1 MINUTE FOR REFLECTION

LR = Learning Routes
WHAT FOR TRAINING YOUR TEAM, PARTNERS AND BENEFICIARIES?
Improve our performance

Lead Innovation

Networking
In a LR each participant is committed with his/her organization back home.

This must be mutual
He/she is not there just to “know more and better”, it´s to became an agent of change.
Innovation Plan winners

Sergio Lazo, Peru

1. Georeference and quality certification of Coffee; Management of stock through mobile technology

2. After 12 months, first time that the cooperative put USD 200,000. in french market
Innovation Plan winners

**Yvrose Joseph, Haiti**

1. Use of rural microleasing as an innovative financial product for the capitalization of assets.

2. 9 months later the public bank where she works is piloting microleasing.
Innovation Plan winners

**Betty Valenciano, Costa Rica**

1. Enhance women capacities to participate in local gov. through the exchange of experiences.

2. 2 months later 10 majors took a 3 days Route and than joined the Women Municipalist Association.
WHO´S TRAINING THEM?
In a LR teachers are practitioners, experts and specially local rural talents.
400 local rural talent are trained to be LR trainers
Experts provide a global frame for the case studies
USD 175,000.- were paid to rural organization in behalf of the LR services provided
WHO´S YOUR TRAINING ATENDING?
In a Route strategic agents come together: farmers, technicians, partners and professional of IFAD operations.
- 50 international LR developed in 20 countries
- 750 directly beneficed; 4500 indirectly
- 40 nationalities; 10 of them were African
They learn from each other, building new ways of understanding and changing realities.
- 65% men; 35% female
- 40% recognize him/her as part of a ethnic group
Do the conference hall reminds you reality?
LR develop them self in field, where the innovative experiences are happening
How do the trainees look like after 10 days of workshoping?
The Learning Routes Programme in East and Southern Africa – ROUTESA

Call for innovation
Local Solutions for a Global South
## WHO WE ARE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROCASUR CORPORATION</th>
<th>OUR MISSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private non-profit international institution</td>
<td>To provide public and private investors engaged in the fight against rural poverty-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established in 1996 - Santiago, Chile</td>
<td>with technical services of knowledge management and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner of:</td>
<td>capacity building</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ IFAD</td>
<td></td>
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<td>▪ FORD Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ International Land Coalition</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
WHAT WE DO

THE LEARNING ROUTE:
AN OPPORTUNITY FOR DEVELOPMENT
LEARNING ROUTE – Definition

**METHOD**
- To identify case studies of best practices and successful experiences on innovative rural development
- To support local actors become trainers
- To mobilize multidisciplinary groups of partners from different regions to take part of a trip

**APPROACH**
- A demand-driven approach

**PROCESS**
- Flexible and adjustable process supported on the field by qualified people at different levels
LEARNING ROUTE – Methodology

BEFORE

- Thematic visits to communities that face relevant development challenges

DURING

- Direct knowledge exchange between participants ‘Routers’
- Facilitation of an Innovation Plan

AFTER

- On-line platform for all partners, to demand/offer technical assistance and training
- ‘Routers’ disseminate acquired knowledge to their communities
WHERE WE ARE

Projects are present in:
- Latin America
- Africa (ESA)
- Asia

SOME NUMBERS

- Over 50 Learning Routes
- Over 200 partners organizations
- Over 500 rural people involved in the training
- More than 1000 users participated (40 different citizeships)
ONGOING ACTIVITIES

1. Learning Routes Programme Latin America and the Caribbean – phase 2
2. Learning Routes Programme – Extractive Industries
3. Rural Talented Youth Programme
4. Learning Territories
5. ROUTESA
6. Research Projects
The Learning Routes Programme in East and Southern Africa – ROUTESA

MISSION

The Programme financed by IFAD aims at:

increasing knowledge and capacities for adopting and scaling up best practices and innovations among IFAD stakeholders in the ESA region.
PROGRAMME’S OBJECTIVES

1. Set up human and social capital within rural communities and organizations in the ESA region where rural development projects (especially IFAD’s) were implemented.

2. Identify best practices and innovative solutions through capacity building in the ESA region.

3. Promote the scaling up of best available solutions.

4. Support local and talented practitioners in becoming providers for training and technical assistance services.
 ROUTESA'S TARGET GROUP

1. Men and women farmers
2. Micro-entrepreneurs
3. Small-scale producers and their associations
4. Project technical staff and other development professionals
5. Central and local government officials
6. Policy makers involved in implementing rural development programmes and projects
ROUTESA’s thematic clusters

- Microfinance and ICT.
- Value chains and access to market
- Community-based strategies for natural resource management
Programme’s Components

- Local Knowledge and Skills Management
- Capacity Building + Incentives for Local Innovation
- Spread and Divulgation of Innovations
Local Knowledge + Skills Management

- Selection of the best experiences (nationally and international) fostered by IFAD and others partners

- Identification and training of rural talented practitioners
Capacity Building +
Incentives for Local Innovation

- Implementation of Learning Routes
- Co-funding of Innovation Plans
- Provision of technical assistance services to institutions and projects
- Production of audiovisual materials and publications
- Disseminate the results and impact of ROUTESA
- Publication of a Website:
  - An innovative experiences compendium
  - An e-directory of local rural talents
  - The archives of the different Learning Routes implemented.
THANK YOU!
STAGE 1. Design and preparation of a LR

1. Make Basic definitions for the LR
2. Situation Diagnosis
3. Organize the LR team
4. Harvesting Knowledge
5. Definition of the Operational and Technical Programme
6. Call and participants selection
Make Basic Definitions for the LR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>GOALS</th>
<th>TOOLS</th>
<th>TIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make Basic definitions for the LR</td>
<td>1. Define the problematic area that will be covered by the Route</td>
<td>Main area of concern and profile of users of the LR</td>
<td>1. Analysis of reports, midterm evaluation, others</td>
<td>•This should be part of a larger human resource developing plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Who is (are) the agent(s) target</td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Interviews with map of agents</td>
<td>•Must consider the opinion of the different stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Date</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Budget</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

STAGE 1. Design and preparation of a LR
### Situation Diagnosis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Situation Diagnosis</td>
<td>1. Deep understanding of the area and the user’s role in it. 2. Identification of projects, organizations and institutions that worked the problem out with success thanks to innovations (case studies)</td>
<td>Conceptual and historical understanding of the problematic area Capacity needs and Learning Objectives for every agent identified Preselect case studies (CS) Documentation strategy</td>
<td>1. Documents review 2. Experience contests 3. Interviews and focus group 4. Experts query</td>
<td>1. Partnership with thematic specialized institutions and other projects 2. Choose few learning objectives, viable to achieve and measure 3. Field Staff do not have much time for reading or access to net. 4. Diversify the sources of knowledge 5. Agree on criterias for the CS identification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STAGE 1. Design and preparation of a LR**
Sources of Knowledge

Thinking Org & Territory

Problems, Opportunities & Challenges

Innovate Research

Document Dissemination

E

net

A&SC

P&P

LRT
Criterias for CS identification

1. Willing to share
2. Linked to the Problematic Area
3. Evidence of improvement
4. Innovative practices
5. Autonomy management

STAGE 1. Design and preparation of a LR
Learning Materials

1. On line and offline
2. Well documented and basically documented
3. Pedagogic audiovisual pills
4. In field support materials

STAGE 1. Design and preparation of a LR
LKM, LR and scaling up
## Organize the LR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>TIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organize the LR team</td>
<td>1. Prepare them to understand the spirit and methodology of the LR. 2. Define roles and responsibilities 3. Agree on the TORs and agenda 4. Prepare instruments and tools</td>
<td>Team empowered and equipped</td>
<td>There are many tools developed for the LR that can have use value.</td>
<td>1. In the job training is very effective. 2. Use and contribute to the LR Toolkit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STAGE 1. Design and preparation of a LR**
Team work

General coordinator

Technical coordination

Methodological coordination

Field Team

Experts advisors

Operational Coordination
## Harvesting Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
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<th>GOALS</th>
<th>TOOLS</th>
<th>TIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harvesting Knowledge</td>
<td>1. Preparation and development of the field work</td>
<td>Case studies</td>
<td>1. RIMISP Sistmatization</td>
<td>1. 2 to 3 days in average to document a local experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Documentation</td>
<td>LRT Training capacities improved</td>
<td>2. Existing information analysis</td>
<td>2. Plan well your meetings, proper tool, space and time for each info</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Habilitation Workshop</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Individual and grupal interviews</td>
<td>3. Involve actively the LRT in the whole process.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Participatory mapping</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3. Participatory observation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Habilitation Workshop Guidelines</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

STAGE 1. Design and preparation of a LR
Harvesting Knowledge

- Previous documentation
- Territorial data

Field Work
- Individual and Grupal Interviews
- Participative observation

Document
- Production
- Expert and local validation

Habilitation
- Preparation of activities, materials and division of the responsibilities
### Operational and Technical Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>GOALS</th>
<th>TOOLS</th>
<th>TIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition of the Operational and Technical Programme</td>
<td>1. Choose the CS that will be part of the LR version and the time distribution of the activities</td>
<td>Operational and Technical Programme</td>
<td>1. Guidelines</td>
<td>1. Prefer local service providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Choose, and book operational services providers</td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Planification matrix</td>
<td>2. Take care of a good distribution of time for every kind of activity, including leisure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STAGE 1. Design and preparation of a LR**
Selection Criteria

- Select according to a larger strategy of capacity building and policy dialogue
- Follow affirmative actions to young, women and ethnical groups defined in the Project
- Individual and institutional trajectory contributes to the learning process in the LR
- Institutional position facilitates the introduction on innovations
- Avoid overexposure

STAGE 1. Design and preparation of a LR
Call and Participant Selection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>TOOLS</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call and participants</td>
<td>1. Call through ICT and non ICT ways potential beneficiaries of the Route</td>
<td>Participant poll</td>
<td>1. Post on website</td>
<td>1. Be aware of the channels that will distribute the call and define a way of having feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selection</td>
<td>2. Choose participants through an objective and transparent methodology</td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Webfly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Participate on the routine activities of your target</td>
<td>2. There is no &quot;one for all&quot; channel</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Internal Comm.</td>
<td>3. Value your partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Face to face</td>
<td>4. Agree previously on the selection criteria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STAGE 1. Design and preparation of a LR
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the LR</th>
<th>Problematic Area</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Skills to develop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Studies</th>
<th>CS details name, location, and focus</th>
<th>Skill strength potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
STAGE 2. THE ROUTE
KNOWLEDGE ON THE MOVE

1. Induction Workshop
   Country Panel
2. Field Activities
3. Analysis Workshop
4. IP Workshops
5. Closure
What's inside of a LR

ROUTE

STAGE 2. THE ROUTE: KNOWLEDGE ON THE MOVE
One day in the Route and the IP

- Video: 7:42 – 12:05
# Induction Workshop and Country Panel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>GOALS</th>
<th>TOOLS</th>
<th>TIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Induction Workshop</td>
<td>1. Methodological Presentation</td>
<td>1. Common conceptual and practical frame</td>
<td>1. Dynamics</td>
<td>• Half day workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Introducing of the participants and team expectations</td>
<td>2. Expectations contract</td>
<td>2. Presentations, videos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Technical presentation</td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Experience fair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Panel</td>
<td>1. State of Arts of the tematic presentations by experts</td>
<td>1. Case studies national frame</td>
<td>1. TOR FOR EXPERTS</td>
<td>• Include strategic agents such as universities, specialized institutions, public agencies and civil society representants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Half day workshop</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

STAGE 2. THE ROUTE: KNOWLEDGE ON THE MOVE
## Field Activities and Analysis Workshop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>GOALS</th>
<th>TOOLS</th>
<th>TIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field Activities</td>
<td>1. Documents review and case briefing</td>
<td>1. Integral and systematic approach to the case studies</td>
<td>1. Videos and text review</td>
<td>• At least 90 minutes per activity will allow proper exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Institutional presentation</td>
<td>2. Developing research skills</td>
<td>2. Noting guideline</td>
<td>• Define a questions agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Innovation presentation</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Exchange with staff, beneficiaries and others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis Workshop</td>
<td>1. Relators presentation</td>
<td>1. Knowledge harvesting</td>
<td>1. Relators guideline</td>
<td>• Take note of everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Discussion</td>
<td>2. Inputs for the IP</td>
<td>2. SWOT tool</td>
<td>• Facilitate dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Establishment of:</td>
<td>3. Identification of sinergies between participants</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Lessons Learned</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Escalling up value</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Recommendations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Feedback</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

STAGE 2. THE ROUTE: KNOWLEDGE ON THE MOVE
### IP Workshops and Closure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IP Workshops</td>
<td>1. Two or three workshops to progress in the adaptation and adoption if success innovations, as well as sharing and developing of basic agent of change skills</td>
<td>1. Innovation Plan designed 2. Reinforcement of concepts and tools learned 3. PI Feedback 4. Design of the Validation Plan Activity</td>
<td>1. Building an Innovation Plan Guide</td>
<td>• Individual technical support by the coordinator • Flexibility in management activities and learning rhythms • Form self support teams between participants • Share them in a Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closure</td>
<td>1. Summary of the Learnings by the CT and participants 2. Graduation</td>
<td>1. Agreements on the lessons learned, knowledge harvest and scaling up value 2. Promote networking</td>
<td>1. Dynamics 2. Presentations, videos 3. Testimonies</td>
<td>• The CT must consider in his/her summary the participant perspectives • The activity should be addressing common understanding and actions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STAGE 2. THE ROUTE: KNOWLEDGE ON THE MOVE**
STAGE 3. STAGE III. CAN DO: IMPLEMENTING INNOVATIONS

1. Validation of the Innovation Plan with the organization
2. IP Contest
3. Diffusion
4. Evaluation
What's inside of a LR

ROUTE

STAGE 3. STAGE III. CAN DO: IMPLEMENTING INNOVATIONS
## Validation of the IP & contest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
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<th>TOOLS</th>
<th>TIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Validation of the Innovation Plan with the organization</td>
<td>1. Presentation of the Lessons Learned and innovation Plan 2. Include adjustments proposed 3. Make available expert ex post technical assistance</td>
<td>1. The innovation plan is validated by the organization 2. Reinforce critical concepts and tools</td>
<td>1. Innovation plan guide and suggested activities</td>
<td>•Engage those who will facilitate or stop you and make them feel represented  •Use the learning materials of the LR  •Plan process not just one activity  •Choose partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IP Contest</td>
<td>1. Voluntary the participants present their adjusted proposal to contest 2. Funding of the best plan, considering it’s scaling up potential.</td>
<td>1. Reinforce critical concepts and tools 2. Contribute to a live bank of innovations</td>
<td></td>
<td>•Choose experts and leaders as jury, make public the criteria and IP files and results  •Prefer concrete and viable ideas either than mega changing strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STAGE 3. STAGE III. CAN DO: IMPLEMENTING INNOVATIONS
## Diffusion and Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Diffusion  | 1. Organize all documents produced by the LR  
2. Pack it in different ways  
3. Distribute in an strategic way | 1. Relevant agents are informed and able to use knowledge harvest by the LR. | 1. Online: [www.procasur.org/fida](http://www.procasur.org/fida)  
2. Offline in: E-books and printed publications  
3. Videos  
4. Feedback report | •Each profile need a different pack and com chanel  
•Partnership  
•Rich contact data base |
| Evaluation | 1. Participatory evaluation of process, products, results and expected outcome  
2. Documentation | 1. Recommendations and adjustments  
2. Outcome evidence | 1. Survey for main agents involved: participants, hosts, team  
2. Case studies after 9 or 12 months. | •Evaluation is expensive, agree on basic dimensions and indicators, use those already available.  
•Evaluate application not concepts. |

STAGE 3. STAGE III. CAN DO: IMPLEMENTING INNOVATIONS
What do LR have that other not?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Points</th>
<th>Other Training Methodology</th>
<th>LR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source of Knowledge</td>
<td>High level of abstraction</td>
<td>Practical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>One knowledge for all Everyone</td>
<td>Each profile need a specific knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The chosen one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissemination of Knowledge</td>
<td>Multiply</td>
<td>Creatively adapt and adopt knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Formally Certificate Experts</td>
<td>LRT, practitioners, experts (4 to 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Beneficiaries</td>
<td>Passive, memorize solutions</td>
<td>Active, learn to research and innovate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Concentrated in an Hotel or diluted in time</td>
<td>Concentrated In the field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Number of beneficiaries Management of concepts</td>
<td>Application</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LR 2009 (an invitation...)

- **Cultural Assets for the rural and local development**
  Colombia / May

- **Development Banks: amplifying the access to financial services of the rural poor**
  Brazil and Guatemala / June

- **Green Markets**
  Colombia / June

- **Access to Land**
  Ecuador and Bolivia / Africa??/ Second semester

- **Young Rural Talents**
  Latinamerica
I. Introduction

With support from the Ford Foundation, PROCASUR is implementing an initiative under the title of Learning from the Impact of Extractive Industries in Latin America and Southern Africa with the aim of improving programmes developed by organisations that are grantees of the Ford Foundation and provide legal and technical assistance to communities in areas vulnerable to the impacts of the extractive industry, as well as programmes developed by other actors in the sector.

The purpose of this activity is accomplished through the organization of two Learning Routes, an effective educational strategy, thematically organized around experiences and successful practices in the field, generating useful learning while encouraging South-South cooperation among the two regions while exploring possible joint activities and strategies.

This document contains the results of the consultation process carried out in order to organise the themes of the routes and determine the relevant experience to study in the field during the Learning Route to be held in Latin America.1

II. Methodology

The information was gathered using a consultation questionnaire (see Annex 1: Questionnaire for consultation) sent to the main organizations involved, Ford Foundation grantees, as well as other organisations identified by the Ford Foundation that will also participate in the Learning Route. These organisations are listed in the following table:

1 A similar report on the southern Africa Learning route will be prepared.
Learning Route: Learning from the impact of the extractive industry in Latin America and southern Africa

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Principal Organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Proceso de Comunidades Negras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observatorio de la Discriminación Racial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North-South Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Servicios Educativos Rurales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Revenue Watch Institute - Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>Centro Terra Viva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Centre for Environmental Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Centre for Applied Legal Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legal Resources Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey was distributed by email and was followed-up in order to obtain the required answers. This was carried out between 30 May and 30 June. There were a total of 12 responses, 7 from Latin America and the United States and 5 from Africa.

III. Results

A. Relevant subjects

At the global level 5 issues were identified showing more important consensus (score 1) as presented in Table 2. These subjects were:

- Strategies for ensuring community participation regarding policy decision making processes including the right to, free, prior and informed consent mechanisms and procedures.
- Models for monitoring environmental and social impacts of the extractive industry by civil society and communities.
- Legal advice and litigation strategies leading to changes in existing laws or passage of new laws and policies whilst raising awareness at community and government level.
- Civil society awareness and advocacy on environmental governance and Incorporation of the principles of environmental governance in the public agenda, policies and legislation.
- Legal frameworks and government instruments and policies regarding extractive industries and the related legislation relevant to indigenous peoples, Afro descendent and other discriminated communities.
Table 2

In your region, and based on the work of your organization in this field, which of the following subjects would be of interest to be addressed during the Learning Route? Please, score the following subjects from 1 to 3 with 1 being the highest score.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Total No. of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for ensuring community participation regarding policy decision making processes including the right to free, prior and informed consent mechanisms and procedures.</td>
<td>9 3 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Models for monitoring environmental and social impacts of the extractive industry by civil society and communities.</td>
<td>7 5 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal advice and litigation strategies leading to changes in existing laws or passage of new laws and policies whilst raising awareness at community and government level.</td>
<td>6 5 1 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil society awareness and advocacy on environmental governance and Incorporation of the principles of environmental governance in the public agenda, policies and legislation.</td>
<td>6 5 1 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal frameworks, government instruments and policies regarding extractive industries and the related legislation relevant to indigenous peoples, Afro descendents and other discriminated communities</td>
<td>6 5 1 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities’ strategies for promoting and securing socio economic and civil rights in territories affected by potential or ongoing extractive industry activities.</td>
<td>6 4 2 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies and instruments for using and managing income from extractive industries in an accountable and transparent manner</td>
<td>6 3 3 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for community empowerment in designing and managing sustainable development plans.</td>
<td>5 4 3 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governmental and community awareness regarding human rights and territorial rights and compliance issues including land claims.</td>
<td>4 6 2 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR models and principles in the extractive industry including the concept of social license</td>
<td>3 6 3 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison between responses from African and Latin American organisations is presented in Annex 2.

Other issues raised in the survey were:

- Models of Development: The answers sought a more macro level discussion on alternative social and economic development.
- Environmental governance: seen as the study and transparency of environmental permits and reparation for environmental damages, among others.
- Managing economic and financial resources.
- Conflicts: including armed conflict and CSR policies in conflict resolutions
- Legislative, judicial and regulatory frameworks: regarding common law and indigenous law and, indigenous territories.

Details of these responses are provided in Annex 3.
### B. Relevant experiences

Organisations consulted indicated the following Latin American experiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Project/activity description and location</th>
<th>Learning relevance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Territories and minorities</td>
<td>Observatorio de Territorios Étnicos de la Universidad Javeriana</td>
<td>From an interdisciplinary approach, supports Afro-Colombian communities in the process of social mapping, empowerment, traditional law with a view to exercise territorial autonomy</td>
<td>Further autonomy and free determination of ethnic groups is consolidated through the combination of territorial appropriation processes and organizational strengthening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to information</td>
<td>Agua Viva Cenati/Recalca</td>
<td>NGO defending environmental rights. Network of social organisations against large-scale mining</td>
<td>Maintains updated information on projects, companies, project impacts, social processes and coordination of social actions against mining projects that work without respecting ethnic and social rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation and litigation strategies</td>
<td>Centro de Estudios para la Justicia y la Tierra/Dejusticia</td>
<td>Research, litigation and support to communities affected by the implementation of large investment projects in their territories</td>
<td>Supports legal enforcement and organizational strengthening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation strategies</td>
<td>Food International Action Network</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free, prior and informed consent</td>
<td>Centro de Estudios de Derecho, Justicia y Sociedad (Dejusticia)</td>
<td>Case studies: Urrá dam in indigenous territories (Embera Katio- Alto Sinú) and exploration in indigenous territories U’wa.</td>
<td>Documents the actual case of prior consultation in Colombia including an analysis of the context (armed conflict pressures), environmental characteristics of the region, regional and national political tensions and, environmental, social and cultural impacts. Research on the perception on the right to prior consultation of the various stakeholders, the practices to create opportunities for participation and the processes of legal and political mobilization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free, prior and informed consent</td>
<td>Centro de Estudios de Derecho, Justicia y Sociedad (Dejusticia)</td>
<td>Technical and legal support on free, prior and informed consent, ethnic reparations to indigenous and Afro-Colombian organizations.</td>
<td>Disseminates documents on international standards on free, prior and informed consent and ethnic reparations. Experience in prosecution and advocacy on legislative agenda, building networks with indigenous and Afro-Colombian organisations, participation in hearings on racial and discrimination issues and prior consultation at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (CIDH). Recently, building support to the creation of a decree on indigenous and Afro-Colombian victims that looks for violations of human rights stemming from the conflicts over natural resources in their territories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial and minorities</td>
<td>Observatorio de Discriminación Racial</td>
<td>Formed by the Process of Black Communities, Dejusticia y the Global Justice and Human Rights Programme at the Universidad de los Andes to document and analyze</td>
<td>Prepares and disseminates extensive documentation on discrimination. Emphasis on land rights and natural resources and its relation to forced displacement and pressure from legal and illegal actors in their territories.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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+56 2 3416367 - procasur@procasur.org - www.procaspur.org
## Learning Route: Learning from the impact of the extractive industry in Latin America and southern Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Project/activity description and location</th>
<th>Learning relevance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to information</td>
<td>Programa Justicia Global y Derechos Humanos de la Universidad de los Andes</td>
<td>Human rights clinic documenting advocacy and carrying out actions to combat them. Receives and documents legal standards and case studies on free, prior and informed consultation and fulfillment of rights of ethnic groups.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to information</td>
<td>Indepaz</td>
<td>Andean Forum for prevention of social and environmental conflicts. Provides legal support to possible effects of mining in La Guajira, Cesar and Cauca.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental impact</td>
<td>AIDA</td>
<td>Protection of strategic ecosystems in Colombia and Ecuador. Strategic lines related to water and human rights.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation strategies</td>
<td>Red por la Justicia Ambiental</td>
<td>Partnership between civil society organisations, academics and individuals dedicated to protecting the environment from human rights perspective.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation and</td>
<td>Comisión Inter-Eclesial de Justicia y Paz</td>
<td>Support in the Manda Norte (Cerro Carraizo) case, suspended by the Constitutional Court until the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous and Afro-Colombian is in place.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial and minorities</td>
<td>Foro Interétnico de Solidaridad Chocó</td>
<td>Network of grassroots organisations (indigenous, Afro-Colombian and peasant communities) with the support of NGOs for advocacy on territorial and human rights.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial and minorities</td>
<td>Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia</td>
<td>Network of grassroots organisations in the country with the support of NGOs for advocacy on territorial and human rights.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú</td>
<td>Regional Diploma on Extractive Industries in Latin America. Builds partnership between the university and a national university to develop high-level, semi-distance training aimed at improving the capacity of civil society.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal monitoring</td>
<td>Grupo Propuesta Ciudadana</td>
<td>Extractive Industries Monitoring Project. Supports capacity building of a network of NGOs in monitoring the generation, distribution, use and impact of income generated by the extractive sector.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Free, prior and informed consent

- Identifies types of mining activities and social conflicts that can arise in La Guajira, Cesar and Cauca. Building capacity in communities to prevent conflict through disclosure of regulatory frameworks for social and environmental obligations of mining companies.
- Identifies types of mining activities and social conflicts that can arise in La Guajira, Cesar and Cauca. Building capacity in communities to prevent conflict through disclosure of regulatory frameworks for social and environmental obligations of mining companies.
- Provides legal support to possible effects of mining in La Guajira, Cesar and Cauca.
- Provides legal support to possible effects of mining in La Guajira, Cesar and Cauca.
- Gathers the experience of different stakeholders; disseminates reports on relevant and current issues on environment and human rights; helps coordinate legal strategies, and creates opportunities for organizations and activists to receive training and education.
- Gathers the experience of different stakeholders; disseminates reports on relevant and current issues on environment and human rights; helps coordinate legal strategies, and creates opportunities for organizations and activists to receive training and education.
- Builds direct experience with local communities and provides legal support in defence of the important Mining Murillo case which has set an important precedent in Colombian jurisprudence.
- Builds direct experience with local communities and provides legal support in defence of the important Mining Murillo case which has set an important precedent in Colombian jurisprudence.
- Engages in inter-ethnic experience to adopt common positions and coordinated strategies in defence of territorial rights and free prior and informed consultation, among other issues.
- Engages in inter-ethnic experience to adopt common positions and coordinated strategies in defence of territorial rights and free prior and informed consultation, among other issues.
- Further knowledge and contacts with grassroots organisations across the country, extensive experience in advocacy in cases of exploitation of natural resources in indigenous territories and national policies related to territory and autonomy.
- Further knowledge and contacts with grassroots organisations across the country, extensive experience in advocacy in cases of exploitation of natural resources in indigenous territories and national policies related to territory and autonomy.
- Builds partnership between international organisations and a national university to develop high-level, semi-distance training aimed at improving the capacity of civil society, targets professionals involved in environmental, social responsibility and sustainable development projects of civil society, local governments and private companies.
Learning Route: Learning from the impact of the extractive industry in Latin America and southern Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Project/activity description and location</th>
<th>Learning relevance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land use planning</td>
<td>Gobierno Regional de Cajamarca, Generica Regional de Recursos Naturales</td>
<td>Ecological and economic zoning and land use planning in Cajamarca Region</td>
<td>Develops a regional land use policy with the participation of the State, mining companies, civil society and international cooperation. Provides technical and participatory process over four years that has allowed defining areas in which mining activities can and cannot be developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal monitoring</td>
<td>Cooperación</td>
<td>Development of civil society capacity for participation in EITI Peru</td>
<td>Supports activities aimed at increasing civil society participation in the EITI process, stressing that this should be a more open process, with reports being more comprehensive, more disaggregated and open to new topics such as contracts and direct social spending. Includes advocacy at national level (Law EITI, for example) and training and advocacy activities with civil society and regional governments. Has made the more systematic work on mining conflicts and been directly involved in negotiations between companies and communities as in the case of the Tintaya mine in Cusco.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territories and minorities</td>
<td>UEN</td>
<td>Study on Marlin Mining, Sipakapa, Guatemala</td>
<td>Further understanding on government and businesses strategies for mining in indigenous territories and finding answers and actions of resistance and legal defence that indigenous communities have developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territories and minorities</td>
<td>PRISMA</td>
<td>Studies on indigenous territorial dynamics in Mesoamerica</td>
<td>Describes the old and new areas of accumulation in indigenous territory in the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to information</td>
<td>UEN</td>
<td>Mapping of Megaprojects and Indigenous territories in Mesoamerica (First Draft)</td>
<td>Contributes to better knowledge on the spatial distribution of megaprojects in indigenous territories in Mesoamerica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>DPLF/MISERED</td>
<td>On-line course on mechanisms to denounce human rights violations by transnational corporations in the context of extractive industries.</td>
<td>Analyses and systematizes existing mechanisms for addressing human rights violations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation and litigation strategies</td>
<td>DPLF</td>
<td>Projects to promote increased use of legal and institutional mechanisms to address issues related to the extractive industry</td>
<td>Provides technical assistance to civil society groups, organizes events and workshops, prepares amicus curiae, prepared letters to authorities, requested hearings at the CIDH Commission and, issued reports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free, prior and informed consent</td>
<td>DPLF</td>
<td>Several studies on the right to consultation in Latin America, especially in the Andean Region.</td>
<td>Prepares reports on the right to prior consultation and indigenous people rights.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. Expectations

Participant’s expectations relate primarily to the development of networks, linkages and learning from other experiences. This section of the survey also shows the interest of the participants on topics such as:

- Community strategies for negotiating, resisting and defending their interests and territories
- Management of revenues from extractive industries
- Legal strategies especially on environmental governance.

The breakdown of responses is in Annex 4.

D. Conclusion

As a result of the consultations, literature review and an analysis by the technical specialist, seven issues have been identified which are relevant to study in Latin America. The selection of topics has also considered the existence of experiences that represent them. The topics are:

a) Negotiation and Litigation Strategies  
b) Fiscal Monitoring  
c) Environmental Impact  
d) Conflicts  
e) Land Use Planning  
f) Free prior and informed Consent  
g) Territories and indigenous and Afro-descendant rights

Two central issues in the extractive industry will be considered during the route as global themes under which framing questions and experiences were identified and topics were selected. These are:

- Macro development models and extractive industries  
- Legal frameworks and instruments and government policies regarding mining and indigenous peoples, African descendants and other communities

The following Table shows the subjects and experiences that would be part of the Learning Route in Latin America.
### Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Project description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal monitoring</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Grupo Propuesta Ciudadana</td>
<td>Extractive Industries Monitoring. Capacity building of a network of NGOs in monitoring the generation, distribution, use and impact of income generated by the extractive sector, Monitoring mining concessions and contracts and direct social expenditures by enterprises. Technical assistance to regional governments for the better management of resources and better development planning in resource-rich areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land use planning</td>
<td>Peru, Cajamarca</td>
<td>Gobierno Regional de Cajamarca, Gerencia Regional de Recursos Naturales / Servicios Educativos Rurales (SER)</td>
<td>Ecological and economic zoning and land use planning in Cajamarca Region. Development of a regional land use policy that has had the participation of the State, mining companies, civil society and international cooperation. Technical and participatory process over four years that has allowed defining areas in which mining activities can and cannot be developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicts</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Defensoría del Pueblo</td>
<td>Advocacy and monitoring to intervene, on the request of the parties, and support legally and humanely people directly or indirectly related to situations of escalating violence and crisis. The APCS also acts in monitoring the agreements signed by the parties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Litigation and negotiation strategies</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Cooperación</td>
<td>Through the formation of transnational networks it was possible to create conditions for conflict resolution and community participation in the process of dialogue by creating Negotiating Tables and or Compensation Agreements. Establishment of a monitoring team and the creation of a development fund.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental impact</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>CENSAT / Inter-American Association for Environmental Defence (AIDA)</td>
<td>Campaign in defence of El Almorzadero paramo Establishment and strengthening the Supervisory and Monitoring Commission for the Protection of Páramo Almorzadero through exchanges, internships and linkages with academia. Legal Initiatives to ensure the protection of ecosystems. Consolidation of a network of communities affected and threatened by mega-projects in defence of territories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Comisión inter-eclesial Justicia y Paz</td>
<td>Direct experience with local communities and legal support in defence of the Important Mining Murillo case which set an important precedent in Colombian jurisprudence. Suspended by the Constitutional Court until free, prior and informed consent of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territories and extraction</td>
<td>Colombia (Cauca, Suaréz)</td>
<td>North-South Institute</td>
<td>Traditional Afro Colombian territory with informal mining concessions, taking place without consultation (AngloGold Ashanti and individuals). Court order suspends licensing and protects land rights. Work in progress on developing tools for monitoring environmental impact.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning Route:
“Learning from the impact of the extractive industry in Latin America and the south of Africa”
PROCASUR-Ford Foundation

The case of “La Toma” country sub-division,
Municipality of Suárez,
Cauca, Colombia

“Territorial defense from the Afro-descendant identity facing large mining activities”
1. **Background and territory characteristics**

The country sub-division of “La Toma”, founded in 1860, is located east of Suárez Municipality, Cauca Department, bordered on the south by Morales Municipality, on the north by county town; Ovejas River is on the east and Cauca River on the west. Its extension is approximately 1224 hectares distributed in the rural settlements1: Dos aguas, El Hato, Gelima, La Toma and Yolombó.

**Rural sub-divisions of the Municipality of Suarez, Department of Cauca, Colombia**

---

1 “veredas” are the smallest territory, political and administrative unit of the rural environment in Colombia
Currently, this country sub-division has a population of 5200 and 1300 Afro-descendant families, most of these households have electrical supply, but serious problems related to drinking water services as there is no aqueduct in this area. Most of the land doesn’t have title deed and are collective land.

Economic activities include agriculture (yucca, coffee, banana, sugar cane, corn and several fruits), aquaculture – fish farms- and ancestral artisan mining that represents the main source of work and income for most of the population. “La Toma” is mainly a mining area, with great potential of metallurgical resources all along the western mountain range, Cauca and Ovejas Rivers, being gold the most important exploitation.

The territory started to be populated in 1636, when slave Afro-descendant population arrived from Cartagena de Indias. Initially, said slaved population settled in Gelima; their activities included “mazamorreo” (artisanal mining process/panning) in underground mining (Ensolvado Mines) and works in ranches and farms. During this period, the Afro-descendant community carried on several resistance movements against slavery, later they took part in the independence struggle in exchange for their freedom. But there was not until 1851 that slavery was abolished in Colombia, unleashing land colonization process by black population. At the beginning of XIX, landowners’ harassment increased –with government support- in order to displace black peasant communities from these territories causing violent clashes and uprisings.

At the same time, the Afro-descendant community continued working in ancestral mining, their main subsistence activity, generating a special relation with this occupation as a socio-cultural practice that dates back to their arrival to the territory and that involves artisanal procedures to extract the resource. The two ancestral ways of extracting the metal are the following: alluvial mining –sort of mining work that extract mineral from riversides, streams, brooks and springs\(^2\)- and vein mining –gold is extracted from the rock using steel tools or explosives, mainly underground shafts\(^3\).

\(^3\) Idem.
The development of this small artisanal mining has allowed meeting basic needs of most of the Afro-descendant population; in spite of this, the population is stigmatized from the institutional sphere due to environmental impacts associated to this activity and its illegal status.

The first records of industrial mining exploitation in the zone is from 1920, with the arrival of the American company -Asnazú Golden- that dredged the Cauca River with high tech machinery affecting mining and agricultural activities of population in La Balsa, Timba, Asnazú and part of Suárez. After 20 years of uninterrupted extraction, the company achieved exorbitant profits in exchange of destroying the best agricultural and cattle-related farms and displacing Afro-descendant population who refused to have their lands expropriated. This fact represents the first attack by a transnational company against the consolidation of black communities in the territory.

Currently, given the richness of natural resources (metallurgical and hydrological) in the area where “La Toma” is located, the area has become a territory of geostrategic interest for different interests that dispute the control of the zone. On this regard, it shall be pointed out that artisanal mining is threatened by three great fronts. First, criminalization of this ancestral activity as the government considers it as illegal mining. Secondly, the intense armed conflict in the territory and different legal and illegal groups⁴ that create an extreme vulnerable situation for Afro-descendant population, peasant and indigenous communities, victims of the war and forced displacements. Thirdly, the front related to the threat of big transnational mining companies that are after concessions for open pit gold mining, affecting the environment and water sources.

⁴ We mean army, paramilitary groups, guerilla, drug dealers and criminal gangs.
2. Learning objectives:

- Characterize the social, ethno-cultural, economic, political and environmental dimensions of “La Toma”.

- Learn about the political process of territorial defense developed by Afro-descendant inhabitants of Corregimiento “La Toma” facing the arrival of foreign economic interests among them, large mining activities.

- Get to know tools of legal defense used to protect the territory.

- Understand the main challenges and projections for “La Toma” territory.

3. The development of the conflict between the Afro-descendant community and foreign interests in the territory

In the framework of the historical process of settlement of the Afro-descendant community in “La Toma”, the population developed strong sense of belonging that defined a specific ethnic identity articulated with uses, cultural traditions, beliefs and specific ways of life. Not being free from violent conflicts with Colombian landlords, Afro-descendants developed the ancestral mining as the economic basis of their subsistence, working in agriculture as a complement; both activities were developed mainly at Cauca Riverside, lands with great gold potential and fertile soil. However, in the late 70’s, a specific event marks and changes the socio-economic dynamics of local population: the construction –without consultation- of the hydroelectric plant “La Salvajina”.

“La Salvajina: social and territorial transformations”

The first studies related to “La Salvajina” power plant in Suárez Municipality are from 1960, but it is only in 1981 that the project under the “Corporación Autónoma Regional del Cauca” –CVC– started the first construction works with funds from the Overseas Economic Corporation Fund – OECF Japan-, Exin Bank of Japan, Girocentrale of Australia and the Inter-American Development Bank. In order to start works, CVC unfairly negotiated with local population large areas of land, paying half price for land lots which appraisals were not respected.

During the construction of the dam, great amounts of land rich in gold were removed, the local population dashed to work in areas of gold deposits that were guarded by the army. The violent persecutions against miners didn’t reduce the desire of extracting the metal, and the important

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5 Governmental entity in charge of management and protection of environmental resources in the region.
portions of gold extracted confirmed that the area of influence of the hydroelectric project contained one of the most important reserves of gold.

In 1983, the fever reached its peak; each person obtained from 11 to 12 grams per day, gold was mainly commercialized at the county town of Suárez. This peak allowed the population experiencing a period of prosperity that lasted only until 1985, when farms, households, mining and cultural sites were flooded. 80% of gold production in Suaréz was under water as well as the best agricultural land, depriving population from important resources, forcing displacement and leaving them isolated with the creation of the lake “La Salvajina”.

“With La Salvajina the best agricultural and mining land was under water, we will never recover that and it is sad”

Luis Armando Vargas, Member of CCM La Toma

Diverse organizations got together claiming some indemnification from CVC as they didn’t agree with the social, economic and environmental damages caused by it. And thus in 1986, more than 15,000 indigenous and peasants Afro-descendants marched towards the city of Popayán claiming the government real actions in order to mitigate the impacts of the hydroelectric project on affected communities. The government, the Corporation and the social leaders signed an agreement in order to build schools, bridges, roads, health posts, aqueducts and electric supply, among others. Although the community -thanks to the strong organization process- had the satisfaction of validating their demands facing the public authority, most of said agreements has not been met so far.

“Transnational investments and community response”

Richness in “La Toma” territory continued generating the arrival of foreign stakeholders interested in its natural resources. Thus, in 1992, the community witnessed the presence of backhoes

intervening in their mining activities at 5 specific sites: Municipality of Buenos Aires (Salado, Guayabal, both banks of Ovejas River) and Municipality of Suárez (Machaqueo, El Treinta). This gave rise to a strong community movement that was faced with threats and violent actions towards local leaders; at the end the machinery was withdrawn.

In 1996, there was a new proposal for the territory: the deviation of 90% of Ovejas River in order to feed growth needs originated by the “La Salvajina” reservoir, already with 10 years of operation. CVC presented its environmental impact assessment, which was evaluated through a consultation process with the participation of local communities that were not willing to suffer territorial dispossession once again. This gave rise to an organizational process involving the creation of a Council with young and adults in order to face this new threat; the political action strategy included “take over” of the municipality and “strikes” in order to avoid the deviation of the river. On May 21 1997, in the framework of “formalizing” the local consultation process, local population contested the performance of the work and the entire Afro-descendant population affected voted against the project.

During the same period of mobilizations, paramilitary groups and drug dealers brought 14 backhoes for mining activity to Ovejas River. These armed groups settled at La Finca –El Corcovado- in the Municipality of Buenos Aires and their violent strategies affected inhabitants of “La Toma”. Once again, the response of organized communities forced the withdrawn of the machinery.

“Ancestral Afro-descendants territory and large mining activity”

As per laws 21 of 1991 and 70 of 1993, the Colombian State recognized the collective territories of afrodescendant population, awarding, among others, their right to Free and Informed Previous Consultation in order to protect their integrity and cultural identity, as well as their survival as communities.

Despite the above, in 2000, Ingeominas awards in favor of the individual Héctor Jesús Sarria a license for mining exploitation –for 15 years- in an area of 99 hectares in “La Toma”, violating the collective rights of Afro-descendant population to be consulted about development projects in their ancestral territories.

Once again, in 2004, the Ovejas River deviation project was reopened, and also new mining concessions were granted, without consultation, to individuals in “La Toma” territory. Among the holders of licenses we can mention the individuals Raúl Fernando Ruiz, Alfredo Díaz and the company La Kedadha –among others-, it seems that they were acting as “figurehead” of the multinational company Anglo Gold Ashanti.

7 The Colombian Institute of Geology and Mining –Ingeominas- is the mining authority in charge of granting soil and subsoil exploration and exploitation rights over state-owned lands.
A strong organization process emerged from the communities, aiming at make visible the conflict and train local leaders on diverse topics (politics, education, environment ...), who will promote awareness in local population about their right to consultation. This training process was carried out with the support of non-governmental organizations, such as Corporación Sembrar and CENSAT.

“We started to talk with the oldest people, warning them that multinationals were coming, we started to learn about the mining code and mining legislation”
Lisifrey Ararat, Leader of CCM La Toma.

Local communities understood that the threat from large mining activities in the territory did not only involve social impacts linked to dispossession of community resources, but it also involved high environmental costs related to leaching industrial process. The use by large mining activities of heavy metals, such as mercury and cyanide, is a risk for water, biodiversity, flora and fauna in the territory.

In 2004, in order to face this situation the Communal Council of La Toma⁸ was created as the autonomous ethnic authority in the territory, 5 rural settlements (veredas) got together creating a country subdivision (corregimiento) and a national articulation with the Afro-Colombian movement as they belong to the “Palenque Alto Cauca” of the Process of Black Communities (Proceso de Comunidades Negras) –PCN-. Since then, the CCM of La Toma has defined a horizontal, participating and inclusive organizational structure. During this period, the organization process from the communities strengthened. In 2006, there was a great mobilization towards Cali in order to demand compliance with the agreements to repair damage caused by “La Salvajina” hydroelectric plant, at the same time an alliance and articulation with other social collectives was sought.

⁸ At the same time, the Communal Councils of Andasur, Indalá, La Meseta, Casco Urbano, Brisa and Los Robles were created.
Meanwhile, extreme violence against Afro-descendants, indigenous and peasants did not stop, causing murders, missing people, threats, forced displacements and every type of permanent violations against human rights. Some leaders of the CCM of “La Toma” were declared as “military target”, and the paramilitary group “Águilas Negras” was identified as one of the main armed actors operating in the territory.

In February 2009, Ingeominas not only had 39 valid mining titles in the territory, but also granted administrative protection (acto de amparo administrativo) in favor of Héctor Jesús Sarria and against “La Toma” community, ignoring their ancestral rights over the territory and treating them as “hinders” of progress. As a consequence of this, the CCM develops a series of strategies to make visible the conflict, including a visit to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, in October 2009, intervention of OAE, participation in public audiences in order to attract the attention of authorities, as well as the creation of networks with local, national and international universities and organization that support with dissemination activities.

Nevertheless, in March 2010, governmental entities order the eviction of “La Toma” inhabitants privileging the interest of the private sector and ignoring agreements of the communities with the national government. This first eviction order was suspended, but was followed by a second and third order that same year.

“We won’t move, there are no more mountains to colonize. This is a strong defense of life to remain in the territory”

Plutarco Sandoval,
Regional leader of PCN.

In response, the local population had political strategies to resist, denounce and face the displacement, the entire community took part and nearby corregimientos were solidary with “La Toma”.

Parallel, legal defense strategies were implemented, such as the “acción de tutela” (writ for the protection of constitutional rights), claiming protection considering the violation of collective, territorial and environmental rights. This “acción de tutela” was denied in first and second ruling.

Among others the slaughter of Naya River (2001), where 100 persons were killed and more than 4000 were displaced, the eviction of miners (2008) authorized by the Mayor of Suárez and 200 families were attacked, the slaughter of “El Hato” against 8 miners in “La Toma” (2010) and the murder of other 5 miners in the Municipality of Suárez (2010).
But with the support of the “Defensor de los Pueblos” (ombudsman), the writ was chosen to be sent to the highest instance nationwide: the Constitutional Court.

Late 2010, under ruling T-1045A the Constitutional Court ruled in favor of Afro-descendant communities’ territorial rights, ordering the execution of the CPLI and the need of prior consent regarding any mining exploitation by third parties –representatives of the private sector and multinationals- in their territories. This implied the suspension of mining and environmental licenses in the area of “La Toma”.

The ruling also alerts about environmental damages that would bring, emphasizing the effect on water sources, contamination, deforestation and increase of ecological imbalance. Likewise, under judicial decree 005, orders the preparation by Government of a Plan of Attention, Prevention and Protection of fundamental rights for those territories.

Said ruling from the Constitutional Court represents a very important legal precedent nationwide, since it recognizes the need of executing consultation before any intervention by third parties in the ancestral territory, ensuring collective rights and participation. Likewise, orders the development of a consultation procedure between the community and the government, taking into consideration cultural aspects that assure ethnic identity and protection of the ancestral territory of Afro-descendant communities.

4. Lessons learnt from the process

From this experience of territorial defense by the Afro-descendant community of “La Toma” emerged the following lessons learnt:

- The Afro-descendant ethnic identity, based on the sense of belonging to the territory of “La Toma”, is an essential element for the population to organize a defense and unify actions facing the threat of displacement. The common experience associated to compulsory displacements and social effects of previous mega project interventions, leads the community to resist and defend the territory as they weren’t willing to be displaced once again. In the same way, ancestral mining is a socio cultural practice that identifies the collective and guarantees its subsistence, it is an articulating axis that reinforces the need of remaining in the territory.
- The creation of an autonomous organizational structure, as the Communal Council of “La Toma” that is horizontal, participative and wide in terms of representativeness—as it is composed by young, women and older people- favors awareness of the collective and drives a social mobilization process that is communally strengthened and legitimized. This figure of ethnic authority is also dynamic because it articulates with a national process led by PCN that relates to the vindication and positioning of collective and territorial rights of Afro-descendant communities in the country. In this sense, it is feasible that leaders understand the conflict from a global analytical perspective that means questioning the prevailing development model.

- The effective strategies for the generation of support networks and the visibility of the conflict were essential for the civil defense process. The generation of a social capital composed of the articulation with regional, national and international environmental and human rights organizations enhanced the possibilities of exercising influence and social pressure on decisions taken by governmental authorities.

- The combination of tools for political and legal defense, gave relevant organizational strength to the process. At the level of political strategies, several mobilizations, take over, town meetings, communications took place, in order to disseminate the conflict to the public opinion. At the same time, a legal strategy was the writ for the protection of constitutional rights, petitions of revision and the submittal of the analysis of the legal case and its illegitimacy to international organizations for the defense of human rights. It is worth mentioning the support received by stakeholders of the civil society, such as Corporación Sembrar, Instituto Norte Sur, international observers and academic centers, such as the following universities: Los Andes, Javeriana, Nacional and del Rosario.

5. Conclusions

Currently, “La Toma” still experiences threats related to illegal mining and intrusion of backhoe and machinery in the territory and intimidation of CCM leaders. Pressure on the territory by mega projects, large mining activities and the armed conflict is far from being solved, although the decision of the Constitutional Court has been a milestone. For this reason, the community feels a series of challenges that have to be faced in order to guarantee the protection of the territory.

On one hand, it is necessary to refocus strategies in order to achieve a better articulation with other relevant territorial actors to reach consensus on perspectives and collective actions. Particularly, this means permanent dialogue for the protection of indigenous and peasant communities in the zone, and learn with them how to overcome differences and guarantee common welfare. In the same way, it is essential to continue with the work of “making visible” the conflict policies, continue with the mobilization of networks and searching alliances with other organizations and institutions.
At communal level, it is necessary to continue working in the unity, awareness, information and training, strengthening the Afro-descendant identity and cultural relevance. Likewise, it is very important to progress in the process of land titling to legally assure the collective ownership of the territory.

One of the great challenges of “La Toma” community is related to the use and management of natural resources with consensus. In this sense, it has been verified that it is not enough to guarantee the protection of the territory but it is essential to generate own strategies for the sustained permanence in the autonomous territory. It is required to prepare and execute a plan of territorial life with unified social support that conceptualizes the productive future, not only from mining activity and that guarantees basic needs related to food, health and education of the population.

As a first step, currently “La Toma” community is aware that the ownership ambitions over the territory due to political and economic interests are not over; on the contrary, it is possible that they will increase; the community is working in the development of their own “protocol” to govern projects entering in the zone. In the same way, it is working on internal regulations to regulate and protect their ancestral territory.

On this regard, as long as the armed conflict persists and the government continues facilitating the entrance of transnational investment, the capacity achieved by local stakeholders to conciliate interests and propose life strategies will determine the future situation in the territory.

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Bukonzo Joint Cooperative Microfinance Ltd

Kyarumba town, Kasese District
Uganda

Name: Bukonzo Joint Cooperative Microfinance Ltd
Location: Kyarumba town, Kasese district, Uganda
Year of foundation: 1999
Contact: http://www.bukonzocoop.com/
        info@bukonzocoop.com
1. The Context

Bukonzo Joint Cooperative Microfinance Ltd (Bukonzo Joint) is a members-owned cooperative that operates to offer sustainable financial and capacity building services to rural poor people living in the Bukonzo county, with special focus on rural women. Bukonzo Joint is headquartered in Kyarumba town, located 53 kilometres from the Mountainous slopes of Rwenzori in Kasese district and 47 kilometres from the border between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Kasese District
Kasese is a district in South West Uganda, formed in 1974 and named after its main municipal centre, Kasese town. Prior to this, it was part of Toro kingdom that comprised the present districts of Bundibugyo, Kabarole, Kyenjojo, Kamwenge and Kasese. The district is located along the Equator and borders the districts of Kabarole and Bundibugyo in the North, Lake George and Kamwenge district in the East, Bushenyi district and Lake Edward in the South and the Democratic Republic of Congo in the West. According to the National Census (2002), Kasese district has a total population of 533,000 people. The district is divided into 2 counties namely Busongora and Bukonzo. It has 19 Sub counties and 2 town councils.

Like more districts in Uganda, Kasese district is predominantly agricultural relying on farming for employment and income. Over 85% of the people in the district depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Most of the farming activities is done on subsistence nature; among the principal food crops produced in the area are finger millet, cassava, maize, ground nuts, sorghum, potatoes and matooke. The district also practices horticulture farming that includes fruits like passion fruits and vegetables. Secondary productive activities are animals keeping (mainly cattle, goat, sheep and pigs) and fisheries, while the rest of the population is involved in trade across the border with DRC. Most of the produce from Kasese gets is marketed in urban centres in the western and central regions of Uganda. The presence of a tarmac road linking Kasese to other districts like Kabarole and Bushenyi, in fact, enables local people to transport their production to other parts of the country. Despite of its economic activities, the poverty level in Kasese district is still high (48%) compared to the rest of the country (34%).

Kasese is a multi-ethnic district with people of many different ethnic backgrounds. The main languages and ethnic groups of the area are the Lukonja and Lutooro of the Bakonjo and Batooro people respectively; other groups in the district include the Banyankole, Basongora and Bakiga. There is also common usage of English, Swahili and Luganda. Land tenure in the district is mostly customary, being the man who owns the land.
Kyarumba sub-county
Located at the foothills of Mount Rwenzori, Kyarumba sub-county is part of the Bukonzo county within the Kasese District. Almost half of the area is covered with lakes and national parks, with snow-covered mountains. There are two seasons of rainfall each year and much of the land is fertile with cereals, tuber root crops, coffee and cotton being grown. About 500,000 people live in Kyarumba. The biggest ethnic group are the Bakonzo (80% of the population), followed by the Anyabindi and Basonkora. The Bakonzo belong to seven traditional clans, such as Basukali, Bakira Bahira, Baswagha, Babinga, Bathangyi, Balegha and Bahambu. Clans constitute the base of the local society, playing a key role in the social and cultural life of the region. In Kyarumba local population mostly depends on coffee as a source of income and any fall in the market coffee greatly affects the region. Between 1996 and 2004, the insurgence of the rebels from the Allied Democratic Front dramatically affected the livelihood and the economy of the region, forcing many families to abandon their lands. Since 2004, Kyarumba’s families started to go back from the refugee camps and life has progressively returning back to normality.

2. What can we learn from the Bukonzo Joint experience?

Bukonzo Joint’s experience offers the opportunity to learn about how to design and implement strategies and methodologies to mobilise resources, develop community-based market strategies and mainstream gender in the frame of microfinance initiatives aimed at and self-managed by poor rural farmers.

Specifically, what we can learn from Bukonzo Joint are:

a) Practices and mechanisms to mobilise resources through group participation at grassroots level;

b) Strategies and tools to develop community-based marketing strategies, with focus on coffee value chain;

c) Strategies and tools to integrate a gender perspective into the design and implementation of rural finance services targeting rural families;

d) Training and capacity building delivery systems;

e) Strategies for building alliances and dealing with donors and other international actors from a community perspective.

3. Bukonzo Joint’s trajectory and objectives

Founded in 1999, Bukonzo Joint started as a microfinance association to serve poor and isolated communities in Bukonzo county which due to war, poverty and remote location had been marginalised and that were not able to access formal financial services. In the late 1990s, as in many rural areas of the country, only few bank branches were present in Kasase district. The only banks serving rural areas at that time (Uganda Commercial Bank and Uganda Cooperative Bank) were located in Kasese town, which is 58 kilometres away from Kyarumba. The lack of adequate financial services in the rural areas precluded local people to
access to savings and credit to start and sustain their business activities. Bukonzo Joint has been the first microfinance association to provide local financial services tailored to poor rural people living in the area.

When the Bukonzo Joint Microfinance association started, it counted with 11 grassroots help-self groups as members; today, the number of the groups associated has increased to 86. In 2004 the association become a cooperative (Bukonzo Farmers Marketing Cooperative) thus gaining legal status which allowed Bukonzo Joint to mobilise community funds; at that time the purpose was to “to get the money nearest” as Annette Kule, Bukonzo Joint Training Community Officer, explains.

“At the beginning there were self-help groups”, Paineto Baluku, Bukonzo Joint Programme Coordinator, clarifies. “In 1999 we brought these self-help groups together into an association. When we decided to create a cooperative the problem was that there were too many groups and it was not possible to gather all these groups together into only one cooperative. So we found a way in which every parish could have a small cooperative, bringing together the self-help groups of that area in order to form what is called a primary cooperative. This happened in 2003. Then in 2004 all those primary cooperatives came together to form a secondary cooperative which is now Bukonzo Joint. So this is how we came out.”

Created thanks to the financial revenues of the microfinance association itself, the Bukonzo Joint Cooperative’s purpose was to help small farmers – mainly coffee producers already members of the Bukonzo Joint Microfinance - to find new markets for their agricultural products and to sell them at advantageous prices. The lack of infrastructure to enable the direct marketing, in fact, had led coffee farmers to depend on middle men who offered low prices for their produce. In this sense, by providing credit and assists in marketing the produce of farmers, Bukonzo Joint also contributed to minimise the gap originally created by middlemen.

Today, the main objective of the Cooperative’s operations is to offer sustainable financial, as well as no financial services (such as capacity building and training) to small farmers and economically disadvantaged people, with special focus on rural women. The major services and products offered by Bukonzo Joint are savings and access to loans either through the Cooperative body or the microfinance using a group lending approach. Bukonzo Joint’s commitment is to improve the living standards of the rural poor, ensuring that they are active participants in the economic, social, and political development of their county. At the same time, Bukonzo Joint is also supporting its members to develop their own cooperatives.

The Bukonzo Joint Cooperative currently operates with 3,400 small farmers, 85% of which are women, mostly involved in coffee growing. Bukonzo Joint's activities are funded by its members, by its microfinance revenues and by organizations that support the Cooperative's training and business development efforts. The Cooperative is managed by a board of members which come from different primary cooperatives and grassroots self-help groups and that are directly elected by groups members. The current board is composed by 4 men and 3 women.
4. How is the experience developed?

There are few but essential requisites that individuals have to fulfil in order to become Bukonzo Joint members: live in the area in which Bukonzo Joint operates and be already member of a self-help group (within a parish or primary cooperative) in the village of origin. As conditions, Bukonzo Joint requires to its new members to apply for receiving a training during a period time of 6-12 months and to agree to buy shares after 2-6 months after becoming a member in their own community. Although the most of Bukonzo Joint members are coffee farmers, membership is also open to other workers, such as teachers or government workers. Coffee producers members can also joint the Cooperative while the others can benefit from training and capacity building activities, a part from the financial services Bukonzo Joint provides. The membership fee is of 10.000 Ugandan schillings per year (about 3,7 USD).

Bukonzo Joint Cooperative has three interrelated programmes: microfinance, production and marketing and capacity building. Gender mainstreaming is a component which cross-cuts the above mentioned programmes.

Microfinance

The Microfinance model Bukonzo Joint maintains is designed to enable members to improve their standard of living by developing, sustaining, and expanding their own small businesses. Members are encouraged to reinvest their funds in viable income generating activities, which are predominantly coffee and maize farming. An essential component of the Microfinance Bukonzo Joint sector is employment and income generation through group participation at the grassroots level. This makes possible for those with low incomes, such as the coffee farmers in the region, to gain access to business development funds that are difficult or impossible for them to get from banks or other mainstream lending institutions. Bukonzo Joint works with saving and credit self-help groups by facilitating their establishment, offering workshops, training and by providing material support, such as lockable boxes and a meeting space at its headquarter.

As Paineto Baluko explains, lending process works in this way:

“The lending starts from the villages. Self-help groups member joint together in order to make their own financial plan to be presented to the management team of Bukonzo Joint. At this point, the organization provide them training and capacity building on microfinance-related issues. After the training, groups members can contact the Microfinance Loan Office to get their money. Loans are always given to groups, not to individuals”.

Production, Marketing and Value chain

Whereas many Financial Institutions focus on credit, Bukonzo Joint adds complimentary services to its microfinance members through a marketing cooperative thus availing a conduit to sell produce and earn income. The majority of members are involved in coffee production; under Bukonzo Joint, the farmers are given a chance to sell their coffee at advantageous market rates but at the same time Bukonzo is also attempting to add value to this coffee so that these farmers get good value for their money. Members sell their coffee to Bukonzo Joint which pays members through the microfinance
institution. Currently, the value of one kilo of coffee produced by Bukonzo Joint members is about 8,600 (about 3 USD) Ugandan schillings; when it is exported to foreign countries (United Kingdom, for instance), it is sold for about 12,600 Ugandan schillings. The cooperative then adds value to the coffee being properly grading it and roasting it before export or sale. At the moment, Bukonzo Joint has bought a coffee huller to be installed so that the coffee can be processed and packaged at Bukonzo for export. However, the first activity still remains the sell of unroasted coffee, while the production of roasted coffee to export is a secondary activity. Bukonzo Joint also counts with a nursery (garden centre) where they keep 3 different kind of seedlings: Arabic coffee, pine and coconut. Bukonzo Joint receives seedlings from NAADS and UCDA governmental programmes and keep them growing in the nursery to then sell them to farmers at low prices.

**Gender Mainstreaming**

Bukonzo Joint has been pioneer in integrating gender mainstreaming into the design and implementation of microfinance initiatives targeting rural families. Given limited access to financial services and the plight of poverty in the region, Bukonzo Joint has emphasised the access of financial services to all regardless of sex. Women are generally the biggest target of Microfinance Institutions because of the lack of access to financial services. While many Microfinance programs only target women, Bukonzo Joint realises that targeting women only will not uplift the women or community but it rather encourages men and women to better understand the role of each. Therefore Bukonzo Joint encourages situations where both spouses are involved, normally through trainings. Both spouses have been encouraged to attend trainings and joint family attendance is needed to iron out issues that would derail one family member from accessing credit and related services. It has also been observed that when targeting one sex only, especially women, situation of mistrust and power imbalance are exacerbated. Therefore women and men are both encouraged to attend trainings so that suspicion can be overcame.

Through the Participatory Action Learning System (PALS) and Gender Action learning System (GALS), men and women have been trained to work together while learning about financial services. Bukonzo Joint piloted the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) methodology in value chain and participatory action research, as well as in value chain in coffee, maize, fruits and beans.

Other notable aspects in the gender mainstreaming has been the focus on providing women access to majority sales revenue. It should be noted that the majority of the coffee sellers are women and Bukonzo Joint works to ensure that they get the largest share of sales income compared to the men. This has been enforced through the voucher receipt systems where Bukonzo Joint ensures that at least 60% of the revenues go to women. The Cooperative has also ensured that those spouses/families that show that show evidence of joint land titles, for instance, can benefit from surplus sales revenue that accrue to the society. This has further improved gender relations.

**Capacity Building and Organic Certification**

Throughout the year, Bukonzo Joint offers training to its members, and to others interested in developing and improving similar organizations. These trainings focus on a variety of topics including gender action learning, women's empowerment, business plan management, leadership
skills, financial management, accounting and record keeping for family businesses as well as the operation of a saving and credit groups.

In a major new capacity building project that was launched in November 2010, and which is very important to the future of Bukonzo Joint and its coffee marketing efforts, farmers are now enrolled in a three-year-long organic certification program. Once the program is completed, thousands of Bukonzo Joint farmers will be triple certified -- under Fair Trade, USDA Organic and EU Organic rules. The training focuses on the best methods and techniques of organic farming for the continued improvement of high quality coffee. The resulting certifications will give Bukonzo Joint coffee a distinct competitive advantage in the international market for specialty coffee. The entire three-year program is being supported by Solidaridad, an NGO based in the Netherlands.

Networking and strategic alliances
Bukonzo Joint counts on a extended and diversified network of different partners and donors at national and international level that are supporting the organization in various projects aimed at rural development. These include: Oxfam Novib, Centenary Bank, Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA), Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC), RABO Bank, SOLIDARED, East African fine Coffee, Japanese Cooperation, among others. Over time, more and more international agencies and private companies have approached Bukonzo Joint offering to support some of their programmes and activities.

Not all the offers from potential donors have been accepted. As Bukonzo Joint members point out, while some donors have showed to be flexible, by adapting their proposals to the organization’s priorities and vision, some others have tried to impose their own organizational structure and rules. In this case, Bukonzo Joint preferred to refuse the external support, even if it implied losing the opportunity to get funds.

“Learning how to deal with donors has been a gradual thing” Paineto Baluku recalls. “We started in our own, we had our saving structure from which we started approaching the marketing sector. From the beginning we have been always clear: this is what we do and this is the way in which we want to work”.

5. Strengths, good practices and lessons learned

“One of the main benefits Bukonzo Joint has brought not only to its members but to the whole community is the way of thinking and approach. They have installed self-confidence in people, helped them to believe in themselves, and these are qualities that can be helpful whatever your are doing”, Douglas Cruickshank remarked. Douglas is a US Peace Corps volunteer which since 2009 lives in the community collaborating with Bukonzo Joint. “One of the main strengths of Bukonzo Joint is the fact that the Bukonzo’s people are a very cohesive group, because of their history. As they live in a remote location, they have been cut off from the main mainstream services and they really had to be very resilient and depend on themselves. This has been one an advantage for the organization”.

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Group cohesion is indeed a key element that has allowed Bukonzo Joint to grow during the last years. Related to it, there is the mechanism of mobilising resources through group participation at grassroots level, which has demonstrated to be efficient in strengthening people’s participation in microfinance and marketing initiatives.

The integration of gender mainstream into the design and implementation of microfinance initiatives started to show the first results in terms of positive changes in attitudes between sexes and the enhancement of gender equality at household level. “At the beginning, the woman used to bring the coffee and to carry it to the store, while the man was following her with his walking stick. After delivering the coffee to the store, the man was picking up the money and putting it in his pockets. But in these days things are changing. At the end of the harvesting season we realised that some women were also carrying money and taking it back home. Now you can find both espouses carrying the coffee, both man and woman”, Bukonzo Joint members explain. Bukonzo Joint tends to emphasise the fact that the coffee quality also depends on the level of cooperation and collaboration at household level; in this sense, the share of responsibilities and mutual support between espouses can positively affect the quality of their coffee production. As better coffee means more money, this message has demonstrated to be a good incentive to stimulate cooperation between sexes.

6. The way forward: challenges and opportunities

The relationship with the external market (especially at international level) can be regarded at the same time as one of the main opportunity and challenge for Bukonzo Joint. If on one hand, the relationship with the international market creates new funding and income generating opportunities for coffee farmers, on the other hand, the need to respond to the growing demand from international partners without overstress the organization constitutes a challenge. In this sense, the fact of delegating responsibilities to other people involved in the Cooperative, that could fill some tasks without being supervised, is becoming more and more important. To involve in regular exportation would also imply the maintenance of a regular level of coffee production at high quality standards, that at the moment would be too challenging for community farmers.

Exportation costs are also a challenge. “On the marketing side, the price that we have to sell the coffee in Kampala is quite low compared to the costs of the exportation. The challenge of exporting is a finance issue: when you export coffee, you have to wait 3 months before receiving the money for the coffee you have sold”, Paineto Baluku points out. The marketing sector is financed by the microfinance groups, so the people who deposit their money need to get some loans to cover the costs for the coffee they want to export.
On top of this, the Cooperative has also to deal with the fluctuations of the coffee market. At the moment, the main crop produced by local farmers and sold through Bukonzo Joint Cooperative is coffee. The lack of differentiation in the crop production could lead the organization to collapse in the eventuality that coffee’s prices fall down. To overcome this constraint, Bukonzo Joint is now encouraging farmers to identify other crops, such as maize and coconut, in order to diversify their agricultural production.

Organic certification of coffee production is also considered a big opportunity for Bukonzo Joint members, as it would open up opportunities to access to new markets. At the same time, as the Cooperative just started to get involved in the certification training process, the concept of organic certification, and all the practices related to it, still needs to be fully understood by local farmers. “In the US, in UK, people want to have special coffee”, Joseph Kasibirehe, Bukonzo Joint Communication Officer highlights. “We need different kind of certification, such as organic certification, fair trade certification, rainforest certification... but when you start talk in these terms to the communities they will not understand what you are saying”. Local producers are now start to get a better understanding about the certification process; however, even if not certified, the coffee produced must meet with high quality standards, which have to be kept over time.

Although during the last years grants offered by international donors have been the main source of income, allowing Bukonzo Joint to start up several activities, the organization doesn’t want to become “grant-dependent”. Even if for many grassroots organizations applying for grants is perhaps the easiest way to get funds, Bukonzo Joint members know that the dependence on external funds would imply to follow donors’ agendas, which is something that they do want to avoid. In order to gain autonomy from grant funds and external donors, Bukonzo Joint is currently working to obtain a credit line that would help the organization to grow their capital in order to expand their external market; indeed, this will require some time as the lack of initial capital to invest is still too little.

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE ELABORATION OF THE INNOVATION PLAN

What does the Innovation Plan seek?

The Innovation Plan seeks to reinforce the participants' practical application of the learnings acquired during the Route to their own reality and the activities of their associations or organizations.

What is the purpose of elaborating an Innovation Plan?

The Innovation Plan's objective is to identify an issue or a problem of interest of each organization in order for the participants to work on it all along the Learning Route. It contributes to focus the learnings' concrete application inspired by what has been seen in the experiences regarding each participants and organizations' area of interest.

The preparation of the Innovation Plan will be the tool enabling the participants to organize their learnings throughout the Route.

The formulation of the Innovation Plan

Analysis and exchange workshops will be held all along the Route during which each presented innovation, its possibility to concretely materialize, its scope and the cooperation possibilities between ideas and/or plans will be discussed. Moreover, each participant will benefit from the constant assistance of the Learning Route's team of professionals.

Each participant will develop, improve, complement and enrich his/her Innovation Plan design.

Throughout several workshops, the participants will finish the construction of their Innovation Plan which will then be presented to the other participants of the Route during the Innovations Fair that will be held on the 18th of April 2011.

While filling in the Innovation Plan, please keep in mind the following instructions:

(a) The innovation proposal must be realistic. In other words, it should be integrated into the action context of your organization, limiting itself to concrete actions to achieve concrete results.

(b) The implementation of the proposed innovation must be viable in an eight (8) months period and with the possible cofunding from PROCASUR of USD 2000 maximum. Two (2) Innovation Plans will be selected to be cofunded.

(c) The Innovation Plan may be complemented with the new learnings and analysis developed during the Route. In other words, it will be in constant change all along the learning process.
INNOVATION PLAN

**To innovate** is to introduce a change or an improvement either in the generation of new products, services, business models or the processes that add value to a company, enterprise or organization, in a sustainable manner. We can identify three types of innovation: i) incremental innovation: it concerns the creation of added value on an existing product or service, adding some improvement to it, ii) radical innovation: it refers to a new product, service or process that was not known before; iii) innovation in management: when the way management is done is substantially changed or common organizational forms are modified, providing progress on the organizational objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization, business or institution</td>
<td>District Livelihood Support Programme (DLSP), Ministry of Local Government, Uganda</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name of the participant</td>
<td>Ruko Judith</td>
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<td>E-mails and phone numbers of contact</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rukidithdith@gmail.com">rukidithdith@gmail.com</a>, +256 772615149, +256 754 615149</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title of the Innovation Plan</td>
<td>Introducing DLSP supported groups and households to gender responsive savings and credit</td>
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

Briefly describe the main idea of the IP. (use max. 80 words)

The main idea behind the innovation is to introduce farmer/fishing groups and household clusters to gender responsive savings and credit. This is expected to form part of the exit strategy for the groups and households supported with enterprise and food security grants. The main methodologies of focus will be the Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) methodology and the SACCOs. The innovation will be piloted in three programme districts of Masindi, Kenjonjo and Kamwenge, these are districts that will exit from the DLSP programme in the financial year 2011/2012.

2. **GENERAL OBJECTIVE**

Point out the main objective of the improvement, change or innovation that you propose to implement in your original organization, business or institution.

The main objective of the innovation is to ensure that the group and household activities have continuity, and are sustainable beyond DLSP. This will also inculcate the savings culture and promote gender sensitive micro finance services for the beneficiaries of DLSP.

3. **EXPECTED OUTPUTS:**

Indicate the concrete achievements that will allow you to fulfil the general objective (the innovation proposed). You may add more than three (3) results if necessary.
Result 1: An inventory of all the groups and households in Masindi, Kamwenge, Kyenjonjo done, a complete database generated as a sampling frame.

Result 2: An inventory of all the SACCOs in DLSP Supported sub-counties done

Result 3: VSLA methodology training done, Sub-county Community Development Officers of DLSP supported sub-counties trained and are able to facilitate the groups and household clusters on the gender responsive VSLA methodology.

Result 4: Farmer and fishing groups/ Household clusters linked to VSLAs, SACCOs

4. ACTIVITIES
State the main actions to be developed in order to achieve the expected results, taking into account that these need to be feasible in the given time period (maximum 8 months) and with the human and financial resources available (you may add more activities).

1. Design/document the innovation plan
2. Do an inventory of all the groups and households supported by DLSP in the Districts of Masindi, Kamwenge and Kyenjonjo.
3. Do an inventory of SACCOs in DLSP supported sub-counties
4. Link with CARE, Iganga District Farmers Association and Rural Financial Services Programme
5. Train community resource persons (Sub-county community Development Officers) on the VSLA methodology and gender
6. Link one group per sub-county to SACCOs in DLSP supported sub-counties
7. 60 Groups and 60 Household clusters selected start VSLA activities
8. Monitor and evaluate the process

5. BENEFICIARIES OF THE INNOVATION
Point out who will directly benefit from the proposed innovation. Describe his/her main characteristics and the way and amount in which he/she will be benefited. Also indicate the indirect beneficiaries that will be impacted by the Plan.

All the members of DLSP supported groups and households who will be selected for the pilot activities of the innovation will benefit from the innovation. 60 groups from the three districts of Masindi, Kamwenge and Kyenjonjo will benefit from the innovation, 60 household clusters form the three districts will also benefit from the innovation.

6. FEASIBILITY
Taking into account your organization, available resources, context, etc, do you consider the proposed innovation feasible? Why? Describe the material and/or human resources, and the networks or current and potential alliances of your organization on which stands the innovation’s development.
7. **SCHEDULE**

Define the activities’ length and order in time, in order to achieve the proposed results. Remember this initiative can last a maximum of 8 months.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Main activities to be developed</th>
<th>Month 1</th>
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<td>Train community resource persons (Sub-county community Development Officers) on the VSLA methodology and gender</td>
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<td>Link one group per sub-county to SACCOs in DLSP supported sub-counties</td>
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<td>Groups and Household clusters selected start VSLA activities</td>
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<td>Monitor and evaluate the process</td>
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8. **RESSOURCES**

Indicate the human and material resources necessary to develop the planned activities and the capacity of your...
**organization to finance or co-finance their implementation.** Indicate the resources that the organization has and the ones that need to be mobilized from other sources. Remember you may compete for a prize of USD 2000/plan maximum destined to the plan’s implementation. Two (2) Innovation Plans will be selected to be co-funded.

The organisation has some basic resources put aside for the innovation within the Enterprise trainings and the gender training budget. If the prize of 2000 USD is won, it will be use to train the community resource persons (the sub-county Community Development Officers) and the key facilitator of this training will be some body from Iganga District Farmers Association(IDFA). The total project cost will come to USD 4000. The Organisation will put in funds for doing the inventories of the groups, households and SACCOs. Most of the activities of the innovation will be integrated into the other main stream activities of the programme; they will not be done in isolation.

9. **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**
Which concrete actions will you develop to have access to the resources, supports and necessary alliances stated above, in order to implement the proposed innovation?

The basic strategy is to brief the management of the programme to get support for the innovation. An innovation work plan and budget will also be made. All the stakeholders will also be informed and updated about the innovation.

10. **COMMENTS**
Do you want to add or comment something else?

This innovation will be rolled over to all the DLSP supported districts as a sustainability strategy. The innovation will therefore spill over beyond the eight months. The DLSP supported district staff will also be encouraged to have exposure visits to the learning route cases for their own learning and adoption purposes.
1. INTRODUCTION

COMSIP is currently focusing on individual groups, a strategy that has proven to be expensive and the groups are not well bound. Despite reporting the higher number of women participating in COMSIP activities, the issue of gender has not been effectively incorporated. In this innovation plan therefore the groups will be reorganised into clusters, using the Bukonzo strategy. The clusters will eventually become cooperatives. While reorganising the groups COMSIP will adopt family approach in group formation so doing both wife and husband will be involved and will encourage joint savings. The gender approach will also be incorporated in different manuals used for capacity building.

2. GENERAL OBJECTIVE

Point out the main objective of the improvement, change or innovation that you propose to implement in your original organization, business or institution.

The main objective is to promote participation in community savings and investment promotion and reduce transaction costs.

3. EXPECTED OUTPUTS:

Indicate the concrete achievements that will allow you to fulfill the general objective (the innovation proposed). You may add more than three (3) results if necessary.
Result 1: Groups strengthened into manageable 30 clusters by the end of 8 months

Result 2: Volume of Savings improved by 20% in 8 months

Result 3: A total of 700 men and women members reached with gender related training in 8 months.

4. ACTIVITIES
State the main actions to be developed in order to achieve the expected results, taking into account that these need to be feasible in the given time period (maximum 8 months) and with the human and financial resources available (you may add more activities).

1. Review training manuals to incorporate critical gender lessons
2. Train extension staff, community volunteers and members of groups on cluster management (using the Bukonzo methods)
3. Group reorganization
4. Conduct Gender needs assessments
5. Gender sensitisation and training of staff and group members
6. Conduct Community to Community Knowledge Exchange
7. Conduct Information, Education and communication on savings, Enterprise development and gender mainstreaming

5. BENEFICIARIES OF THE INNOVATION
Point out who will directly benefit from the proposed innovation. Describe his/her main characteristics and the way and amount in which he/she will be benefited. Also indicate the indirect beneficiaries that will be impacted by the Plan.
The beneficiaries for the innovation are the members of the existing groups both male and females in the reorganised groups (clusters). The following are characteristics:

- Poverty is skewed towards women
- The women have multiple chores inhibiting active participation in developmental activities
- In some cases cultural norms prevent women to stand out and take leadership positions.
- Cultural norms in some cases prevent the women from participating actively in a meeting, development activities, holding leadership positions in presence of men.
- Low saving culture, limited entrepreneurship and exclusion from mainstream financial services.

The target clients will benefit from the innovation plan as follows:

- Men and women will be sharing responsibilities which will enable the overburdened women to have free time for other Enterprise activities
- There will be an increase in productivity at household level through the shared vision by both wife and husband that will lead into accumulation of income and asset.
- Social distance will be reduced among men and women, creating an enabling environment for women to compete effectively in leadership positions and get involved in decision making on issues concerning gender.
- The innovation plan will also benefit the target clients because gender relations will improve and eventually other issues such as HIV/AIDS and domestic violence will easily be tackled.
- The plan will improve the saving levels at household level and in the process making both wife and husband together get Access to financial services.

6. FEASIBILITY

Taking into account your organization, available resources, context, etc, do you consider the proposed innovation feasible? Why? Describe the material and/or human resources, and the networks or current and potential alliances of your organization on which stands the innovation’s development.

The innovation will be implemented effectively and is feasible because of the following reasons:

- The resources are available within the Local Development Fund (LDF), a major funder of COMSIP activities. Annually COMSIP provides an annual plan and budget in the last quarter of the financial year ending June 30th. In this regard the forthcoming annual plan and budget will have a specific budget line on gender mainstreaming.
- The innovation will help in improving the strategic approach to development
- Currently COMSIP has strong working partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development. This working partnership will also assist COMSIP to solicit ideas on gender mainstreaming and resource mobilisation.
### 7. SCHEDULE

Define the activities’ length and order in time, in order to achieve the proposed results. Remember this initiative can last a maximum of 8 months.

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<tr>
<th>Main activities to be developed</th>
<th>May</th>
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<td>Train extension staff, community volunteers and group members in cluster management</td>
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<td>Group reorganisation</td>
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<td>Conduct gender action learning</td>
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<td>Conduct community to community knowledge exchange</td>
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### 8. RESOURCES

Indicate the human and material resources necessary to develop the planned activities and the capacity of your organization to finance or co-finance their implementation. Indicate the resources that the organization has and the ones that need to be mobilized from other sources. Remember you may compete for a prize of USD 2000/plan maximum destined to the plan’s implementation. Two (2) Innovation Plans will be selected to be cofunded.

The organisation has capable personnel in its operations and Finance and administration divisions. Currently the organisation is implementing activities according to its workplan and budget. It has an annual budget of USD1 million from which the pilot activities as per this innovation plan will be implemented. In the subsequent years the activities will scale up to cover more areas.
### 9. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

**Which concrete actions will you develop to have access to the resources, supports and necessary alliances stated above, in order to implement the proposed innovation?**

The organisation has its Strategic Plan and the Innovation plan activities are within the Strategic Actions that will be carried out. This is a five year Plan that ends in 2016. It has specific performance management systems to evaluate its implementation. This plan is shared among stakeholders including the donors like World Bank and the African Development Bank.

### 10. COMMENTS

**Do you want to add or comment something else?**

The innovation plan will be piloted in 6 district councils out of the 28 district councils where we have clients. It will be presented to members of staff for their inputs before starting the implementation process.
ICTs and rural financial markets

Technology helps to reduce transaction costs of rural financial services everywhere

Graciela Quezada, manager at Jardín de Azuayo Savings and Credit Cooperative, Ecuador, discovered in Africa how to reduce by half the cost of telephonic financial transactions. Her findings have already allowed the cooperative members savings for over 120 000 dollars.

The experiences in Sudafrika, Malawi and Uganda allowed her to address one of the main challenges of her organization: the high cost of financial transactions in rural zones.

“In the route, we identified different alternatives for the service, and we decided to use a shorter number with an integrator,” Graciela explains.

By simply change an existing product for telephonic financial transactions, called J4Move, we could reduce by half (from 10 to 6 Dollars) transactions costs of a standard credit transaction.

“Today the cooperative covers the costs, substantially reduced and the service is cost-free for the members. If we consider an average of 30 thousand annual credit transactions, this means an annual saving of USD 120 000 for the benefit of our clients”, Graciela explains.

“Back in Ecuador, we analyzed the change and defined the most convenient technological alternatives, negotiating with supplying companies and institutions and developing the required technological platforms for its implementation. We also started training the members of the cooperative in the use of new IT systems.

Participants of Learning Routes commit themselves to prepare an innovation plan for implementation based on the lessons learnt during the journey. Graciela’s plan was a catalytic for the Jardín de Azuayo Cooperative, as it needed an organizational transformation. The innovation was an opportunity to install a new ad hoc service for the financial needs and characteristics of their users.

Another result from the Route was the creation in the cooperative of a unit for permanent investigation, training and incorporation of new services and products, where technological innovations play a main role. Likewise, they have increased resources to follow up and evaluate the efficiency and efficacy of delivered products and services.

The Cooperative Jardín de Azuayo (Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito Jardín Azuayo) is a social and financial institution located in the Coast, Sierra and Eastern zone in Ecuador. It has 25 offices and more than 110,000 members. Its working strategy includes training processes, generation of opportunities from each community and the consolidation of their organizations as integrated components of access to financial services.

CONTACT: www.jardinesu.minef.ec
Experts in rural finance from Latin America and Africa learnt from successful Self Help Groups models working in India and Bangladesh.

Learning business from the excluded

Experts in rural finance from Latin America and Africa learnt from successful Self Help Groups models working in India and Bangladesh.

Self Help Groups created by informal workers in India’s and Bangladesh inspired new ideas in Mojisola Mobolaji, a Nigerian expert in microfinance and director of Development Initiatives Network. It was a proved and effective system for promoting access to financial education programs and to credit for groups of people lacking for opportunities in her own country.

Participants of Learning Routes commit themselves to prepare an innovation plan for implementation based on the lessons learnt during the journey. Mojisola’s plan was to adapt the Self Help Groups’ model and its rural finance education system to the reality of her country.

And thus, from the consulting institution that she leads, Mojisola promoted the creation of financial self help groups among women micro entrepreneurs, as well training courses. In this way, these women will receive training and, at the same time, will be able to replicate the lessons learnt in their own communities.

More than two hundred women traders, artisans and small scale agricultural producers have received training in financial administration, savings and investment, credit systems and risk management in less than a year. Outcomes of this training program have been multiplied by five thanks to a training for trainers program, through which a total 1,000 workers have been trained so far.

Once the training period has concluded, participants are encouraged to continue using the Self Help Groups as a support network to achieve the most important financial goals. A tool called Progress Table have been developed to follow up of this process, through this tool the groups can visualize their progresses and challenges at short and medium term.

Other innovation directly related with the experience of the Route to Learning has been the development of a training manual for financial Self Help Groups.

Mojisola Mobolaji recognizes that “those that have gone through this type of financial training have been able to start new business, expand their existing businesses, obtain loans from micro financial Banks, improve savings, invest in shares and, in general, demonstrate a better understanding of what to do to produce better results from their money at short and long term.”

The Development Initiatives Network, Nigeria, works in the expansion of access to financial services and financial inclusion, through the financial education of workers from the informal sector; it aims at achieving changes in practices and services of formal financial institutions.

Contact: mobolajij@yahoo.co.uk
PROCASUR Regional Corporation

PROCASUR is a non-profit regional institution created in 1996; initially, it was created in Chile with representatives in Bolivia and Colombia. The institution is engaged in the design and presentation of technical services for rural development, knowledge management, and generation and development of capacities among agents that take part in the implementation of initiatives to fight rural poverty. Its mission is to increase the innovation capacities of development projects, associations and organizations of beneficiaries and local governments, offering, in the field, the knowledge and wisdom of the best rural talents that have successfully applied solutions with outstanding results, following their later adaptation and dissemination.

Its working experience has been focused on Latin America including actions in Africa and Asia. Its main working areas are the following: (a) development of capacities among projects’ developers, directors of executing units, executing technical teams, private suppliers of services, authorities and local governments technical teams, and men and women leaders of rural associations and communities; (b) technical assistance services, focused on improving project management; and (c) information for the development of markets for rural technical services. PROCASUR offers to its members and users solution proposals adjusted to their needs, with proper knowledge of the main focuses, trends and processes that, currently, fight against rural poverty is facing.

PROCASUR has a wide network of local, national and international experts, around 300 professionals and local practical teachers with important experience in strategic topics to improve the efficiency and efficacy of those investing in rural development. The following are some of the main topics we have addressed: (i) management and development of local talents and capacities; (ii) access to new markets for economic associations of rural poor individuals; (iii) strategies for the inclusion of local governments as development agents; (iv) application of strategies for gender and groups age equity; (v) cultural assets in life strategies of rural poor; (vi) diagnosis, planning and S&E projects methodologies; and (vii) natural resources management and administration as strategies for the sustainable development of rural populations.

PROCASUR addresses sustainability applying a management model that combines the following strategies: (i) strong decentralization in the implementation of its activities, identifying and contracting the best regional experts in the different required topics (professional practitioners, local talents and experts, scholars and researchers, etc.); (ii) aggregation and co-financing of national and local resources in all its activities in order to optimize the use of donors resources used by PROCASUR; (iii) supply of services through agreements and/or public bidding mechanisms that allow expanding the horizon of its activities and multiplying the experiences and innovations that are part of its available capital of regional knowledge; (iv) a low cost regional unit with strong articulation and association with national and international institutions and organizations that share their working strategies and focuses.

PROCASUR underwrites agreements and/or contracts, supplies support services and focus its efforts from the experience of joint work. It establishes technical and financial cooperation links with public and private institutions, grassroots organizations and information and knowledge networks.
Learning Routes Programme II

Men and women from rural territories transform themselves into talents suppliers of knowledge services

PROCASUR, through the Learning Routes, have achieved a tool to develop capacities; this tool successfully combines local management of knowledge produced and accumulated by innovative practitioners of rural development, with a pedagogical strategy focused on impacting the practice and performance of the direct users of the Routes, as well as their origin associations and territories.

The Routes have been proved as an effective learning mechanism for development agents and beneficiaries associations, men and women, from different, economic, social and cultural environments. Through the Routes, PROCASUR promote the recuperation and systematization of available knowledge, its pedagogical organization, the exchange and application of new approaches, good practices and lessons in order to improve the development of beneficiary rural organizations, technical teams of rural development projects and their national executing institutions of local rural governments and private organizations.

In this new stage of the Programme, financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development, Ford Foundation, PROCASUR Corporation and members, we seek to increase the use of the Routes mechanism among new organizations and territories, including and giving priority to relevant thematic areas in order to improve opportunities for poor rural population. The construction of new Routes will favour south-south cooperation between rural talents that although their multiple differences share challenges and generate innovative answers with scaling up potential. In this stage, rural families and communities, associations of small agricultural producers, artisans, rural microentrepreneurs, local governments, men and women from rural territories, will contribute to expand development opportunities through the management of their knowledge and good practices.

Since 2006, PROCASUR, together with its partners, has implemented 40 Learning Routes, working directly in the territories, where the innovations of 15 countries from Latin America, Africa and Asia have been born and consolidated, strengthening the capacities of more than 650 users from 35 different citizenships. The network of talents suppliers of services for the execution of the Routes is composed for more than 170 organizations, including communities, rural associations, governments and 400 rural talents that have been remunerated for the training services supplied.

The new stage of the Learning Routes

The general objective of the Programme is contributing to the improvement of rural development projects in Latin America, facilitating that rural producers’ organizations and small associations systematize and disseminate their experiences and knowledge, becoming suppliers in the market of technical support services pertinent to the needs of other development organizations and initiatives.

Purpose

At the end of the Programme, it is expected to have a regional system of Learning Routes, with the participation of multiple institutions, beneficiary organizations and projects that promote innovative local processes, through de dissemination of local rural development successful cases and experiences that strength the development of knowledge rural markets in Latin America and initially in Africa.

CORPORACIÓN PROCASUR
Heriberto Gavarrubio 21, oficina 705, Nutrias, Santiago, Chile. Fono/fax (56-2) 3416357 / procasur@procasur.org / www.procasur.org
The specific objectives are the following:

- Develop human capital in rural and agricultural communities, and organizations of small rural development projects, mainly projects financed by IFAD and the Ford Foundation, through the identification, systematization and dissemination of the best practices.
- Foster the dissemination of knowledge and the adoption of innovative solutions among institutions responsible for the design, implementation and execution of policies, programs and projects for poor, rural families.
- Improve the design and management of projects through the inclusion of lessons learnt and the best management practices; and
- Expand the geographical coverage of the Program to new countries in Latin America and Africa.

Main components of the Programme

a) Management of local knowledge and skills

Through this component we identify the main thematic axis of common interest: select the successful experiences with proved impact in life conditions and incomes of poor rural population; facilitating the participative systematization of their experiences, lessons and good practices and the strengthening of pedagogical capacities of their talents, in order to offer this knowledge services to others.

b) Creation of capacities and incentives for local innovation

Through this component, management capacities of the agents involved in the design and implementation of rural development initiatives are strengthened, mainly technical teams of executing public institutions, projects’ coordinating units, service suppliers and leaders of rural organizations and enterprises. Besides, promotes the co-financing of regional institutions interested in taking part as direct users of the routes and establishing coordination mechanisms with beneficiary organizations, in order to receive the benefits of the training services offered by the Routes. Institutions interested in the adoption of innovative strategies formulate innovation plans, at each Route, and compete for a direct economic incentive to apply the learnt changes.

c) Elaboration and dissemination of the innovations

The Program invests in the systematization and dissemination of successful experiences in fight against rural poverty, testimonials of the impact of the Routes and methodological and conceptual documents, in this way, it favors a wide range of projects financed by IFAD, Ford Foundation and other associated organizations. For this purpose, we develop virtual, printed and audiovisual publications.

Main strategies:

1. Lead by the demand for new learning services and mechanisms with high use of value for its direct and indirect beneficiaries.
2. Focalized on practitioners, designers and decision makers of public and private investments for poor rural population, including national, regional and local levels.
3. Develop following up and evaluation mechanisms for the adaptation and adoption of innovations by the user of the Routes, mainly through activities in networks and cooperation alliances between former users and rural talents suppliers of training and technical assistance services.
4. Multiply the volume of stakeholders interested in including the Routes’ mechanism as part of their regular activities for the development of their capacities.
5. Mobilize resources of partners and users through a flexible and differentiated strategy in order to make the Routes sustainable and massive.
6. Improve and increase the positioning of rural talent in the knowledge rural market through the sale of training and technical assistance services.
The story that follows is about the initiative of men and women of the Afro-Colombian community of San Basilio de Palenque, community that three years ago participated in a Learning Route, translating what they learned into new solutions for their people and territory.

Their innovations adventure began when 13 representatives, primarily young people, traveled to rural communities in the districts of Santander and Cauca in Colombia to learn first-hand and in the field from successful small rural entrepreneurs, returning to Palenque with a new vision and a concrete plan for change.

This is one of many meaningful stories that the Regional Learning Routes Programme has been hearing since 2006, when the Corporation PROCASUR (Regional Programme for Rural Development Training), with initial financial support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), began to systematically implement the Routes. This tool for local knowledge management and peer-to-peer learning has achieved important results in raising the profile and value of practical knowledge generated in the field, building capacity among the best local talents in rural areas to transfer their knowledge and thereby trigger innovation processes among the beneficiaries of the Routes.

So far, 40 Learning Routes have been carried out, training more than 570 leaders of beneficiary associations, managers of rural development programmes and projects, professionals and local government authorities, and others from 35 countries in Central and South America, Africa and Asia, systematizing and exchanging over 150 innovative experiences in more than 15 countries, equipping 420 rural talents as training service providers and transferring more than US$150,000 to rural associations and microenterprises for training services provided under the Routes methodology.
San Basilio de Palenque was born and grew on the edges of our world. Around the middle of the 17th century Benkos Bioho, a rebellious slave, led an escape from Cartagena de Indias to the south. He traveled 50 kilometers to the interior of the continent to found what would be the first palenque: a small village surrounded by a fence of thin poles, carefully laid out with houses and a large open plot for growing food crops, very close to a stream. This palenque would then become the basis for a rebellious movement. In 1690, the Spanish crown was still trying to negotiate peace. A century later, in 1779, the Palenqueros’ right to this territory was finally formalized.

During the centuries that followed, the Palenqueros maintained the customs that blended in their roots: the palenquero language, which comes from African, Spanish, and Portuguese dialects. A social fabric based on the huagro, a bond of friendship stronger than family ties that constitutes the backbone of the community. Music and dance as forms of everyday expression and as the basis of the lumhali, the ritual foundation of local religiosity and of traditional healthcare.

In its struggle for recognition, Palenque has learned the language of action and developed a capacity for organization that has led to some gradual achievements in terms of visibility – and also, new opportunities for its people. However, people’s efforts do not always translate into the better quality of life that they aspire to. The unmet basic needs index (67 per cent) and the living conditions index (middle to low) show constant stagnation over time, especially in access to and quality of public services – water supply, sanitation, electricity, health care, education.

Before leaving Palenque

This situation of stagnation persists in the productive activities of the people of Palenque. As many other afrodescendant communities in the region, the local economy is characterized primarily by gender-based specialization of labor. Men farm small parcels of land called mazas, where they cultivate yucca, corn, yams, rice, watermelon, melon, beans, peanuts and other crops. Often they also keep small livestock for milk production and fattening.

For their part, women work as producers and street vendors of traditional sweets. Driven by tourism, women have gone from selling their goods in front of their homes to traveling to neighboring towns and states in the Caribbean: Cartagena, Barranquilla, Santa Marta, Riohacha. With time, women looking to increase their incomes have gone further afield to cover virtually the entire country, from one market to the next. These displacements last an average of two months at a time, taking a toll on women’s families. Emelina “La Burgos” Reyes (49 years old) says: “I cry every time I have to leave, because what you want is to be at home with your family around you, to be with your husband and children, but necessity makes you go anyway.” In the women’s absence, grandparents, older brothers and husbands take on responsibility for looking after their homes and children.

During these tours, women follow their individual commercial plans although they travel in small groups. On average they can make up to US$200 per month, equivalent to the minimum wage in Colombia. For the most part, this money is sent back to Palenque in the form of remittances through informal channels. The sale of traditional sweets constitutes the primary source of income for the population, which is why the most important challenge they face is to create a more accessible market under more acceptable social and economic conditions.

We left to find out our future in Palenque

In 2006, PROCASUR and the Rural Microenterprise Development Programme (PADEMER) of the Colombian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, designed and executed the Learning Route Successful Colombian Rural Micro-enterprises.

Four experiences, out of more than 300 rural microenterprise associations served by the Programme in Colombia were selected to portray innovative and successful ways to respond to the main training and capacity building needs of micro-entrepreneurs in Palenque, namely improving the management and administration of their businesses, establishing them legally as micro or small enterprises, increasing sales and income, improving their production processes to better meet their clients’ demands, and supporting themselves within competitive and dynamic markets.
Maria Oliva Lizarazo, director of PADEM at the time, says: “The goal of this Route was to capitalize on what we had been doing to learn from the most successful entrepreneurial experiences of our beneficiaries. The Routes had an added value for us, that the lessons learned we had accumulated would be passed on to people and associations instead of being placed in a report or compiled in a book. This was consistent with our objective to promote a rural service market and to firmly introduce across the territory the ideas and tools that we were promoting under the project.”

PROCASUR facilitated the selection of the cases and the participatory systematization of their experiences and lessons learned. It also built capacity among their main stakeholders to transfer and share their experiences, and it designed an educational itinerary that allows for learning in the field among rural entrepreneurs.

Taking advantage of this local educational opportunity, 13 young women and men traveled for 10 days within the districts of Santander and Cauca, learning from four microenterprise experiences: the Association of Bocados (sweet pies) Producers of the Province of Vélez (ASOVELENOS); the Corporation for the Development of Silkworm Production in Cauca (CORSEDA); the Union of Associations of Women Producers of Ornamental Plants in Caldoncito; and the Association of Producers and Marketers of Panela (cane sugar) in Quilichao (ASOQUILICHAO).

The process of selecting and inviting participants was led by the Community Council of Palenque with technical support from PROCASUR, which provided some of the participant selection criteria. The Route began in Cartagena on 27 January 2007, and it represented a real change from the workshops and study tours done previously by some of the participants. For the first time the teachers were people from the rural, just like them, with problems that were very similar even if they were involved in a different line of work.

As noted by Luis Manuel Marrugo, a farmer and ethno-educator from Palenque: “The Route was a very effective learning strategy, especially for San Basilio de Palenque … our ancestral learning is all based on doing—essentially that is how we learn in Palenque, by watching and doing at the same time, that’s why it has had such an impact on participants because we were able to combine knowledge and information while at the same time having a chance to watch each process, while the team encouraged us to think about how to apply it usefully in our community.”

The workday on the Route started early. By 6:30 participants had already had breakfast and were on a bus that took them to rural communities and microenterprise associations, who gave them a warm welcome. The days passed quickly between demonstrations, conversations, joking and practical exercises. As the technical team facilitated, they discussed the positive, negative and useful aspects of the experiences visited. To encourage people to speak up, they formed pairs of rapporteurs who had to explain their findings to the others so that, as a group, they could find ways to adapt the lessons learned to the situation in Palenque.

**The have a plan for Palenque**

Bringing a concrete action plan back to Palenque was one of the commitments the participants took towards their community, therefore the Route facilitated the design of an innovation plan through group workshops. The first workshop was organized by the community and authorities of Palenque before the Route began, and it aimed to come up with evidence and proposals to answer two questions: What is holding Palenque back from overcoming poverty today? How is Palenque dealing with these problems? This first exercise led to taking a critical look at associative and business conditions before the Route, and the results were repeatedly revisited during the three subsequent workshops – at the beginning, in the middle and at the end – that took place during the trip to design the innovation plan, based on a format facilitated by PROCASUR.

The plan was titled *Improving the quality of life for the community of Palenque*, articulating the various stages of the process of sweets production, and it had three components: productive, commercial and organizational. Upon their return, the participants organized a day of dissemination and communication of the results of the Route to the community. Using photos, testimonies and documents, they shared their experience and listened to comments, which validated the plan as an inclusive strategy for the community as a whole, and not just for those who made the trip.
Returning home with new ideas and drive

Perhaps the primary impact of the Learning Route and of the US$3,000 the community got for their innovation plan was people’s motivation to work as a team and improve their quality of life.

The first step was to organize and give legal status to a community association with representatives of the various productive activities and economic opportunities present in the territory, yielding a scheme that, as explained by Manuel Pérez, has “three axes: ethno-tourism, sweet production, and farming”.

The leadership of this enormous challenge was taken on by a small number of participants, with important support from the Community Council, the Jorge Artel Corporation and the technical team from the Route. Invitations to join the association were made on an individual basis, evaluating each candidate’s commitment and potential contribution. Based on this process, and with a membership of 38 men and women, ASOPRODUCE was born. A first hypothesis on which the Route methodology is based was thus validated – just six months after the Route, the 13 participants had already mobilized other 25 people through their knowledge and spirit.

Contracting ASOQUILICHAO, the panela producers that host them during the Route, to assist in the process of setting up and legalizing the association clearly facilitated this achievement.

Among the meetings, exchanges and knowledge transfers motivated by the Route, the most important is the dialogue between ASOQUILICHAO and ASOPRODUCE. Elizer Popo and Luz Mary Tolosa, panela [Demerara sugar] makers and leaders, provided technical assistance for giving legal status to the association.

After analyzing the various legal forms available, the Palenqueros opted to set up a producers’ association, reviewing the bylaws and regulations of other microenterprises and adapting them to their needs.

These and other legal and administrative instruments saved them time and money. According to José Luis Samper: “Something that helped us a lot were the Aswelehos bylaws, which their legal representative gave us: that facilitated things greatly. So it was easy to get the administrative and legal matters organized for start-up.”

Don Roso Balanto, then president of ASOQUILICHAO, shows the other side of the coin in a letter he wrote to PROCASUR after taking part in the implementation of the innovation plan: “Being able to support you in Palenque after having received you into our sugar mills and homes allowed us to be part of a beautiful story of solidarity with our Afro-Colombian brothers”.

Adds Luz Mary: “it was very important to realize the value of the experience we acquired through our own organizational process and to understand that it is even more valuable to help others get ahead, just as you have done”.

The drive to improve translated into new members fresh resources an new ideas. The innovation plan was mainly oriented towards sweets production, farming and some ethno-tourism. Starting from ethno-tourism, we were already looking at some artisanal marketing initiatives: says Manuel. Then, along with marketing artisanal crafts and music, other things were included, such as setting up restaurants with traditional dishes.

Less than nine months after finishing the Route and implementing their innovation plan, participants had increased their monthly incomes through higher sales in the community and on the Cartagena market, where they adopted a territorial approach to sales, as does ASPROLESO, each taking a zone and seeking a brand and new types of products that would identify them. This allowed them to increase and standardize their prices. The sweet vendors estimate that their incomes have risen 35 per cent and, even more important to them, they have improved their quality of life. Their dream of working and spending more time with their children, partners and communities is becoming close to reality.

A Learning Route is a continuous process of in the field training that seeks to broaden and diversify the markets of rural technical services, including and valuing the best experiences and knowledge of institutions, associations, communities and rural families. Each Route is organized thematically around experiences, case studies and best practices on innovative rural and local development in which local actors are become trainers. Through workshops, interviews, conversations and other activities in the field, the Route generates a space for individual and collective learning for visitors and hosts. This knowledge takes form in a concrete innovation plan.

Unlike other methods for knowledge management, the Learning Route facilitates scaling up of innovations and best practices through meetings among peers on the terrain where these practices originate. This allows stakeholders to appropriate the keys to their own successes and failures, and to strengthen their pedagogical skills to enable them to participate in the rural knowledge market. To this end, during the preparation phase the Route carried out a series of workshops together with the selected rural micro-enterprises to train and strengthen local talents, where by means of practical exercises they could design and practice the training modules that they would then offer.
A few lessons learnt in the process

Nearly three years since the Route, and following several exchanges with leaders of local associations, today we can identify and share some achievements that can be ascribed to the Learning Route, which, along with the participation of other actors, made it possible to activate and trigger change and innovation benefiting the population of Palenque.

When analysing the impact, we need to look at all the actions that the Route strategy encompasses, from identifying the best experiences (contributing key relevant knowledge), recording success stories (delivering ways of formalizing experiences), improving local capacity to share and transfer relevant learning that can be replicated (pedagogy), giving market space and value to local capacity (charging for training services), orienting the practical value of the knowledge and capacity acquired (designing an innovation plan) and transforming associations and communities by incorporating innovative solutions to improve their living conditions (implementing an innovation plan and multiplying benefits among their members).

To grasp this story in its entirety we need to understand the significance of this experience for the host talents, those involved in the “success stories”, who became trainers and educators during the Route and technical assistants for the community of Palenque. Peer-to-peer training is more effective because it utilizes shared codes and teaches by example and through practice – indeed, adult entrepreneurs require concrete solutions. Those who went on this Route were especially motivated by the fact of seeing themselves reflected in others, as we heard from Maria de Jesus Salgado Julio, a young sweet producer and vendor: “When we arrived at ASOQUILICHAO, Don Roso talked to us, and I liked his speech very much because it led us to conclude that, yes, this is happening to us too… I don’t know if it was because he was dark-skinned like us, but it made us reflect and realize that we were wasting time by not organizing”.

We capitalize on public and private investment when we build human capital and local knowledge markets. The Route was based on the most successful rural initiatives under the PADEMER project, which invested in systematizing these experiences and strengthening the pedagogical capabilities of their protagonists to enable them to market these experiences. In the words of Pola Jimenez, spokesperson for ASOQUILICHAO: “Like any successful enterprise, we have always received lots of visits, but we just received them and answered their questions. With the Route we realized how much we knew, and that we could organize our knowledge and pass it on to others with better results. Now we have different workshop and practical exercise programs depending on what our visitors are interested in, and we charge a fee of 10 dollars a day per person, whereas before we didn’t charge anything. We can also offer accommodation and meals. We call all this process “knowledge routes...”.

Designing “living” learning tours at the closure stage of rural development projects helps to transfer the skills and technologies that they promote and to reduce the cost of future investments, generating a supply of knowledge that is competitive and effective when there are no subsidies available. From the outset, the Route has been adapted and used by different national and foreign stakeholders. According to the host talents, by technically improving their supply of knowledge they have increased the number of visits and justified the increase in the price they charge for each visitor, giving rise to a new source of income, which comes from selling training and technical assistance services. PROCASUR has facilitated the implementation of this Route another four times.

There is a two-fold challenge here. First, how to provide incentives for market-driven knowledge management in the context of particularly successful experiences. Second, how to promote strategic alliances among experiences that have a complementary pedagogical value, so as to provide a comprehensive response to complex capacity building needs. PROCASUR and other partners are exploring solutions to this, by linking up grassroots organizations into innovation alliances through the Learning Routes and through an on-line platform serving rural development projects and their beneficiaries, where people can offer or demand technical assistance and training. In the case of Colombia and Bolivia, the inventory of rural talents has already identified 300 grassroots organizations (http://www.talentosrurales.org/).

Finally, we need to find partners for certifying the competencies of local talents, in order to open new opportunities in the rural knowledge market for them. As Luz Dary Daza, an artisan and director of CORSEDA, puts it: “The Route showed me that you need to take a qualitative leap. Every year a university would invite me to teach weaving with fibres from plants, roots and soil. They paid my travel costs and food, but nothing more. This year when I received the invitation I asked them to pay me a fee, and the university said they couldn’t pay me because I didn’t have a degree. So I said I was sorry, but I was very busy and couldn’t participate this year. Three days later they called back and said they would pay what I asked for. I was very happy, because I love working with young people”.

Looking at the local with women eyes

Learning routes allow Latin American women in decision making to gain knowledge about successful ways of engendering public affairs.

“By getting to know what other women politicians were doing, I learnt that we women can turn public affairs into a fairer and more efficient space”. Rebeca Rojas, councilwoman at the Peruvian municipality of Tarma, visited in 2008 successful experiences in local administration with gender perspective in Bolivia and Ecuador, in the framework of the Learning Route organized by INSTRAW and PROCASUR.

Following a week of trips, visits, conversations – and confessions- at airport waiting rooms, Rebeca returned to Tarma renewed, in the most literal sense of the term: she came back home with a lot of enthusiasm and many ideas to fulfill her role as local administrator. “We learnt to recognize our different ways of doing politics, she says. One of the main results of her participation in the Route was the elaboration of an Equality Plan for the municipality. For this purpose she prepared a diagnosis of the specific problems and needs of women in Tarma and, later, sought alliances in order to achieve wide support among their colleagues in the Council.

Unity is strength. This is one of the certainties that Rebeca brought with her from the Route, after getting to know the work of the Asociaciones de Mujeres Municipalistas (Associations of Councilwomen) from AMUME, AMJUPRE and ACOBOL in Bolivia, and the local policies of equity and social integration in the Municipalities of Cuenca and Nabón in Ecuador. And thus, one of the main axes of her Plan was the promotion of women’s associationism. As a result, she promoted the creation of the Dialogue Table of Women, at municipal level in 2008; the Association of Women in Politics of the Tarma Province, in 2008; the Network of Women Authorities in the Junin Region, in 2009, and the association of these bodies into the National Network of Women Authorities (Red Nacional de Mujeres Autoridades) (RENEAM). Around 1500 women take part in these associations.

Since her return, Rebeca has organized various local and regional seminars for women authorities from Tarma, Junin and at national level, as well as awareness and informative seminars on citizens’ rights. “We have to train women –she explains-, give them knowledge and tools for them to be able to say what they think, to conquer the spaces that belong to them and to stop being just electoral tools in the hands of men”.

Including women into the productive sphere has been another area of work. Rebeca has been continuously encouraging the creation of women productive associations. “There is still a lot to be done” –she says- but the Route has proven to be an extraordinary catalytic tool for change”.

The Tarma province is located over 3,000 m.s.l. in the Peruvian highlands. Population: 51.3% are women, 48.7%, men.

Participants of Learning Routes commit themselves to prepare an innovation plan for implementation based on the lessons learnt during the journey. Rebeca’s Plan focuses on engendering decision making in the Tarma province.

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Sergio Lazo, Manager of “Mundo Rural Sustentable”, a consulting firm, took part in a Learning Route to gain knowledge on how to access specialized coffee markets. In the Peruvian province of Moyobamba, many small producers had made certification efforts to add value to their crops but the costs of this process did not compensate the benefits. The certified coffee was being sold at local markets, at prices established by wholesalers, with no gains.

During his participation in the Route “Access of Poor Rural Territories to Dynamic Markets in Ecuador and Peru”, organized by PROCASUR in 2007, he was able to learn about the innovative experience of Café Femenino, the product of a cooperative of peasant women in the Peruvian forest that sells to the most exclusive markets thanks to a ingenious brand and a strict quality control process.

Sergio prepared an innovative action plan to disseminate confidence among members of the cooperative Frutos de Selva, based on a sophisticated system of georeference, classification and selection of the best coffees in the zone in order to offer them to the most discerning tastes in the planet.

The plan received the award for the Best Innovation Plan in the Route, in which 25 technicians and experts from several countries took part. The award — co-funding of the plan, estimated in 6000 dollars— allowed its implementation.

It was not long until they saw the results. “Exporting two containers and having economic movement in Fruto de Selva bank account for the 2008 campaign, meant opening the doors to receive loans at very low interest rates from international cooperation banks, which helped the replenishment of the cooperative funds”, Sergio explains. Besides, it allowed commercializing through negotiated sales, generating additional incomes up to 20 dollars per quintal for 444 producers’ families.

At the organizational level, the training of Sergio in the Route and the development of the innovation have improved the delivery of the services offered by the consultancy firm towards producers associations. In fact, the firm has created a new axis that articulates the work with producers’ associations in order to promote their access to dynamic markets.

Mundo Rural Sustentable (MRS) (Sustainable Rural World) is a Peruvian civil association of private law specialized in fostering rural development through the transfer of technological information and investigation-action. It facilitates knowledge management processes, environmental management, human development and citizens participation, including value change, gender equity, intercultural, associativity and social inclusion focuses; all these activities are being performed in order to generate changes in favour of the development of sustainable production

The Coffee Producers Association FRUTOS DE SELVA has more than 217 members that cultivate 480 hectares of coffee, producing 6,000 quintals per year. It is a legal entity and its coffee producers are concentrated in the District of Sorito, in the Peruvian Province of Moyobamba.
Learning business from the excluded

Experts in rural finance from Latin America and Africa learnt from successful Self Help Groups models working in India and Bangladesh.

Self Help Groups created by informal workers in India’s and Bangladesh inspired new ideas in Mojisola Mobolaji, a Nigerian expert in microfinance and director of Development Initiatives Network. It was a proved and effective system for promoting access to financial education programs and to credit for groups of people lacking for opportunities in her own country.

Participants of Learning Routes commit themselves to prepare an innovation plan for implementation based on the lessons learnt during the journey. Mojisola’s plan was to adapt the Self Help Groups’ model and its rural finance education system to the reality of her country.

And thus, from the consulting institution that she leads, Mojisola promoted the creation of financial self help groups among women micro entrepreneurs, as well training courses. In this way, these women will receive training and, at the same time, will be able to replicate the lessons learnt in their own communities.

More than two hundred women traders, artisans and small scale agricultural producers have received training in financial administration, savings and investment, credit systems and risk management in less than a year. Outcomes of this training program have been multiplied by five thanks to a training for trainers program, through which a total 1,000 workers have been trained so far.

Once the training period has concluded, participants are encouraged to continue using the Self Help Groups as a support network to achieve the most important financial goals. A tool called Progress Table have been developed to follow up of this process, through this tool the groups can visualize their progresses and challenges at short and medium term.

Other innovation directly related with the experience of the Route to Learning has been the development of a training manual for financial Self Help Groups.

Mojisola Mobolaji recognizes that “those that have gone through this type of financial training have been able to start new business, expand their existing businesses, obtain loans from micro financial Banks, improve savings, invest in shares and, in general, demonstrate a better understanding of what to do to produce better results from their money at short and long term.”

The Development Initiatives Network, Nigeria, works in the expansion of access to financial services and financial inclusion, through the financial education of workers from the informal sector; it aims at achieving changes in practices and services of formal financial institutions.

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ICTs and rural financial markets

Technology helps to reduce transaction costs of rural financial services everywhere

Graciela Quezada, manager at Jardín de Azuayo Savings and Credit Cooperative, Ecuador, discovered in Africa how to reduce by half the cost of telephonic financial transactions. Her findings have already allowed the cooperative members savings for over 120 000 dollars.

The experiences in Sudafrieca, Malawi and Uganda allowed her to address one of the main challenges of her organization: the high cost of financial transactions in rural zones.

“In the route, we identified different alternatives for the service, and we decided to use a shorter number with an integrator,” Graciela explains.

By simply change an existing product for telephonic financial transactions, called j4Movil, we could reduce by half (from 10 to 6 Dollars) transactions costs of a standard credit transaction.

“Today the cooperative covers the costs, substantially reduced and the service is cost-free for the members. If we consider an average of 30 thousand annual credit transactions, this means an annual saving of USD 120 000 for the benefit of our clients”, Graciela explains.

“Back in Ecuador, we analyzed the change and defined the most convenient technological alternatives, negotiating with supplying companies and institutions and developing the required technological platforms for its implementation. We also started training the members of the cooperative in the use of new ITCs.”

Participants of Learning Routes commit themselves to prepare an innovation plan for implementation based on the lessons learnt during the journey. Graziela’s plan was a catalytic for the Jardín de Azuayo Cooperative, as it needed an organizational transformation. The innovation was an opportunity to install a new ad hoc service for the financial needs and characteristics of their users.

Another result from the Route was the creation in the cooperative of a unit for permanent investigation, training and incorporation of new services and products, where technological innovations play a main role. Likewise, they have increased resources to follow up and evaluate the efficiency and efficacy of delivered products and services.

The Cooperative Jardín de Azuayo (Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito Jardín Azuayo) is a social and financial institution located in the Coast, Sierra and Eastern zone in Ecuador. It has 25 offices and more than 110 000 members. Its working strategy includes training processes, generation of opportunities from each community and the consolidation of their organizations as integrated components of access to financial services.

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‘Learning routes’: sharing knowledge about market access in Ecuador and Peru

Sharing, discussing and learning from successful and less successful experiences is the ultimate goal of all learning organizations. Since 2001, with the support of IFAD, a Latin American training organization specialized in rural development has promoted an innovative learning approach known as ‘learning routes’. Participants of a learning route on market access in poor rural territories visited the business enterprises of five associations in Ecuador and Peru and took valuable lessons back to their own activities and communities.

Learning routes, known in Latin America as rutas de aprendizaje, bring together a multidisciplinary group of rural development workers and partners in a series of thematic visits to communities that have faced development challenges.

The learning routes are executed by the Regional Programme for Rural Development Training (PROCASUR) – a Latin American training organization specialized in building capacities for rural development – and cofinanced by IFAD. The routes involve visits to rural development projects to learn about the struggles and successes small entrepreneurs encounter when trying to start their businesses and make them successful. This approach is enriching both to the visitors – mainly development professionals of various disciplines, community leaders and policymakers – and their hosts, and provides opportunities for discussion and collective analysis. Themes of learning routes have included ecotourism, rural microenterprises, rural microfinance and local development.

“The learning routes have been designed to fill a vacuum of knowledge among development practitioners and policymakers who have not yet found the answer to many basic development questions,” says Ariel Halpern, coordinator of the learning route project at PROCASUR.

Simple questions, complex answers
In March 2007, a learning route on Rural Poor Territories and Successful Access to Dynamic Markets included visits to five small-scale
businesses in poor rural communities in Ecuador and Peru. The 18 participants from eight countries included producers’ representatives, development workers, market experts and members of the communities.

The aim of the route was to try to determine which factors make or break a poor rural producer’s business.

“There are no simple answers,” says Nuria Felipe Soria, IFAD’s regional communication officer for Latin America and the Caribbean and a participant in the route. “There are many variables, including management capacities, capacity for innovation, leadership styles and market opportunities, that determine how successful a small business will be. The learning routes programme understands this complexity, and that is why it takes a multidisciplinary approach to seeking answers and knowledge.”

Participants in the market access learning route visited the businesses of five rural associations:

- **Quesinor**, a cheese-processing union of small producers’ associations in the sierra norte of Ecuador
- **Jambi Kiwa**, an association of traditional indigenous medicinal plant growers in Riobamba, at the foot of the Chimborazo volcano in central Ecuador
- **CACH**, an association of weavers and producers of artisanal handicrafts in rural areas of Chordeleg, in southern Ecuador
- **Café Femenino**, an association of women coffee growers in Agua Azul, in the department of Cajamarca in Peru
- **ACOPAGRO**, an association of cocoa producers located in the valley of Huallaga Central, in the jungle highlands of north-eastern Peru

**Learning from success – and from failure**

Participants studied the successes and failures of the enterprises in the areas of markets and marketing opportunities, organization and leadership, technology and innovation, and business management.

One of the discussions among the participants centred on the opportunities and constraints of fair trade markets. Four out of five of the communities on the learning route chose to focus almost exclusively on international organic and fair trade markets without considering local markets. This strategy has its benefits but also its risks.

Fair trade markets usually offer higher prices, which translate into higher profit margins and can absorb small production volumes, unlike traditional markets. Small-scale Latin-American producers
are taking advantage of the current situation on global markets, even though it is highly unstable. However, the fair trade market is starting to reach the saturation point because of its popularity and the continual entrance onto the market of small producers from all over the world.

**Recommendations for success**

Based on their observations and interaction with members of the five associations, the participants developed several recommendations.

*Markets and marketing opportunities:* Small rural producers should diversify their markets rather than earmark all of their production for sale on the international solidarity market. One solution is to increase production to cater to a range of markets instead of only one, even though it may be the most attractive.

*Organization and leadership:* Businesses that revolve around a specific product or skill should be established by the producers themselves. If a number of members are not producers, there should be mechanisms in place to ensure that the contribution of non-producers and producers to the business is equivalent.

*Technology and innovation:* Many of the businesses analysed operate in markets that are not yet fully formed and are not very demanding or competitive, as in the case of the producers of coffee and handicrafts for export. For the others, innovation is an essential way of making a difference.

*Business management:* Before starting a business, no matter how small, it is necessary to develop a strategic plan and an operational plan, and then develop mechanisms for implementing the strategy.

**Taking the lessons home**

During interviews at the completion of the route, participants indicated that the end of the route was actually just the beginning for them and their organizations.

Participant Cesar Visarea is a capacity-building specialist at Consejo de Desarrollo de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos de Ecuador (CODENPE) in Ecuador. CODENPE is a public institution whose role is to promote the social, economic and cultural development of indigenous identities and peoples of Ecuador.

“I’m particularly interested in strengthening the capacity of these communities,” he said. “This route is a great opportunity for me to learn about these experiences and about opportunities in accessing markets, so that I can then share this knowledge with the communities we work with. I was pleased to see that external partners and donors played an important role in stimulating the communities to outfit themselves and overcome market access difficulties. I think the methodology of the route is excellent, and I would like to develop similar thematic routes in Ecuador on specific themes such as how fair trade and organic markets, bio-certification and quality requisites function. This is a work plan I’m taking away with me.”

Participant Ana Lucia Palaquabay, a financial advisor for Banco Solidario in Ecuador, said she learned a lot about what needs to be done and what should not be done in business management.
“I work in a bank that provides credit to small rural producers,” she said. “For me, this route is an excellent opportunity to better understand the realities of living in poor rural communities, and the challenges and difficulties poor people face when starting their own businesses.”

Flor Salazar, a weaving teacher at the Fundación ChoCho in Chile works with indigenous Mapuche women, helping them develop their weaving skills and textile designs.

“I’m very interested in reconciling tradition and innovation in our textile production to open up new markets for our products,” she said. “I see this route as a chance to learn how to do this. What I learned here is how other organizations with similar activities have dealt with accessing new markets, which is my main focus at present. I will take home with me a lot of what I have seen in these last 10 days.”

Jesús A. Pérez, a rural development expert at the Programme for the Economic Development of the Dry Region in Nicaragua, said that the main lesson he learned was how complex and difficult it is to give the correct support to people in their fight against poverty.

“As a rural development expert I work with poor farmers in the dry region of Nicaragua. I came to this route to learn about product innovation and how to introduce changes in business management. In my country, there are families that have been producing the same product in the same way for generations, and it’s important to me to be able to provide them with new options.”

Louise McDonald, IFAD’s country programme manager for Swaziland, said the route was a valuable opportunity to experience and learn about enterprise development and market access in another region.

“A significant difference between group formation in the two regions is the original purpose,” she said. “In Latin America most groups were formed around issues of culture and tradition and have since turned into enterprises. The organizational and planning skills of these groups were impressive to say the least – even over large distances – and our region, Eastern and Southern Africa, could benefit from some of the lessons learned here.”

Since 2002, a total of 40 learning routes have been implemented in six Latin American countries, and in 2007 some transcontinental routes were added. At the end of 2007, Asian and African development experts visited 15 successful microfinance projects in Latin America. In June 2008, the same experience was carried out in Africa.

KEY FACTS
Regional Programme for Rural Development Training (PROCASUR)
Total cost: US$1.5 million
IFAD grant: US$900,000
Cofinancing: US$400,000
participants in the programme and
US$200,000 PROCASUR
Duration: 3 years
Geographical area: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Uruguay
Directly benefiting: 200 field technicians, 60 farmers associations and 400 rural organizations
Partners: IFAD projects in the region, farmers’ associations and rural organizations
Status: ongoing

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LINKS
IFAD in Latin America and the Caribbean
http://www.ifad.org/operations/projects/
regions/pl/index.htm

Learning route on market access
http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/english/
regions/americas/rutas/index.htm

PROCASUR
www.procaser.org/fida

Stories from the field
http://www.ifad.org/story/index.htm

Building a poverty-free world
IFAD was created 30 years ago to tackle rural poverty, a key consequence of the droughts and famines of the early 1970s. Since 1978, IFAD has invested more than US$10 billion in low-interest loans and grants that have helped over 300 million very poor rural women and men increase their incomes and provide for their families.

IFAD is an international financial institution and a specialized United Nations agency. It is a global partnership of OECD, OPEC and other developing countries. Today, IFAD supports more than 200 programmes and projects in 84 developing countries.
Looking at the local with women eyes

Learning routes allow Latin American women in decision making to gain knowledge about successful ways of engendering public affairs

“By getting to know what other women politicians were doing, I learnt that we women can turn public affairs into a fairer and more efficient space”. Rebeca Rojas, councilwoman at the Peruvian municipality of Tarma, visited in 2008 successful experiences in local administration with gender perspective in Bolivia and Ecuador, in the framework of the Learning Route organized by INSTRAW and PROCASUR.

Following a week of trips, visits, conversations – and confessions- at airport waiting rooms, Rebeca returned to Tarma renewed, in the most literal sense of the term: she came back home with a lot of enthusiasm and many ideas to fulfill her role as local administrator. “We learnt to recognize our different ways of doing politics, she says.

One of the main results of her participation in the Route was the elaboration of an Equality Plan for the municipality. For this purpose she prepared a diagnosis of the specific problems and needs of women in Tarma and, later, sought alliances in order to achieve wide support among their colleagues in the Council.

Unity is strength. This is one of the certainties that Rebeca brought with her from the Route, after getting to know the work of the Asociaciones de Mujeres Municipalistas (Associations of Councilwomen) from AMUME, AMJUPRE and ACOBOL in Bolivia, and the local policies of equity and social integration in the Municipalities of Cuenca and Nabón in Ecuador. And thus, one of the main axis of her Plan was the promotion of women’s associationism. As a result, she promoted the creation of the Dialogue Table of Women, at municipal level in 2008; the Association of Women in Politics of the Tarma Province, in 2008; the Network of Women Authorities in the Junin Region, in 2009, and the association of these bodies into the National Network of Women Authorities (Red Nacional de Mujeres Autoridades) (RENAMA). Around 1500 women take part in these associations.

Since her return, Rebeca has organized various local and regional seminars for women authorities from Tarma, Junin and at national level, as well as awareness and informative seminars on citizens’ rights. “We have to train women –she explains-, give them knowledge and tools for them to be able to say what they think, to conquer the spaces that belong to them and to stop being just electoral tools in the hands of men”.

Including women into the productive sphere has been another area of work. Rebeca has been continuously encouraging the creation of women productive associations. “There is still a lot to be done” –she says– but the Route has proven to be an extraordinary catalytic tool for change”.

The Tarma province is located over 3,000 m.a.s.l. in the Peruvian highlands. Population: 51.3% are women, 48.7%, men.

Participants of Learning Routes commit themselves to prepare an innovation plan for implementation based on the lessons learnt during the journey. Rebeca’s Plan focuses on engendering decisionmaking in the Tarma province.

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A special coffee, granted

Georeferencing technologies and origin certification open the doors to selected markets for small producers in the Peruvian forest

Sergio Lazo, Manager of “Mundo Rural Sustentable”, a consulting firm, took part in a Learning Route to gain knowledge on how to access specialized coffee markets. In the Peruvian province of Moyobamba, many small producers had made certification efforts to add value to their crops but the costs of this process did not compensate the benefits. The certified coffee was being sold at local markets, at prices established by wholesalers, with no gains.

During his participation in the Route “Access of Poor Rural Territories to Dynamic Markets in Ecuador and Peru”, organized by PROCASUR in 2007, he was able to learn about the innovative experience of Café Femenino, the product of a cooperative of peasant women in the Peruvian forest that sells to the most exclusive markets thanks to an ingenious brand and a strict quality control process.

Sergio prepared an innovative action plan to disseminate confidence among members of the cooperative Frutos de Selva, based on a sophisticated system of georeference, classification and selection of the best coffees in the zone in order to offer them to the most discerning tastes in the planet.

The plan received the award for the Best Innovation Plan in the Route, in which 25 technicians and experts from several countries took part. The award — co-funding of the plan, estimated in 6000 dollars— allowed its implementation.

It was not long until they saw the results. “Exporting two containers and having economic movement in Fruto de Selva bank account for the 2008 campaign, meant opening the doors to receive loans at very low interest rates from international cooperation banks, which helped the replenishment of the cooperative funds”, Sergio explains. Besides, it allowed commercializing through negotiated sales, generating additional incomes up to 20 dollars per quintal for 444 producers’ families.

At the organizational level, the training of Sergio in the Route and the development of the innovation have improved the delivery of the services offered by the consultancy firm towards producers associations. In fact, the firm has created a new axis that articulates the work with producers’ associations in order to promote their access to dynamic markets.

Mundo Rural Sustentable (MRS) (Sustainable Rural World) is a Peruvian civil association of private law specialized in fostering rural development through the transfer of technological information and investigation-action. It facilitates knowledge management processes, environmental management, human development and citizens participation, including value change, gender equity, intercultural, associativity and social inclusion focuses; all these activities are being performed in order to generate changes in favour of the development of sustainable production (www.mundoruralasustentable.org).

The Coffee Producers Association FRUTOS DE SELVA has more than 217 members that cultivate 480 hectares of coffee, producing 6,000 quintals per year. It is a legal entity and its coffee producers are concentrated in the District of Soritó, in the Peruvian Province of Moyobamba.