

INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN PERU DEFEND THEIR LAND RIGHTS AND BECOME COMMUNITY LEADERS

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Country: **Perú** - Principal Organisation: **SER**

ABSTRACT

Asociación Servicios Educativos Rurales (SER) promoted changes to statutes in 25 communities to formally include women in decision-making processes. It also developed women's capacities to improve their effectiveness in their new roles as

community leaders. Twenty women in the Andean regions of Ayacucho and Puno have since joined the management boards of their respective communities and are implementing local projects for sustainable development.

ILC COMMITMENTS



EQUAL LAND RIGHTS FOR WOMEN



SECURE TERRITORIAL RIGHTS FOR IPs



INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING

COMPETENCIES

AREAS

2

**COMMUNITIES,
INDIGENOUS
AND RELIGIOUS
INSTITUTIONS, AND
RIGHTS
RURAL LAND
GOVERNANCE
WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS
AND GENDER JUSTICE**

SKILLS

**ADVOCACY AND
CAMPAIGNING
LAND POLICY AND
MULTI-STAKEHOLDER
DIALOGUE
MAPPING AND LAND
REGISTRATION**

BACKGROUND

Indigenous communities in Peru have to contend with government policies that prioritise extractive activities, regulations that threaten their collective rights, and an increase in socio-environmental conflicts. In this context, women in Ayacucho and Puno have been active in defending their territories but until now have had limited participation in

decisions taken on land issues. As well as persistent obstacles to land ownership and a lack of access to senior management positions in their communities, participation by indigenous women is limited by their low educational levels and the fact that they speak native languages (Quechua in Ayacucho and Aymara in Puno).

THE CHALLENGE

The aim was to modify community statutes so that women could be included as qualified community leaders, with a voice and a vote in community assemblies, allowing them to participate in community management bodies and take part in drafting development proposals. Capacity-building activities were carried out, along with the updating of management tools. The capacity-building process included awareness-raising

activities with both men and women; participants were trained, among other themes, on the rights of women and groups, land governance, coordination among women, and prior consultation. The updating of management tools included the formation of commissions made up of both men and women, with the aim of changing statutes and assisting the public registration process for land.





3

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGE

The two processes implemented in the different communities achieved empowerment for women by offering them the skills they needed to defend their rights and the rights of their territories. The women who took part are now seen in their communities as qualified community leaders, and are taking on management positions and becoming more engaged in community decision-making processes.

MOVING TOWARDS PEOPLE-CENTRED LAND GOVERNANCE

Twenty-five communities modified their statutes, incorporating specific articles to support women as qualified community leaders and to be elected as members of community management bodies. In total, 929 women from 30 communities in the two Andean regions of Ayacucho and Puno are now seen as qualified community leaders, who can participate in community assemblies, with a voice and a vote. Currently, 20 women are involved in community management boards in their communities, participating in decision-making processes relating to land issues. Four women's organisations at the district level have submitted proposals to care for the environment, and these proposals have been implemented in the two district municipalities of Ayacucho and Puno. Seven women from three communities have also managed to get the issue of solid waste management included in the agendas of their communities, and they will jointly work on these proposals with the respective municipalities.

THE GOOD PRACTICE IN FIVE SIMPLE STEPS

1

Capacity-building and community awareness-raising sessions for women:

The capacity-building programme was targeted mainly at women from 30 peasant communities and made use of participatory methodologies, audiovisual tools, socio-drama techniques, drawings, and information leaflets on land governance and community management tools. The awareness-raising sessions targeted both men and women from these communities, and used videos or socio-drama techniques to reflect on the roles of men and women and to consider the role of women in the community and the family.

2

Change and registration of community statutes: Statutory committees consisting of both men and women members were formed in 30 communities to modify community statutes, and the changes were later approved in community assemblies. The statutes were registered in public records, adding institutionalism to the communities.

3

Election to management bodies and ongoing support: An election process was supported for new community management boards, and support continued subsequently with visits to the communities and specific advice to each of the women who had been elected.

4

Proposal drafting: Work with women from three communities was carried out to draft proposals that were later submitted to community assemblies. Seven women from local communities were involved, and they were provided with counselling and support throughout the process.

5

Meetings for women qualified as community leaders: Two meetings were held in Ayacucho for women qualified as community leaders, in order to exchange experiences and strengthen their capacities. Participatory methodologies and relaxation, drawing, and painting techniques were used.



3 THREE FACTORS OF SUCCESS AND REPLICABILITY

1

The first key element in the success of women's empowerment and capacity building in these Andean communities was the prior knowledge of SER's institutional team of the areas where the interventions took place.

2

The second element to highlight was the knowledge of SER team members of Quechua and Aymara, which are the native languages of a large proportion of the rural populations of Ayacucho and Puno respectively.

3

The third key element was the coordination of initiatives among local actors, including the women taking part themselves.

5

LESSONS LEARNED

It is not enough simply to change rules and regulations if women are to seek management positions. It is crucial also to offer them support to overcome the fear and oppression that they so often experience.

It is essential to work with both men and women in communities, especially when the role of women is being reassessed.

It is fundamental to use participatory methodology and local languages (in this case Quechua and Aymara) to successfully connect with women from peasant communities.

It is crucial to back up such initiatives with a national advocacy process to change regulations affecting peasant communities, with the specific aim of achieving women's participation as qualified community leaders with a voice and a vote.

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