

COMMUNICATING WOMEN-LED CLIMATE SOLUTIONS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

RESERVOIR OF RESILIENCE

The case of the Ch'orti' indigenous communities in Guatemala



November 2023



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Resilience to climate change can transform long walks to fetch water into solutions to ensure that crops can be irrigated and that families in every home can turn on the faucet to wash their hands. This was achieved by the Coordinating Association of Associations and Communities for the Integral Development of the Ch'orti' Region (COMUNDICH) with the construction of three water reservoirs. Women and girls used to walk to the wells or streams to wash clothes.

With the support of Tierra Viva and GAGGA, they also installed a water collection tank. "Water was brought down from the mountain to the community," says Elodia Castillo, president of COMUNDICH, about the project in which more than 100 families participated. Many women worked on the water initiative. "We have discovered the capacity that we women have in our communities. We saw that we women can also contribute to society," adds Elodia.

The organization works to mitigate the damages of climate change in the indigenous Ch'orti' communities of Guatemala. "Many years ago, the grandparents used to mark which days it rained and which days it didn't, but now we don't know anymore because the climate is no longer the same. In addition, there is a lot of deforestation by farmers, and that also makes climate change much stronger in the territories. So, I think that is also part of what has been happening in these territories", summarizes Elodia.

The organization is committed to reforestation to recover soil stability. "There are many landslides and that has to do with the deforestation of the farmers," explains Elodia. Planting trees and plants is one of the organization's priorities to prevent landslides and mudslides.

In addition, Elodia recalls that with the pandemic, growing their own food started to become a necessity. "We are recovering native seeds. We started looking for those seeds because since the pandemic began, we were left with nothing: no corn, no beans," she says. To recover the native seeds, they are also reconditioning the soil with organic fertilizers. Elodia explains that with the heavy rains the soil is washed away and to recover the soil it is necessary to do it with organic fertilizers composed mainly of leaves and ashes.

It is the women who lead most of the organization's initiatives. "The bakery initiative, family food gardens, laying hens and reforestation are coordinated by women," says Castillo.

They also have the participation of a council of grandmothers and grandfathers who have extensive knowledge about plants and the care of the land. "Water has a spirit similar to the one we women have, so we make offerings to the water sources so that they do not dry up. Before preparing the land, we ask permission from mother earth to produce our food and medicine," explains Elodia.

These initiatives are then shared at intercommunal meetings. "Not only in words or knowledge, but we also share food," says Elodia. Thus, the possibility of facilitating access to water or having vegetable gardens no longer seems so far away. "We share ideas, we tell how we are doing it and in that way, there are communities that are already starting to take these initiatives."



COMUNDICH

**Coordinating Association of Associations and Communities
for the Integral Development of the Ch'orti' Region**

Indigenous communities of the municipality of Camotán, Department of Chiquimula, Guatemala.

