two women hold administrative positions. SERTEDESO has applied the gender methodology to all the communities it works in.

Four SERTEDESO staff have attended the gender workshops. They have transferred the gender methodology to their colleagues through a variety of methods, including: discussions, meetings, sharing workshop proceedings, and on-the-job training that implements the gender methodology in the communities.

SERTEDESO has had previous experience working with gender and has incorporated other participatory methodologies in their gender work with PAAR. They have a good understanding of gender issues, which they have acquired through different trainings as well as through their own work.

A mural depicting their work includes the phrase “gender is the transversal axis of all our activities.” As they explain it, the meaning of that phrase is that “we don’t want our activities to be men only or for women only, but for men and women together.”

SERTEDESO has changed its discourse to incorporate gender mainstreaming. The target of their technical assistance is now the entire family, as opposed to male producers. That is corroborated by their reports, which now refer to families and male and female producers, but not to male producers only.

SERTEDESO believes the gender methodology has improved the success of its work, and is applying the methodology to its work with other non-FPL projects. They claim that “we now value women’s work more.”

Their work goes beyond strict technical assistance to promote gender equality. They note that, “we always encourage women to attend trainings and encourage men to engage in activities such as building improved stoves.” They even asked men to prepare food for women during one training session. Despite their advances with respect to gender mainstreaming, they also note that, “this is an area where we have more work to do.”
VII. Conclusions and Lessons Learned

The actions related to gender taken by the PAAR have resulted in more efficient delivery of agricultural extension services and in more co-operative relations between men and women in the target communities. By identifying the right extension service users (or groups of users), expanding the definition of beneficiaries to include all family members, promoting collaboration between men and women and targeting extension services to meet the needs and interests of all community members, the TA providers’ work is more efficient, information is assimilated more effectively, projects are completed more quickly and the impact of technical assistance in the communities where service providers operate, is greater.

At the same time, by promoting women’s participation in mainstream agriculture (aside from kitchen gardens) and actively encouraging the work of men in areas that fall within the domestic arena (kitchen gardens, home improvements, construction of improved stoves and oven, etc.), the service providers are raising awareness of gender issues and promoting discussion around the role of men and women in rural society. By promoting collaboration between men and women at the household and the community levels, the methodology has had positive impacts on male-female relations.

Specific impacts attributable to this methodology include the following:

- It has successfully incorporated women in the technical assistance planning process and elicited their feedback regarding the types of TA they would like to receive;
- It has extended technical assistance in traditional and non-traditional arenas to women and men;
- It has promoted increased collaboration between women and men in the implementation of agricultural, animal husbandry, domestic and other rural development projects;
- It has promoted improved communication and more harmonious relations between men and women;
- It has fostered a greater awareness and appreciation of the value of women’s labor to both women and men;
- It has promoted a greater awareness of gender among TA providers and subsequently, a change in focus from male producers, to the entire family, as the target of extension services.

The principal factors associated with the successful application of this methodology appear to be its usefulness for extension agents’ work and the methodology’s non-threatening character and focus on familial integration as opposed to women’s rights. In addition, the commitment and experience of the PAAR gender staff, the positioning of the gender component within the project’s organizational structure, and the integration of gender aspects since the design of the project have been critical elements contributing to the

The gender methodology is designed to make technical assistance more efficient by identifying both men and women as recipients of extension services.
successful implementation of this methodology.

Lessons Learned.

- **Gender aware project design.** The inclusion of a gender expert as part of the social assessment team for the PAAR was instrumental in identifying the main gender issues across the project’s distinct components, as well as potential barriers to men’s and women’s effective participation in the project. Even if a specific person is not appointed, the social assessment TOR should require the gathering of gender information that is relevant to the project’s operations. In the case of the PAAR, this information has helped the design team define clear and realistic gender goals and include them in the project proposal. Equally important in the design stage, were the recommendations made as part of the project’s Gender Strategy – the proposal called for concrete mechanisms for the implementation phase. Including these kinds of measures in the Project Appraisal Document and/or Staff Appraisal Report is important in supporting future actions related to gender in the implementation phase.

- **Gender aware project implementation.** In light of the PAAR experience, it is important to build the project’s capacity to address gender issues by considering issues of staffing and training. A gender focal point (person responsible for gender in the project), with experience applying gender, particularly in the rural development sector, has been instrumental in PAAR’s success. The positioning of the gender focal point within the project’s organizational structure is also an important element that should be considered in project design.

- **Gender aware monitoring and evaluation.** Linking the progress in gender issues to the overall progress of the project guarantees a successful evolution of gender actions. Although the PAAR counts on a set of gender indicators (as part of the gender methodology), they could be of greater usefulness if incorporated into the monitoring and evaluation system of the project. As mentioned earlier, complementing quantitative indicators with other that measure less tangible dynamics that have to do with gender roles and relations can provide important information about the ways in which the project is impacting men and women beneficiaries.

- **The right gender approach.** By focusing on the concept of family and stressing the importance of all family members in the planning and implementation of extension services, the project has managed to avoid opposition to increased participation of women, and has encouraged men’s and women’s involvement in activities not traditionally associated with their gender roles. This approach has proven to be very effective in bringing service providers and PAAR staff members “on board” and getting their support for the gender agenda of the project.

**Replicability.** The PAAR gender methodology is a useful starting point for promoting gender mainstreaming in rural extension activities. In order to increase the success of future efforts, implementation should be coordinated by an expert in gender issues, rather than an agronomist, as often occurs with rural extension projects. The methodology should also be modified in accordance
with the operational procedures of each project as well as the idiosyncrasies of each particular region.