



CASE STUDY

Improving the quality of life of small farmer families through the construction of cisterns, education on farmers' rights and land law, and more: El Jabalí Producers Association

Summary

El Jabalí Producers Association is located in the Chaco province of Argentina. It includes more than 60 members who have historically inhabited the territory and who joined together in 2017 to fight for the rights of peasants in defence of their lands and forests and a healthier ecological environment.

Background

The region has a low population density due to environmental factors, such as low water availability and a lack of basic services, such as communications, public services, and transportation. When forests are destroyed in this region, serious issues such as erosion, environmental damage, drought, and higher temperatures decrease productivity and biodiversity. The region's forest has been threatened for almost 20 years by large enterprises (latifundios) that are fumigating and clearing forest areas. For this reason, this initiative works to strengthen small farmer families who use sustainable production practices through an association.

The project also has multiple efforts to improve access to basic rights, such as access to water. Before these efforts, many local families did not have access to potable water or water for productive use. Women's participation in this work has been key and, without the role of women and collective work, these objectives could not have been achieved.

The association's main objective is to improve the quality of life of small farmer families in various aspects, such as production, marketing, housing, water, health, education, sports, and environment. Initially, the association conducted a survey to identify community needs and collaborated with public organisations. They conducted training sessions and workshops on various topics, including farmers' rights and land law, developed signage for locations, and participated in workshops on land use planning.

Actions taken

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- **Community Assessment & Planning**

- Conducted surveys to identify community needs.
- Partnered with public organisations for project development.
- Participated in workshops on farmers' rights, land law, and land-use planning.
- Developed signage for locations.

- **Training & Capacity Building**

- Organised training sessions on various agricultural, legal, and environmental topics.
- Provided hands-on construction training, including tool handling and material preparation, with strong women's participation.
- Supported leadership development for women through board positions and organisational roles.

- **Water Access Projects**

- Built 28 cisterns with collector roofs.
- Built 21 cisterns with 16,000-litre capacity.
- Built 9 community dams.
- Currently constructing 6 additional cisterns with women's active involvement.
- Promoted use of plate cisterns and boreholes for improved water storage.

- **Support for Women Farmers**

- Encouraged women's involvement in livestock raising, poultry farming, cheese production, weaving, and agricultural marketing.
- Provided opportunities for women to participate in fairs and local sales.
- Promoted inclusion of women in decision-making processes and organisational governance.

Challenges:

Many of the challenges that the women in the association face can be attributed to gender inequalities:

Scarce and differentiated access to land tenure and ownership: Most women do not have land titles and must travel approximately 900 kilometres to complete related procedures. This makes it difficult for economic and logistical reasons, and it is not easy to leave home due to the number of tasks and responsibilities women have. Many of them found the association helpful in carrying out the procedure or claim for land management. However, even with this support, it is still complicated and the responses are complex.

Limited autonomy in decision making, associative, and representative roles: For several generations, women have been left out of decision making roles, as cultural norms assume that they are in charge of the home and will not go out to the city or participate in meetings.

Long working hours taking care of the house: Rural women work more than men, in unpaid or very low salaried employment. They generally work long hours doing productive and domestic work.

Little economic autonomy and meagre income to cover essential demands:

Women are the heart of the family economy but rarely handle bank accounts, bank procedures, financial operations involving investments, etc. Government social assistance and pensions can be a first step towards independence. Still, even the procedures necessary to obtain this type of assistance are complicated because the nearby banks are closed daily. The distances to them are long, requiring someone with a vehicle to travel there to carry out the procedure or to go by motorcycle. In general, women do not drive cars in rural areas; they depend on their husbands or drive motorcycles on very complicated roads, subject to the weather.

No job opportunities or projects that help cover basic household needs: Food, housing, water, connectivity, health, education, etc., are each essential for all. Yet, the distances to educational establishments and the lack of connectivity complicate primary education and trade training for women, who also have less time for training.

Outcomes

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- **Improved Water Infrastructure**

- Increased water storage capacity in drought-prone areas.
- Reduced immediate water scarcity through cisterns, dams, and collection systems.
- Strengthened women's technical skills in water system construction.

- **Enhanced Livelihoods**

- Diversification of income through livestock, dairy, poultry, weaving, and cheese production.
- Improved market participation and ability to sell products for household income.
- Maintenance and continuity of traditional productive activities despite economic and climatic challenges.

- **Strengthened Community Organization**

- Increased institutional and resident collaboration.
- Empowered women through leadership positions and participation in organizational decisions.
- Increased knowledge of land rights and environmental defense.

- **Resilience Building**

- Improved capacity to cope with drought and economic hardship.
- Sustained rural life and prevented community depopulation by supporting essential needs.
- Preserved traditional farming and cultural practices through strengthened social ties.

Women's involvement

Since 2017, the association has noted the significant role of women in founding a legal small farmer organization and their continued involvement in addressing inequalities and challenges faced by rural communities. Women play a crucial role in sustaining activities both within and outside the home, including ensuring family nutrition, performing domestic care tasks, raising livestock, supporting children's education, and engaging in production and marketing activities. Despite facing climatic vulnerabilities, water scarcity, limited technological resources, and low levels of formal education, women remain the backbone of

rural life, organising and caring for life in the territory. They contribute to the survival and continuity of rural communities despite economic dependencies on climatic factors and limited access to land titles.

Women Champions:

Members such as **Ramona Marcela, Rosa Clotilde, Aldana Soledad, Analía Griselda, Débora Elizabeth, Elisa Mabe, Luisa Marie, Balvina, Griselda del Jesús,** and **Hortencia** demonstrate the essential role of women in sustaining rural life. They combine household care with farming, livestock raising, construction, artisanal crafts, and community leadership. Despite water scarcity, limited land rights, and economic challenges, they drive production, income generation, and organisational activities, ensuring the resilience and continuity of their communities.

Lessons Learned

Women's Leadership is Key – Actively involving women in planning, training, and implementation increases project sustainability and community ownership.

Localised Water Solutions Work – Cisterns, collector roofs, and small dams are effective, affordable, and adaptable models for other drought-prone rural areas.

Partnerships Boost Impact – Collaboration with public institutions and NGOs accelerates resource mobilization, training, and knowledge transfer.

Skills Training Ensures Continuity – Practical capacity-building in construction, land rights, and production equips communities to maintain and replicate solutions.

Integrated Approaches Build Resilience – Addressing water, livelihoods, and governance together strengthens long-term sustainability and reduces rural depopulation.

Contributing Authors

Karen Elizabeth Bernard

Corresponding Author

Aguilar, Lorena

Corresponding Author Contact

kbernard@unccd.int

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Agriculture, Irrigation and Gender

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