



## 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

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.

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. 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.

Likewise, the project acknowledges that ensuring women's access to land rights is critical to support their engagement – as stewards of the land and active participants in its maintenance and preservation – in decision making roles at higher levels. This has been highlighted as one of the main challenges (see above).



## Initiative overview

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.

Water provision is a major challenge due to the location in a dry region with frequent drought. The association implemented projects in response to water shortages, including three that resulted in the construction of 28 cisterns with collector roofs, 21 cisterns of 16,000-litre tanks, and nine community dams. Currently, six cisterns are being built with the participation of women, who actively collaborate in training, handling tools, and preparing construction materials.

The lack of water remains a pressing issue, along with other difficulties members face. These activities have strengthened ties between institutions and residents, contributing to the sustainability of traditional productive activities and improved living conditions in the region.

## Women's involvement

Since 2017, the association has noted the significant role of women in founding a legal small farmer organisation 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

**Ramona Marcela**, a small farmer and mother of two who received education at the primary school level, works in collaboration with her partner to raise cattle, sheep, poultry, and goats on a larger scale, producing approximately 500 kilos per year. The sale of these animals is an essential source of income for the family.

**Rosa Clotilde**, a widowed mother of 11 adult children and grandmother of three minors who are in her care following their mother's death, was unable to complete her primary education but can read and write. She uses her income and state aid that she receives to pay for feeding and caring for the poultry, cattle, and pigs, and she raises poultry, cattle, and pigs on a small scale. She holds the position of first alternate member of the organisation, supporting preparation of the hall for activities and benefits.

**Aldana Soledad**, one of the youngest mothers in the association, has two children and primary level education. Three years ago, they founded her family farm and, together with her partner, is making improvements. In addition to caring for the house and children, she is involved in setting up the farm, cleaning the land, carrying water, and building fences and the plate cistern, an improved means to store water. Her family is among the households that suffers the most from a lack of water due to droughts and from the economic situation, which cause a lack of basic necessities, with only a minimum income to cover the expenses for the household.

**Analía Griselda**, a young mother of two, has a primary school education. She takes care of household chores, childcare, and education and helps her partner raise goats, sheep, and cattle. She also cleans the lot and enclosures, carries firewood and wood, and builds cisterns. At a young age, she has the capacity to learn and develop many new skills to help advance further improvements within her household and community.

**Débora Elizabeth**, a mother of two daughters, completed primary school but could not complete her secondary schooling. Together with her partner, she founded their farm three years ago and is responsible for housework, childcare, and maintenance and construction in the family home. She cleans and has built enclosures for the property as well as cisterns and a borehole to help them raise poultry, goats, and cattle, activities they are starting due to the lack of water. She is a producer who knows how to make manufactured products and Creole cheeses, which help her increase her income and cover her family's expenses.

**Elisa Mabe** completed primary education and is a founding member of the association. One of her oldest daughters helps with household chores, enabling Mabe and her husband to raise poultry, cattle, and goats on a larger scale, and sell them to pay for family expenses. She is a third board member of directors and participates in workshops and training sessions organised at the legal headquarters and other institutions.

**Luisa Marie**, a mother of three adult children and a grandmother of five grandchildren, is a founder of the organisation and farmer who, together with her partner, cares for the fields and raises poultry, cattle, sheep, and goats, which they use to support their families by selling meat, eggs, milk, and other by-products, as well as cheese.

**Balvina lives** with her two youngest children on the farm that she founded and is one of the few female heads of the farm with land titles in the advanced stages of being titled. She is a small farmer producer and head of household who does all of the work required in the field. She raises cattle, poultry, and goats on a larger scale, the sale of which is her primary source of income for her household and other needs. She is also a craftswoman, making regional weavings and participating in local fairs.

**Griselda del Jesús**, a mother of five children, has completed primary school and takes care of household activities and education. Together, she and her family raise poultry, cattle, and goats, which they use to cover part of their needs. She is a member of the board of directors, holds the position of alternate auditor, and actively participates in the organisation's different activities.



**Hortencia** is a primary school teacher with 32 years of service in rural areas. Also a farmer, producer, and founding member of the association, she owns 250 hectares of land. She advocates alongside other members to defend the land, forest, and environment. She coordinates, manages, and accompanies others in support of the initiatives and procedures of the association.

## 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.



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