
Case study: *“South-South Cooperation on the water management and sanitation in indigenous and dispersed rural communities, with a gender perspective and an inter-cultural approach”* (MDG-F projects on water and sanitation in Panama, Nicaragua, Paraguay)

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Short summary

This is an initiative developed with the ILO coordinators of the Joint Programmes MDG-F (JP) involved in the formulation and implementation of the water and sanitation projects in Nicaragua, Panama, and Paraguay¹, under the Democratic Economic Governance. The aim of these projects was to strengthen the government’s capacity to manage water provision and water quality, including the poorest and excluded populations. ILO’s technical expertise to these projects comprised capacity building on labour based techniques² and rights (Convention 169).

Each project was in a different level of implementation and a participatory mechanism was needed to share community based experiences and discuss technical issues to incorporate a gender and inter-cultural approach along the project cycle. Panama and Nicaragua had already started the

¹ Nicaragua: “Democratic economic governance in the Water and Sanitation sector in the RAAN and RAAS”; Panama: “Strengthening equity in access to safe drinking water and sanitation by empowering citizens and excluded indigenous groups in rural areas”; Paraguay: “Strengthening the ability to define and apply water and sanitation policies”.

² Technology choice for infrastructure development and employment creation, approach developed by the ILO’s Employment Intensive Investment Programme, EIIP.

implementation and Paraguay was in the planning stage, consequently, Paraguay would incorporate and develop the lessons learnt from the other two projects under a South-South Cooperation knowledge sharing scheme.

It focused on three main topics: planning and consultation with Indigenous communities, as a way of communities' prioritisation and identification of local knowledge on water provision (Paraguay); management and empowerment through the management of water systems and sanitation (Panama); and technical capacity building in construction and maintenance to participate in the local labour market (Nicaragua).

Key words:

Community participation, gender, indigenous peoples, planning, local resource based approach, empowerment

Issues addressed:

Water resources management (water-use efficiency, integrated water resources management, transboundary cooperation, sustainable extraction and supply of freshwater)

It was put in evidence different geographical conditions to access drinkable water. Paraguayan indigenous communities lacked availability of drinkable sources of water while Caribbean and Panamanian communities had special problems to quality of water and health diseases;

Water quality (pollution, dumping of toxic materials, wastewater management, recycling, reuse, restore ecosystems and aquifers)

Each Project established specific agreements of collaboration among the Regional/Local governments and the Health authority to develop packages of training on sanitation and hygiene: training also included managerial, technical and environmental aspects.

In Nicaragua a laboratory per municipality to measure the quality of water and small plants for processing clean water and the domestic use of chlorine were set up.

Methodology

Two events of knowledge sharing of two days and field visits as *pasantias* were developed (Paraguay and Nicaragua).

Two workshops with different actors as participatory mechanism were developed: one with local beneficiaries in the rural area and field visit; and another workshop with sectorial and governmental authorities in the capital city (Asuncion and Managua)

It was encouraged to have indigenous leaders, women representation, local government authorities and civil society organizations; two Panamanian Ngobe bugle women leaders were invited. In total participated 52 people, 42% women to the first event in the Chaco Paraguayan.

Tools for implementation:

Technology: Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning, Community Contracting,

Who is involved?

ILO Coordinators of the MDG-JP projects from Paraguay, Nicaragua and Panama; the Technical specialist EIIP from headquarters.

Paraguay: UN agencies of the JP; national authorities of the water and sanitation sector; local government authorities from the Boqueron department; the Ayoreo, Nivaclé, Guaraní Occidental and Abaí Guaraní indigenous leaders.

Panama: two women leaders from the communities of Kankintu and Kusapin, Comarca Ngabe Bugle, Ño Kribo Region in Panama

Nicaragua: UN agencies of the JP; national authorities of the water and sanitation sector; local government authorities from Pearl Lagoon district in Bluefields; Table of Negotiation of water, hygiene and sanitation integrated by local authorities and institutions. Different systems for water storage, distribution and treatment put in place during the project implementation.

What were the objectives of the intervention?

The overall aim of the programme was to empower rural and indigenous populations to manage their own water resources and thus improve the quality of, and access to, public water and sanitation services.

The aim of these projects was to strengthen the government's capacity to manage water provision and water quality, including the poorest and excluded populations. ILO's technical expertise to these projects comprised capacity building on labour based techniques³ and rights (Convention 169).

Implementation challenges

To mainstream the gender and intercultural approach in the implementation of the projects.

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Main task/activities undertaken / Tools used

The application of the Integrated Rural Access Planning (IRAP) tool adapted for consultation and planning with Indigenous communities, following the 169 Convention, intercultural and participatory approach, for the identification and prioritisation of communities' needs on water provision;

Anthropological study⁴ for the integration of traditional practices and knowledge (Biological indicators for location of sources of drinkable water and rituals associated; technologies for water storage and disinfection; typology of soils for construction and the role of women in resources management.

During the WS:

1. Discussion about the Consultation as a process: It was especially helpful in that this meeting addressed Consultation from the indigenous communities' perception and reality, meaning that **time and needs** have a different perspective of understanding for project implementers and indigenous leaders who have to make sure that the purpose of the outsider proposal is clear for their people's needs and interests. It may require two or three meetings.
2. Self-community identification of empirical technicians for the works: It was proposed a previous assessment of **community's local capacities** (skilled and low skilled builders) related to the implementation of the project. Local knowledge is crucial to build appropriate and sustainable infrastructure in a region where the source of water are just rains because most of the groundwater is salty. It was demonstrated that projects developed by external contractors became 'white elephants'; innovative approaches were often unknown, ignored or not employed by public authorities.
3. Women's role and knowledge on water use: Another contribution was indigenous knowledge that associated with women's domestic role of water collection, use **biological indicators** to identify sources of drinkable water as well as special plants to purify contaminated water and avoid intoxication.
4. Women empowerment: One of the most important passages of the event was the presentation of the two **women leaders from Panama** who explained their ruling role within the water organization entities and local government to address health and education needs with important effects for their family and communities. Women's leadership had a shocking effect among the Guarani, especially among the Ayoreo and Nivaclé where *caciques* still claim them to be the political leaders and interlocutors between the community and the outsiders. Indigenous women's leadership is still a challenge, especially due to low level of education.

Post Workshop

5. Community contracting mechanism for the implementation of the project.

Monitoring

Main outcomes / impacts (what has changed?)

⁴ Renfelth, M. "Perception and demands related to the use, management and administration of water and sanitation systems for rural and indigenous communities from the gender perspective in the framework of the ILO Convention 169" ILO Asuncion 2009

Panama's Ngöbe-Buglé women leaders learned to negotiate with national authorities to position local requirements to public services of quality. One of the women leaders is running for the Parliament and the coordinator of the project, a Kuna member has helped to organize and to develop an entrepreneurial organization to link indigenous economic initiatives to the market, demonstrating its commitment and leadership.

Lessons Learned:

Triggers: Organization of local units and small contractors for maintenance of civil public works with appropriate technologies.

It demonstrated the development of the apprenticeship of the "entrepreneurial builders" in which 70 young men and women from Miskito and Afro Descendant communities are trained and certified in construction and plumbing.

Barriers: Monitoring and strengthening local administration units for water provision still need to improve.

What has worked well?

- Development of a Water Quality Monitoring Program in Panama, involving a commitment from aqueduct users and requiring them to make payments on a regular basis;
- Appropriate water and sanitation infrastructure works
- Disease reduction (doctors consulted during the midterm evaluation reported a noticeable reduction in disease where water systems have been installed).
- A cadre of 71 qualified plumbers by INATEC in Nicaragua are ready to enter in the labour market,
- Four microenterprises on maintenance of infrastructure services were created in Panama and the Enterprise Estrategias y Operaciones Abia Yala, is a social enterprise that promotes entrepreneurship and innovation in the indigenous communities providing guidance and employment opportunities to women and youth.

What can be improved? The geographical area of intervention in Nicaragua and Panama are lands legally recognized by the government as being owned by an indigenous population, consequently they technical assistance on managerial aspects for water provision could improve their livelihoods, while in Paraguay aspects related to the right to land still needs to be developed

The way forward: This initiative is innovative as it highlights indigenous knowledge and gender empowerment in the process of implementation of the projects to access public services of quality. Additionally, it is an entrance point to ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, incorporating Consultation as project activity (Paraguay); enhancing local capacities by developing local units and small contractors for maintenance of civil public works with appropriate technologies (Nicaragua), and highlighting women leadership and the integrated management of local and traditional authorities and doctors in the local administrative bureau (Panama). It also helped to

position the ILO as leader agency in inclusion and rights promotion and employment creation and within the UN agencies system.

Links:

http://www.ilo.org/pardev/partnerships-and-relations/south-south/WCMS_173249/lang--en/index.htm

<http://www.mdgfund.org/program/strengtheningequityaccesssafedinkingwaterandsanitationempoweringcitizensandexcludedindigeno>

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Estrategias-y-Operaciones-Abia-Yala/462456127111933?sk=info>