

SECURING WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS IN NICARAGUA

ILC'S DATABASE OF GOOD PRACTICES



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Country: **Nicaragua** - Principal Organisation: **Trocaire**

ABSTRACT

The patriarchal society in Nicaragua hinders women's ownership of land. Women are much less likely to own land or access loans to purchase land. Trócaire and partner organisation engaged in a five tier intervention to address barriers to women's access to land. The project focused on enhancing women's access to land through

purchase, leasing, sharecropping, inheritance and land registration. To achieve this, Trócaire focused on raising women's awareness about their land rights; assisting them to access finance, land and other resources.

ILC COMMITMENTS



**SECURE TENURE
RIGHTS**



**EQUAL LAND RIGHTS
FOR WOMEN**



**INCLUSIVE
DECISION-MAKING**

COMPETENCIES

AREAS

RURAL LAND GOVERNANCE

WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS AND GENDER JUSTICE

CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURAL DISASTERS

SKILLS

USE OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNING

LAND BASED FINANCING

RESEARCH AND TRAINING

BACKGROUND

Despite efforts to redistribute land under agrarian reforms in the past, land ownership is undergoing a process of re-concentration: 9% of land owners control approximately 56% of agricultural land in Nicaragua. According to the 2011 National Agricultural Census, only 23% of agricultural areas are owned by

women. Despite legal provisions that protect women's right to equality, patriarchy impedes women's ownership of land. As a result, women are much less likely to own land or have access to loans to purchase land.

THE CHALLENGE

Nicaraguan rural women face multiple barriers to access to land. Women are discriminated against in divorce or inheritance in predominantly patrilineal communities. A lot of single mothers in rural areas are sustenance farmers, yet they do not have access to land. Women not only face barriers

to accessing land due to lack of finance to buy land or disinheritance; but also through traditional mechanisms for landless farmers, such as renting or sharecropping.



OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGE

The good practice focuses on key initiatives to address barriers to women's access to land, focusing on five different mechanisms: buying, renting, inheritance, crop sharing and legalization. Trócaire focused on:

1. raising awareness and developing the capacities of women to exercise and demand their land rights;
2. challenging the customs and practices that discriminate against women, particularly those relating to access, use and control of land;
3. access to finance, land and other resources;
4. adopting sustainable technologies to increase productivity and reduce vulnerability to climate change (irrigation, seeds, tools and techniques,);
5. increasing the diversification of nutrition production and education to improve food security and sovereignty;
6. strengthening economic initiatives through processing and marketing to increase and diversify agricultural and non-agricultural incomes of women; and
7. increasing public awareness, lobbying and advocacy on women's land access policies.

MOVING TOWARDS PEOPLE-CENTRED LAND GOVERNANCE

This good practice responds to rural Nicaraguan women's land needs, and seeks to protect their land rights. Rural women now have more resources to buy, rent, crop share, inherit or legalise their land rights. Their incomes and livelihoods have improved, and their agricultural products have diversified, thanks to increased access to land. This has led to improved food and nutrition security, improved income, strengthened livelihoods and more

investment in their homes and families.

As a result of the project's advocacy component, women's land rights are receiving attention in national debates, and there is increased awareness about the plight of women's access to land.



THE GOOD PRACTICE IN FIVE SIMPLE STEPS

1

Engaging key stakeholders. Trócaire and partner organisations developed connections with key stakeholders, such as rural women's organizations, universities and other local organisations leading in the field of women's land rights, such as the Rural Women's Coordinator, NITLAPAN (Central American University), the Field Workers Association and the Centre for Promotion, Research and Rural Social Development (CIPRES). This opened discussions with strategic actors and allowed a more informed design of Trócaire's initiative, with a deep understanding of the socio-political and economic context and the structural challenges faced by women in rural areas.

2

Initial research on access to land. A research study was carried out involving women's focus groups in target areas to identify and describe the traditional mechanisms rural women use to access land and the particular barriers they face when using these mechanisms. Identified mechanisms include buying, renting, inheritance, crop sharing and legalization. The findings of this study were used to design strategies and tools that local organisations would use to improve the conditions for women's access to land.

3

Implementing mechanisms. Trócaire's partners implemented mechanisms in different contexts over a 3-year period:

- **Buying:** Trócaire's partners worked to improve women's knowledge of their land rights. They provided legal, financial and technical advice to women.
- **Renting:** They developed written agreements based on the principles of fairness and protection of agro-ecological production in order to protect the environment and encourage longer rent periods.
- **Inheritance:** They formalised inheritance processes, promoted usufructs and raised awareness on the importance of gender equality in inheritance.
- **Crop-sharing:** They identified productive land and profitable crops, created investment plans and drafted fair written agreements with land owners.
- **Legalization:** They provided legal advice for the registration of land, ensuring joint title, and thus helping women to secure their land rights and have access to finance.

4

Action-research. The project included an action-research component that documented and followed up on the implementation of selected mechanisms, including inheritance and land bought through loan schemes. The research aimed at drawing conclusions and recommendations to assist the protection women's land rights and strengthen research-based advocacy.

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Disseminating lessons learned for practice and advocacy. Finally, the project linked women's land rights actors working at national level, including women's movements, government, media, universities (such as National Agrarian University and Nitlapan-UCA), civil society organisations, and advocacy platforms such as the ILC National Engagement Strategy and the National Alliance for the Soils. National forums, farmers' fairs, public demonstrations, radio and TV programmes were used to disseminate the lessons learned, increase public awareness and strengthen advocacy linked to the land rights of women in Nicaragua.

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3

THREE FACTORS OF SUCCESS AND REPLICABILITY

1

Comprehensive research at the beginning and during implementation helped to design solid strategies to address barriers to women's access to land, adjust the strategies to meet women's needs, and build evidence for advocacy.

2

A holistic approach is needed to address gender-based barriers to women's access to land. If a holistic approach is not taken, women are put in a vulnerable position.

3

Advocacy spaces linking civil society actors, are essential for strengthening the voices of women in policy-making, implementation of land laws and enhancing visibility of women's land rights.

LESSONS LEARNED

Research results confirmed that women with access to water and land have improved livelihoods. As such, protecting the land rights of women often requires a multidimensional approach that includes land, water, training, irrigation and micro-irrigation systems, inputs and access to markets. Access to land can contribute to the empowerment of women by increasing their self-esteem and statuses in the community. Whilst access to land is an important first step, its success also hinges on complementary actions that promote agro-ecological farming as a sustainable means to improve food security and

mitigation of climate change. It also diversifies women's sources of income and improves women-led families' livelihoods.

Finally, it is important to work with men in order to overcome male chauvinism and encourage community support of women. Women's capacities and land rights knowledge must be strengthened in order to empower them to engage in advocacy for their land rights.



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FIND OUT MORE

1. Project presentation online

<http://www.una.edu.ni/trocaire/678-una-en-la-busqueda-de-tierras-para-mujeres>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YV2c0Fy9Go0>

2. Videos and press articles about activities to advocate for women´s right to land

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WAEghSy7ZTY&feature=youtu.be>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50_CB1JyvS4&feature=youtu.be

<http://www.laprensa.com.ni/2016/05/05/nacionales/2029979-mujeres-rurales-exigen-fondo-comprar-tierras>

<http://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/nacionales/391995-demandan-fondos-comprar-tierras/>

<http://www.una.edu.ni/direcciones/direccion-comunicacion/504-mujeres-solicitan-que-se-aplique-lo-establecido-en-la-ley-71>

3. Location of project participants

<http://www.una.edu.ni/trocaire/705-mapa-de-beneficiarios-de-una-trocaire>

4. Project participants receiving training or participating in exchanges

<http://www.una.edu.ni/trocaire>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_J3VI82fFVg&feature=youtu.be

CASE STUDY

Land for women, opportunities for life

<https://www.trocaire.org/news/Aurora-Zarate>