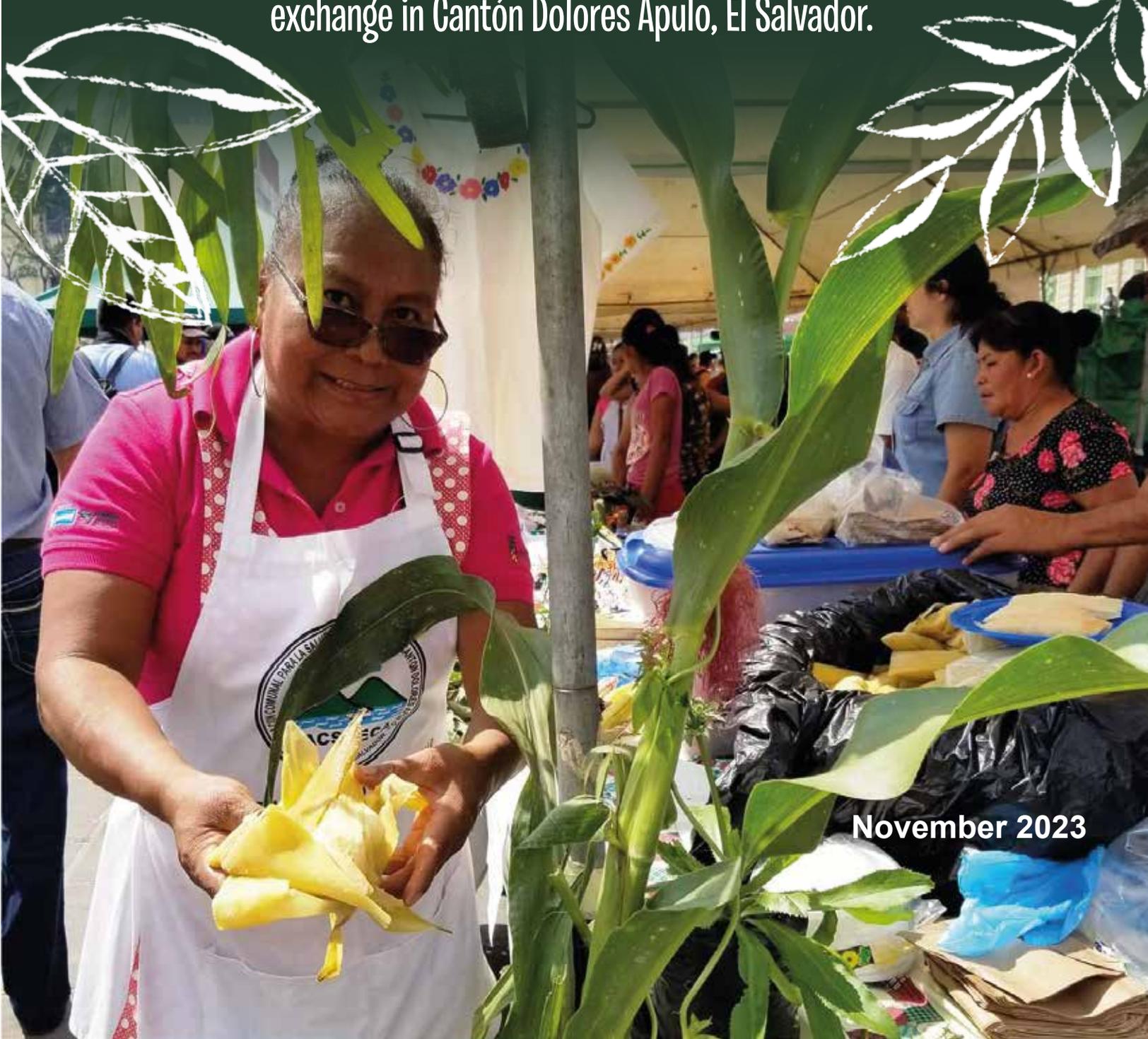


COMMUNICATING WOMEN-LED CLIMATE SOLUTIONS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

LMEDICINE IN OUR BACKYARDS AND KNOWLEDGE IN COMMUNITY MARKETS

The experience of home food gardens and knowledge
exchange in Cantón Dolores Apulo, El Salvador.



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KNOWLEDGE IN COMMUNITY MARKETS

A community located a few kilometers from the imposing Lake Ilopango in El Salvador has found in agroecological practices the best way to protect the soil and reconnect with ancestral wisdom. "In our lake there was a Mayan Quiché settlement, so around the lake we have many cultures and with the patron saint festivities every year we live this cultural exchange," says Rosario Contreras Murillo, leader of the Asociación Comunal para la Salud y la Educación del Cantón Dolores Apulo (ACSYECA) (Community Association for Health and Education of the Dolores Apulo Canton).

However, the effects of climate change and pollution are now part of the reality of the neighboring communities. "One moment we have too much heat and then too much rain, then any oversight causes us to lose our crops and can also affect the raising of chickens, which can get sick," Murillo explains.

On the other hand, the association carries out community work such as clean-up days to collect garbage from Lake Ilopango. "To address this situation, we are educating families, communities and schools about the impact of climate change and alternatives to minimize its effects," says Murillo

In addition, erratic rains and flooding have affected nearby communities. To mitigate this damage, Murillo explains that they plant trees to restore the soil. They have also promoted the incorporation of home food gardens and chicken farming to ensure food security for families.

The organization - made up mostly of women - has more than 20 years of experience in community work. They work with at least 29 communities within the Dolores Apulo canton. In the 2000s they organized to mobilize basic demands such as access to water and managed to get the National Administration of Aqueducts and Sewers (ANDA) to build a well so that the community can have water. Through this they have obtained community participation within ANDA by integrating work tables to address the water shortage.

"The lack of water affects both women and men because if there is no water they cannot consume it either. But getting water is a task that usually falls upon the women because the men must go to work and it is the women who are left in charge of washing, cleaning, and cooking," explains Rosario.

Since one of ACSYECA's main areas of work is health, with the support of Tierra Viva and GAGGA they implemented projects to improve the community's diet. "We worked on raising awareness about natural food and making our own products such as natural consommé and not consuming processed consommés, maggi or maruchan soups. This has improved the women's quality of life, both in their health and economically. Because they raise their own chickens, eat their own chickens, sell them, and also grow their own vegetables using organic fertilizers, and then we no longer need chemicals," Murillo emphasizes.



The members of the association carry out agroecological practices in their plots and home food gardens where they grow tomatoes, peppers, corn and eggplant. They also grow aloe vera, which they sell as raw material for shampoos and creams.

Another initiative they are working on is the production of plant-based medicine. With the coronavirus pandemic and the increase in the price of pharmaceutical drugs, the women of the organization reconnected with their ancestral knowledge in the use of medicinal plants and organic food to take better care of their health. The organization produced an informative book that was of great help to the families, Murillo says. "We even have something we call alternative foods, herbs such as moringa, chaya, papelillo, purslane and amaranth, which have many properties that are beneficial to our health," she explains.

They also work with the use of fruits in season. The latter through the production of foods such as jams and pickles. "This brings economic benefits because they can sell the products and also benefits the nutrition of the families through their own food gardens," says Rosario.

The association also organized a community market, and the women were able to sell their organic products such as ointments and creams made from natural products. The space is key to exchanging knowledge about agroecology and home food gardens with women from other communities.



AGSYECA

**"Communal Association for the Health
and Education of the Canton Dolores Apulo"**

Canton Dolores Apulo, Municipality of Ilopangó, El Salvador