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From vision to action



Fundación Solar's IWRM and participation projects in the rural areas of Guatemala

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Short summary

Since 1999, Fundación Solar has led several IWRM projects in the rural areas of Guatemala; where woman and man have been considered as equal.; facilitated gender networks—use of alternative energy, adaptation to climate change, among others.

The last one, 2014 consisted in the assessment and design of a restoration river basin plan, through a participatory process—local government, 9 rural communities and national sectorial representatives—adopting the integrated water resources management as the framework that make possible the approval of a restoration and management plan, October 2014, in a San Luis Jilotepeque, Jalapa, Guatemala, micro basin.

River basin area: 75 Km², population, 7,500 persons; 13 communities; 63.9% of overall poverty; 20.55% of extreme poverty; HDI 0.333 and general chronic malnutrition 33.5%.

Main economic activity: agriculture as livelihoods. Area yearly affected by droughts but with perennial rivers not yet utilized for irrigation or water storage no water inventory, while 2 communities lack of water supply and sanitation systems, all others without improved sanitation nor sewage treatment plants, all lack of enough food to eat and malnutrition chronic problems—infant, children and adults.

Fundación Solar is also a founding member of GWP at the regional (Central America) and national (Guatemala) levels.

Keywords

Universal and equitable access to drinking water; Adequate and equitable access to sanitation for all; Consider needs of women and girls in access to sanitation; Increase water use efficiency across sectors; Ensure sustainable withdrawals; Ensure supply of freshwater to address water scarcity;

Implement IWRM; Water cooperation; Reduce number of deaths and number of affected people; Reduce economic losses; Protection of the poor and vulnerable

Issues addressed

WASH (inequalities, schools, health centres, refugee camps, women and girls): Equality; Equal participation of community representatives, one woman and one man

Water resources management (water-use efficiency, integrated water resources management, transboundary cooperation, sustainable extraction and supply of freshwater, restore ecosystems and aquifers): Local assessment; and IWRM plan approved between the local government and 9 communities; Broad participation of the local authority and the communities to assess the current situation – relation between society, economy and environment; approved IWRM plan to improve the local social and economic opportunities.

Water quality (pollution, dumping of toxic materials, wastewater management, recycling, reuse): No sanitation systems in place; surface water are contaminated. Introduce water supply services in 2 communities; Improve the sanitation rural systems for all.

Risks (mortality, economic losses caused by natural and human-induced disasters): Accentuated poverty, chronic malnutrition of children and adults and water diseases as third cause of death; Improve the resilience of the local authorities and the river basin council.

Tools for implementation

Financing / economic instruments: Tariffs for the water supply services; Align the intervention of public, international and local efforts.

Governance: Institutions / legal framework: Local government and national councils law. Complying with law, building specific accords to approach local challenges and opportunities.

Technology: Improve land, forest and water management; and producers organization and marketing skills; Mixture of occidental and ancestral knowledge, discuss and convey.

Capacity development: Improve capacities while resolving critical problems; Learning by doing.

Who is involved?: The local government, 9 of 13 communities located in the river basin area, FAO, and Fundación Solar as facilitator. From the communities, one woman and one man as representatives.

What objectives?: Strengthen the capacities of the local government and the communities--political, legal and institutional--as well as on better practices for natural resources management,

through a permanent process of experience exchange, technical assistance and capacity building. Comply with the law—rights, duties and obligations—basic human rights—life, equality, health, food, water supply and sanitation, participation, etc.

Implementation challenges: Keep and develop the institutional mechanism—river basin council. That the basin council will be capable to support the food production—auto consumption—as well as the improvements in the natural resources management perceived by the local actors as added benefits.

Main task/activities undertaken /Tools used: Develop the water resources of the micro river basin; Restore and protect the forests, soil and water Resources; Develop the productive programme; Develop the risk management programme; Main tool, decisions are taken by the general assembly of the river basin council represented by one woman and one man of each community and the local authorities.

Main outcomes / impacts (what has changed?): Empowered, organize and proactive communities; Local government strengthened; Water management incorporated; The natural resources used in a sustainable way; The productive system—land, forest and water—improved; Annual crops improved.

Lessons Learned:

Triggers: The need to survive and the confidence on their own capacities and the leadership of the local authorities.

Drivers: The conviction that with the present resources—human and natural—organized in a river basin council the social and economic situation of the communities may improve.

Barriers: Poverty, lack of national policies and investment and lack of support from the national entities.

What has worked well?: Improve the relation between the local authorities and communities with the central government, responsible for the national policies on health, agriculture, rural development and food security.

What can be improved?: The link between the local government, communities, FAO and an external facilitator to define common interests.

The way forward: In poor communities, both woman and man are marginalize by the social system and must participate in the decisions regarding local development; and share duties and benefits considering their specific needs and capacities; Stick to the plan; keep the institutional mechanism; align the intervention of thirds parties; being confident on the local capacities.

