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## Final Performance Evaluation of the Gender Component of *PROTIERRA*:

### Conflict Resolution on Land and Natural Resources: Afro-Colombian Women's Leadership for Land Tenure in the Middle and Lower Atrato, Choco

**August 2014**

This evaluation was made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this evaluation are the sole responsibility of its authors Andres Gordillo, Paola Molina, Francisco Quiroz, Paola Benitez, Keri Culver and Management Systems International, Inc., and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

# FINAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF THE GENDER COMPONENT OF PROTIERRA

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# CONTENTS

- Acronyms ..... i**
- Executive Summary ..... ii**
- Performance Evaluation: PROTIERRA ..... 1**
  - Evaluation purpose and evaluation questions ..... 1
  - Program background ..... 2
  - Evaluation design, methods and limitations..... 4
- Findings and Conclusions ..... 7**
  - Question 1: Conflict resolution, men and women..... 7
    - Findings ..... 7
    - Conclusions ..... 12
  - Question 2: Women’s leadership ..... 13
    - Findings ..... 13
    - Conclusions ..... 15
  - Question 3: PROTIERRA’s Gender Model ..... 15
    - Findings ..... 16
    - Conclusions ..... 18
  - Question 4: Behaviors and attitudes about gender ..... 19
    - Findings ..... 19
    - Conclusions ..... 22
  - Question 5: Community land management and women ..... 22
    - Findings ..... 22
    - Conclusions ..... 25
- Recommendations ..... 25**
  - Keep what works ..... 25
  - Lessons learned..... 26
  - Build on success ..... 27

# ACRONYMS

ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
ACIA	Integrated Peasant Association of the Atrato
CODECHOCO	Corporación Autónoma Regional para el Desarrollo Sostenible del Chocó
COCOMACIA	Community Council of the Integrated Farmers Association of the Atrato
COCOMASUR	Community Council of Tool River, Southern Coastal Zone of Acandí
COCOMAUNGUIA	Community Council of the Lower Atrato of Unguía
GOC	Government of Colombia
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
INCODER	Colombian Institute for Rural Development
INCORA	Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

***Note on the use of conventions:*** This report uses the standard convention of italicizing words in Spanish, (e.g., *veredas* or *campesinos*), with the exception of proper nouns (e.g., Banca de Oportunidades.) A second convention involves the capitalization of acronyms that have become words, such as the names of organizations, are spelled with only the initial letter capitalized (e.g., Cocomacia, Cocomaunguía, etc.) These are included in the Acronyms list but used as words in the report text.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## EVALUATION PURPOSE AND FOCUS

This report presents the external final performance evaluation of the gender component of the PROTIERRA – Conflict Resolution on Land and Natural Resources: Afro-Colombian Women Leadership for Land Tenure in the Middle and Lower Atrato, Chocó, implemented by Mercy Corps since June 2011. PROTIERRA seeks to address root causes of land and resource conflicts by strengthening Afro-Colombian community capacities to peacefully manage conflict; ensuring local ownership of land and conflict mediation; and increasing women’s participation. In late 2013 PROTIERRA received an additional infusion of \$500,000 from USAID’s Women’s Leadership Incentive Fund to enhance women’s empowerment and leadership components. The new program trained women in skills for land conflict resolution, tenure security and leadership.

USAID/Colombia requested a performance evaluation that focused on activities related to the latter funding, but took into account all PROTIERRA activities to date.

## DESIGN, METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

The evaluation was conducted with qualitative and quantitative methods to identify the project’s effects on gender, women’s empowerment, and land tenure and use. Mercy Corps and USAID were deeply involved in the evaluation design, which includes wide community participation in its execution. Methods included outcome mapping, focus groups, observation, in-depth interviews, case studies and a quantitative survey.

The short duration of the current pilot, less than a year, allowed little time for mature results on changes sought in deep-rooted gender norms. As a result, outcomes are less robust than might be possible with a longer program. Since access to Afro-Colombian communities is fully determined by the Community Councils, there were limitations on access to individuals whose views may have substantially differed. The pilot nature of the intervention and small sample of participating communities limits the external validity of the report’s conclusions.

## KEY EVALUATION RESULTS

### *Conflict resolution*

Training users in Global Positioning System (GPS) technology’s quantifiable measurements has empowered Afro-Colombians, including women, to manage land-related conflicts within and between communities, and with local landowners. Other training included alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and gender and new masculinities. Program participants, including many women, use the new skills to map internal and external boundaries, claim their collective territory before the state and other parties, and resolve conflicts through dialogue. The model for conflict resolution appears to enhance the communities’ own traditions for mediation, and add elements that make a significant difference, although the GPS practice may not yet be fully accepted when administered locally. More widely targeting awareness may help reduce this challenge. Similar approaches to using GPS technology should be considered in programs facing similar challenges in land management.

Council respondents lauded Mercy Corps for customizing activities for locally defined needs and interests. Respondents felt their needs were met in the complex area of land tenure at a crucial time in the life of the communities. Mercy Corps' model and standards in this area should be considered for other areas with ethnic and other hard-to-reach communities, while final results the PROTIERRA experience are maturing.

### ***Equitable participation***

Including women in the trainings related to land rights, titling and use was key to help changing culturally rooted gender stereotypes. In discourse, community members of both sexes agree that women's participation is valuable and important. This contrasts with traditional gender roles that privilege men for tasks in public spaces and women for tasks within the home. However, beyond discourse, actual behaviors are slower to change, particularly among the male community leaders present for the evaluation's focus groups.

Mestizos, women, and local council respondents made their voices heard in the evaluation: community goods, including international development projects, should be available to all. While implementers in these communities need to build working relationships with gatekeepers, there is a parallel need to ensure that programming does not exacerbate discrimination or exclusion. Consider out-groups (geographic, ethnic, age-based, or other) in design decisions and work with gatekeepers to ensure inclusion when working in such community-based programming.

### ***Gender model and replicability***

Mercy Corps has successfully adapted its land conflict resolution model to focus on gender. Significant change in these deep-seated cultural norms will require sustained effort. In the future, implementers should develop and test a comprehensive theory of change around gender, making explicit the dimensions of change sought, the treatments and resources necessary and the assumptions and resistance that are likely to present obstacles. Approaches should be embedded in themes vital to communities (land is certainly one, as is the theme of livelihoods) and must be adapted to local circumstances.

The main barrier to women's leadership in community processes remains men's reluctance to relinquish space for women's full participation. The threat such changes represent must be addressed over time and with attention to likely backlash from in-groups. Include in-group reactions, such as men's resistance, as an integral part of program design and theory of change to empower out-groups.

Gender roles and relationships are already changing in communities like these. PROTIERRA took advantage of some participants' greater openness to change by bringing women heads of households and existing female leaders on board. Other initiatives should similarly position themselves. Women with new usufruct rights were also motivated to continue their participation and insist on space in community decision-making. Incentivize students, activists, leaders, women heads of households, and other progressive members of such communities to lead the way to acceptance of changed gender roles.

Initiatives related to GPS-supported land-management improvements appear worth replicating, although more time may be needed for local practitioners to be fully respected. Similarly, although initial results of gender-based focus of the past year are promising, more time is needed to determine if they are good targets for replication.

# PERFORMANCE EVALUATION: PROTIERRA

## Evaluation purpose and evaluation questions

### *Evaluation Purpose*

The present study presents the results of the performance evaluation of the gender component of the Program entitled “PROTIERRA: Conflict Resolution on Land and Natural Resources: Afro-Colombian Women Leadership for Land Tenure in the Middle and Lower Atrato,” implemented by Mercy Corps, with funding from USAID Women’s Leadership Incentive Fund. The evaluation used qualitative and quantitative methods to identify project results on gender issues, women’s empowerment, land tenure and land use. Mercy Corps’ design and implementation process were also examined.

The evaluation was conducted during the approximately six months in which the Women’s Leadership Incentive Funds were put to use. However, Mercy Corps has worked with these Community Councils for over four years. This evaluation focuses on the implementation of the USAID award funds, with its specific objectives on generating empowerment and leadership among women beneficiaries. The evaluation also took into consideration the activities carried out prior to this funding, in order to understand the sum of effects of the interventions.

The evaluation looked at accountability and learning. For accountability, the team examined the project design and implementation relative to the USAID cooperative agreement. The evaluation also examined questions of learning for development effectiveness, a process that included the use of participatory methods. The goal was to understand issues around gender, land tenure and land use from participants’ perspectives, identify obstacles, and propose solutions.

### *Audience and Intended uses*

The audience of the Performance Evaluation final report includes:

- USAID’s Office of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Bureau for Economic Growth, Education and Environment;
- The Ethnic Communities Unit of the Office of Vulnerable Populations, USAID/Colombia;
- Embassy and USAID/Colombia Gender Working Groups; Mercy Corps; and
- Local beneficiary community organizations and Afro-Colombian Community Councils.

The evaluation findings identify best practices and lessons learned in the current programming, to be used in any replication of similar programming elsewhere for wider Mission and USAID audiences. At the same time, the evaluation can be used to provide targeted inputs to Mercy Corps to improve processes and to inform beneficiaries of progress toward goals.

### *Evaluation Questions*

The evaluation was based on the following questions from the evaluation SOW (Annex VI):

1. To what extent was the project successful in ADR-based conflict resolution, including the active participation of both women and men?

2. To what extent was the project successful in increasing women's participation and leadership in land use planning, decision-making and resolution?
3. What is the gender model in the program, and does it show promise for scale-up/replication? (It may also be necessary to document variations on the model by region/Afro-Colombian Council)
4. Were the PROTIERRA interventions (a) necessary and (b) sufficient to change female beneficiaries' behaviors and participation, and males' attitudes about women's participation? Why/why not?
5. What, if any, impacts have the PROTIERRA interventions had on community land management and governance? This includes community council (both local and general leadership) and related municipal governments, and the incidence and influence of women's participation.
6. What unintended results or consequences positive or negative can the beneficiaries, municipal partners or implementers report?

## Program background

In June 2011, USAID/COLOMBIA signed a two-year Cooperative Agreement with Mercy Corps, to implement the program "Resolution of Land and Natural Resources Conflicts in Colombia." The objectives were to: i) Strengthen community capacity to peacefully manage conflict within and among communities in the Darién region and Quibdó; ii) Build sustainability and ensure local ownership of land and natural resource conflict mediation; and iii) increase women's participation and that of Afro-Colombians in addressing the root causes of land and natural resource conflicts. Program activities were intended to mitigate land and resources conflicts in the targeted areas.

In 2012<sup>1</sup>, Mercy Corps received an additional award of nearly \$500,000 from the USAID Women's Leadership Incentive Fund to enhance women's empowerment and leadership components. These components include: i) strengthening women's leadership in the resolution of land and natural resources conflicts by using Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods; ii) increasing tenure security by using Global Positioning System (GPS) technologies to delineate boundaries; iii) carrying out exchanges on the role of women in land conflict resolution to strengthen the Gender Commissions of the Councils; and iv) building women's knowledge of and participation in developing ethno-territorial plans and in decision-making regarding land use.

With this additional funding, PROTIERRA proposed to benefit directly 220 Afro-Colombian women leaders in the Afro-Colombian Local Councils and three Regional Councils (Cocomacia, Cocomasur and Cocomaunguía) in three municipalities (Quibdó, Acandí and Unguía) by training them in new skills for land conflict resolution, tenure security, gender and leadership. PROTIERRA uses an integrated approach to gender that includes women and men, and youth of both sexes. Programming follows on the assumption that land tenure, sustainable use, and positive development outcomes are supported by gender equality in these matters.

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<sup>1</sup> Though the award was granted in 2012, the additional funding arrived to the Community Councils in mid-2013.



USAID/Colombia requested a performance evaluation of PROTIERRA in the project’s use of the Women’s Leadership Incentive Fund award. The evaluation takes into account that the current efforts build on the years spent working with the Community Councils and women members to date, but will focus the investigation on the present efforts.

***The context: Community Councils***

The Community Councils in Afro-Colombian communities were created by Law 70 of 1993, the purpose of which was to recognize the collective land rights of the rural communities ancestrally settled along the rivers that are part of the Pacific Basin. Article 5 from this Law reads that:

*“In order to be able to receive the collectively owned allocable land, each community will form a Community Council as a form of internal management, whose requirements will determine the regulation issued by the National Government.” (Law 70/93)*

The GOC’s Decree 1745/95 described how the Community Councils are to operate, how they are to relate to territorial government, and procedures to be followed for collective land titling by the communities. This Community Councils structure is essential for understanding the institutional and sociocultural contexts where program activities have taken place.

The regulation gives the Councils key rights such as demarcation and allocation of land; ensuring the preservation of cultural identity; decision-making on the use and conservation of natural resources; protection of collective property; and the development of alternative mechanisms for dispute resolution in accordance with their customs. Each of these aspects of the Councils is important in how Mercy Corps has worked with the Councils, and in the evaluation.

The evaluation team noted important differences between the participating Councils, with effects on the scope and outcomes of the program. Cocomacia is the oldest Council and integrates the largest number of local councils (127), spread around Quibdó, the capital of Chocó Department. Their headquarters location in the capital gives Cocomacia greater access to state institutional services and to international cooperation. There is a difference in access to education as well: 61% of women participants had high school education while in Cocomasur the figure was 25% and 38% in Cocomaunguía. (See Table 1.1 for a demographic comparison of the councils.) Cocomacia has had a Gender Commission for eleven years; its leaders have managed to channel resources on gender, as they have with PROTIERRA.

**Figure 1.1. Demographic comparison of the Community Councils**

	<b>Cocomacia</b>	<b>Cocomaunguía</b>	<b>Cocomasur</b>
Number of local councils	127	6	9
Date that collective territories were allocated to Community Councils	December 29, 1997, by INCORA	July 21, 2003, by INCODER	August 1, 2005 by INCODER
Presence of a Gender commission	Yes, 11 years	No	No
Hectares reported per respondent	13	2.4	16.3
% respondents who are landless	32%	57%	20%
% women with high school education	61%	38%	25%

Unlike Cocomacia, neither Cocomaunguía nor Cocomasur has a Gender Commission. Cocomaunguía participants reported the least access to land in the survey: on average, respondents reported having access to 2.4 hectares per household compared to 13 hectares per household in Cocomacia and 16.3 per household in Cocomasur. In Cocomaunguía more than half of participants are landless (57%) while a third of Cocomacia’s respondents and one-fifth in

Cocomasur reported that they owned no land. These features made PROTIERRA and its activities well received in the community. Mercy Corps' support to organizational processes and leader trainings were reported to be essential and part of the formation and consolidation of the Community Council itself.

Cocomasur has a very broad geographic dispersion of its local member councils. The lack of access roads and easy communication mean that the relationship between the regional council and its component local councils is weaker. However, the Council is a strong organization and has active women and men leaders who have been able to access international cooperation resources. The Council sets the conditions of these cooperative undertakings. Cocomasur maintains autonomy from external organizations and programs. Of the three Councils, it was most challenging for Mercy Corps to rebuild trust with this Council, in part as a result of the delayed arrival of the resources initially pledged by USAID, and long delayed in arriving.

## **Evaluation design, methods and limitations**

The team designed used qualitative and quantitative data collection to undertake a performance evaluation of the gender component of PROTIERRA. This involved gathering data from the main program stakeholders, including the Councils and participants, national and regional institutions, USAID and Mercy Corps. The evaluation explored learning and accountability, as well as questions of possible replicability. As the program worked in unique collective environments with otherwise hard-to-reach populations, the design reflects very close participation with Mercy Corps and USAID to shape the terms of reference, as well as with the communities to carry out the selected methods.

The mixed-method design included a range of methods. Full details of these methods are available in Annex IV. In short, the team conducted a document review before heading to the field to conduct necessary prior consultations<sup>2</sup> with the Council Boards. Prior consultation resulted in two important effects on the evaluation: first, by request of all three Councils, in each method, men and women were to be consulted equally. This resulted in increased sample size. Second, the Boards agreed to the survey only if their own citizens would be trained and used as surveyors. Though this can affect the sample (for example, excluding marginalized groups), the evaluation team complied with the Boards' wishes in order to be able to carry out the survey.

To answer the evaluation questions, the team then undertook outcome mapping, focus groups, observations, in-depth interviews and case studies. Results were analyzed alongside the quantitative results, to provide an overall picture of program operations and participant results.

The fieldwork sample, by Council, is shown in Table 1.2. For brevity, this table shows aggregate totals; in Annex IV a more complete table is offered, with disaggregation by method and respondent type, with information as well on the sites visited within each regional council area.

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<sup>2</sup> Prior consultation is a legal term in Colombia, which grants to indigenous and ethnic groups the right to insist on full prior consultation whenever projects, works or any activity is planned within their territories. The prior consultation process is enshrined in law, in order to protect the cultural, social and economic integrity of the communities and guarantee their right to decide the types of participation in which they will engage.

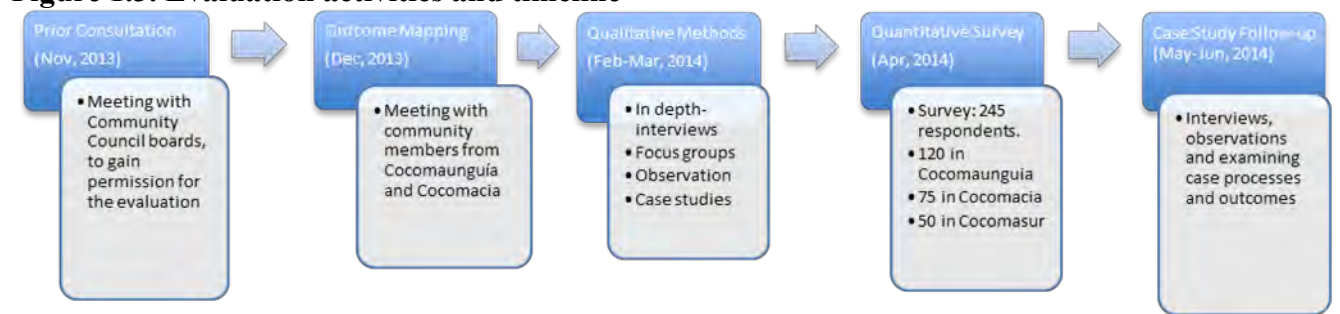
**Figure 1.2. Sample**

Regional Council	Women	Men	Total
Cocomaunguía	97	91	188
Cocomasur	38	46	84
Cocomacia	99	61	160
	<b>234</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>432</b>

As shown, the evaluation included 432 responses. Some respondents participated in more than one method with different instruments. In total 56% of respondents were women and 44% men.

The trajectory of the evaluation activities can be seen in Figure 1.3, below:

**Figure 1.3. Evaluation activities and timeline**



The final phase of the evaluation was to meet with Community Council boards in September, 2014 to share evaluation results and invite their feedback. Communities were very pleased to have been included in this phase, they saw their communities reflected in the results and identified the need to share the results with community members broadly. One group became particularly engaged in discussing the gender data in the presentation. The evaluation and USAID were thus held accountable to these communities that opened their doors for the research, and community members are empowered with results and can choose how they will respond.

## LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the study included the short duration of the current implementation model, approximately six months, which allowed little time for results to mature. At the same time, the changes sought with the intervention touch on deeply-rooted social gender norms. Outcomes are likely less robust than might be possible with a longer program. Access to the communities is also fully determined by their Councils, and as such access is restricted to those who the Council allows to speak. Different views can be missed in such circumstances. The distances, time and costs limited the number of local councils visited. The pilot nature of the intervention and small sample of participating communities limits the external validity of the report's conclusions.

One further issue was the delay in the arrival of PROTIERRA funding to communities, due to internal USAID processes. Mercy Corps had promised the communities intervention over a year prior to receiving the funds. Particularly at the consultation in Cocomasur, the leaders were upset with Mercy Corps and resistant to the evaluation. This slowed and shortened implementation. For the evaluation team the difficulty was overcome: Cocomasur eventually accepted and

participated in all activities as planned. The degree to which this delay affected respondents' opinions about PROTIERRA is unknown.

# FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Annex I contains a detailed analysis of findings, conclusions and recommendations in response to the evaluation questions. The following sections summarize that analysis in a more reader-friendly manner. Annex III includes four case studies for a detailed understanding of PROTIERRA's effects in the communities.

## Question 1: Conflict resolution, men and women

### To what extent was the project successful in conflict resolution, including the active participation of both women and men?

**Summary:** The program was successful in conflict resolution in providing communities with tools and knowledge that complemented their community traditions. The program provided communities with concrete examples of successful resolutions of land conflicts. The evaluation found significant levels of women's participation in the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and other trainings. Nevertheless it does appear that the types and depth of women's participation are limited compared to those of men, when it comes to putting knowledge into practice and being empowered to make community decisions.

#### Findings

##### *Afro-Colombian communities prior to Mercy Corps*

Prior to the arrival of Mercy Corps in Chocó, Afro-Colombian communities in many areas had worked to ensure that the State granted them titles for their community territories. Their organizational model – Community Councils – came in part from the Juntas de Acción Comunal (Community Action Boards) and in part from the Asociación Campesina Integral del Atrato (ACIA – Integrated Peasant Association of the Atrato.)

Law 70 of 1993 granted Afro-Colombian communities the rights to their collective territories. The communities organized into Community Councils to claim those territories, as part of a larger process of consciousness-raising about their identities and their rights. The State adjudicated these claims and provided title to communities across the Middle and Lower Atrato, among other sites.

*The State gave us title, but then they left. Mercy Corps arrived at the best possible time.*

(Male Council leader, focus group, Quibdó)

New problems arose following the titling process with the State, however. The communities still needed to establish their territorial boundaries with respect to their neighbors, they had to distribute usufruct to community members and families, and they had to resolve disputes that arose upon delimitation and distribution of usufruct.

##### Case Study

The use of GPS technology allowed program beneficiaries to establish the boundaries of territories allotted to the community. GPS provided precision that traditional demarcation could not offer.

*(Please see the case study of Luz Estela in Annex III for an example.)*

Council leaders reported that PROTIERRA helped them resolve important community problems. The State had provided Councils with the titles to their collective territories but left the communities without making clear

how to assert their rights of ownership and use. Title was guaranteed on paper but the knowledgeable use of the lands was out of reach – the communities lacked organization and technical capacities to make best use of the land.

### ***PROTIERRA interventions on conflict resolution***

PROTIERRA supported these community councils and provided them with tools to delimit their lands objectively. They received training and equipment in the use of GPS technology to mark external and internal boundaries, which included the elaboration of maps based on community agreements. They were also trained on the rights that their communities are legally granted, based on their status as Afro-Colombians.

PROTIERRA also imparted training in alternative dispute resolution (ADR) methods. Prior to the current funding period under evaluation, PROTIERRA established mediation centers in each of the four Community Councils then involved. These Centers were equipped and users trained to classify and conduct follow-up on different types of conflicts around land and natural resources, both within their community and between communities.

Upon delimiting the communities' collective territories, conflicts became apparent between these communities and other de facto claimants: local landowners and indigenous communities in particular. PROTIERRA supported communities in their efforts to seek amicable agreements on the territorial boundaries.

PROTIERRA also worked with communities on the boundaries and distribution of usufruct within the collective titles. PROTIERRA supported conflict resolution, provided methodologies for land distribution, and established a set of rules for these situations with which all parties could agree.

The program also developed an exchange program around experiences of conflict resolution, in which participants in ADR processes in regional conflicts, participants in conflicts between community councils, and similar program participants in Guatemala were brought together – in person and virtually – to share their experiences.

*The people learned from each other - 'south-south' - that our conflicts can be mediated.*

*We want to continue with one another in this amiable, agreeable way. We've always mediated conflict through conversation. If it weren't, there'd be nothing but pasture from here to Panamá.*  
(Community Council Legal representative, interview)

Focus group participants lauded Mercy Corps' support to Cocomacia and Cocomasur in their own efforts to secure territorial boundaries and resolve land-related conflicts. They noted, too, that PROTIERRA built on prior community efforts to resolve conflicts through peaceful dialogue, even before they had technological support.

Participants mentioned three main types of PROTIERRA activities that helped achieve these positive results:

- 1) Training in GPS, territorial recognition and delimitation, and cartography
- 2) Strengthening community organizations, including their leaders, through exchange of experiences and training in community rights
- 3) Establishment of Mediation Centers and training in ADR methods

The interventions contributed to the resolution of land-related conflicts that had emerged after the collective titles had been granted. After helping the communities to mark the territorial boundaries and exercise their rights of possession, Mercy Corps worked with the Community

Councils to manage the conflicts that arose as a result. For example, in Cocomanguía, the El Puerto community was able to obtain land from a neighboring landowner. The conflict was mediated through the participation of the Mayor’s Office, Mercy Corps and community mediators. Likewise in Cocomanguía, during the fieldwork in Ticolé, the team observed an intercommunity mediation process.

Some conflicts have yet to be resolved, according to participants interviewed in the evaluation. Both Cocomasur and Cocomanguía continue to experience conflicts with large landowners. Cocomacia and Cocomanguía have intercommunity conflicts or with indigenous groups. There are also conflicts with the State in which collective titles are seen as too limited. Though some conflicts remain, the communities have utilized GPS boundaries, conflict resolution training, and training in their community rights, to advance their claims. They have also, they said, benefited from Mercy Corps’ assistance to ensure that their demands are heard by the State and other claimants. Based on the survey results, the great majority of the participants (93%) report that the trainings have given them tools and knowledge to resolve conflicts peacefully.

**Case Study**  
Please see the Land mediation case study on Cocomanguía, Annex III

***Participant satisfaction***

The evaluation survey found nearly unanimous results on several measures of PROTIERRA participant satisfaction. The great majority of respondents report that the program had a very positive impact in their communities:

- 89% of the participants reported that the program allowed them to advocate for their communities’ interests before municipal and regional government authorities.
- 98% stated that they have a deeper understanding of collective rights.
- 97% believe that their awareness of the collective territory has increased.
- 92% say that the way the community makes decisions about land use has changed.
- 93% believe that the activities of the program have contributed to strengthening the community relative to other actors – landowners and local government, for example.

Data from the survey indicate that women's participation was not far from parity with men in all training activities in terms of percentages. Figure 2.1 shows the relative participation of men and women in the activities.

**Figure 2.1. Men’s and women’s participation in PROTIERRA activities**

Mercy Corps’ activities	Women	Men
Strategic exchanges between community councils	61%	67%
Activities in the mediation center	52%	64%
Participation in mediation activities	56%	54%
Participation in training on alternative dispute resolution	52%	59%
Leadership training and community mediation	56%	64%
GPS use and management	31%	30%
Participation in the <i>RedTierras</i> platform	28%	30%

***Men’s and women’s conflict resolution roles***

When asked about who makes decisions and works to resolve conflicts in their communities, respondents reported changes in the degree to which women participate in these activities. Prior to PROTIERRA, involvement in establishing boundaries, making decisions on land use and

tenure, and resolving disputes were considered culturally to be men's activities. Women were much less involved, particularly in roles of leadership in these activities.

*The man is 'street' and the woman is 'home.'*

(Woman, interview, Tutunendo)

*We women have to battle and keep the home safe, take care of the children... because the men are out in the streets.*

(Woman, focus group, Tutunendo)

In patriarchal societies, such as the communities in which PROTIERRA worked, space is traditionally divided between men and women, in most aspects of life. The appropriation and use of land is no exception. Women are charged with caring for children and the elderly, and the maintenance of the home. These tasks tend to have little social recognition; often, as in these Afro-Colombian communities, women also support men's remunerative work outside the home. But inside the home, men do not generally share tasks of caring for the home or family. Rather, it is a place of rest for them, while their active

domain is in the public sphere.

Conflict mediation is one of the defining attributes of leadership in these communities. PROTIERRA respondents report that this leadership is transmitted from generation to generation, and specifically from father to son. As a result, it is the men who serve on the Community Councils, and particularly, the men who lead them. An example from Cocomasur illustrates the pace of change in women's leadership. In Cocomasur, a male led the only mediation process that the evaluation team observed there. Aureliano, the Council leader, reported that he had inherited the community's rules, its principles, the authority to mediate, and the charisma to do so, from his own father. While the team did not observe a woman leading a mediation process in the Cocomasur community, though one woman leader, Everildys Cordoba, reported that, "As with Aureliano, I also learned from my family about mediation and peaceful conflict resolution."

Change has come to these traditional societies, quite apart from PROTIERRA's interventions. This is due in part to violence in the region, which has left some women in the role of head of the household. Conditional transfers from the State, which provide families – and particularly women – with economic resources have also changed the power balance in these families. And increased educational attainment among the women from these communities have led them to assume evolving gender identities. This creates contention and competition in public spaces, as women have become more empowered to participate in community decision-making

*You take a seat at the table... and you feel love and enthusiasm to be Afro-Colombian and to fight for your rights.*

(Woman leader.  
Interview, Acandí)

PROTIERRA supported these women's emergent leadership processes; due to the organization's gender policy, they included quotas for women's participation in all program activities. The women who sought greater participation found an avenue for that participation through the program. Women heads of households were prioritized in the participatory processes and had the possibility to access land titles through the program.



Nevertheless, women’s participation was seen to have reached a “ceiling.” Mercy Corps identified this barrier in its recent report “Women, men, gender and territory,”<sup>3</sup> and the evaluation team found evidence of this limit to women’s full participation. Despite men’s and women’s equal training on topics of rights, mediation and GPS technology, it was less common for women to put their new skills fully into practice. Only rarely did they lead the mediation processes. The evaluation team observed in nearly all cases that women continued to assume primarily operational and organizational roles in the councils, while men maintained the decision-making and leadership positions.

In February of this year, both men and women took part in workshops on gender. Mercy Corps’ report on the activity noted that gender paradigms are only beginning to change. More time will be required, they found, along with ongoing intervention with men and women of all ages, in order to see significant changes in the attitudes and practices the communities have around gender roles.

In focus groups and interviews with women and with men (separately), this limitation on women’s participation was evident, at the same time that respondents appeared open to the changed discourse about gender. In the interviews and focus groups in all Community Councils, it was common to hear men talking about the benefits of women’s participation in the empowerment of the territory through GPS trainings and territorial empowerment. Through their discourse, men and women appear to be more accepting of women’s participation, at least in principle. The PROTIERRA trainings have empowered women to participate.

Women also participated to some degree in conflict resolution processes, as in Cocomacia and Cocomanguía; however, in only one case was a woman leading such a process. In Cocomacia, the team observed a mediation process led by a woman. She had been trained by the program in GPS and ADR. She was also a member of the Territorial Committee. In Cocomanguía the team observed a woman leader in charge of managing the files in the documentation center, who told the team she participated in the El Puerto mediation process.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Case Study</b></p> <p>Please see the case study: Lessons and recommendations from an unresolved case, Cocomacia, Annex III.</p>
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Women and men are accustomed to the division of labor in their communities. In focus groups, women held stereotypes about other women who worked outside the home, particularly when the work they did was considered man’s work. Men, for their part, spoke in focus groups about the “threat” of women’s participation: “you have to let them participate, but without giving them much power,” because that would allow the women to “control and decide about their lives.”

Similar comments in other focus groups also appeared to reflect men’s attempts to maintain the status quo in gender roles, and a sense that changes were perceived as threatening. Such attitudes inhibited women from participating to the extent they were capable, such as in decision-making and conflict resolution leadership.

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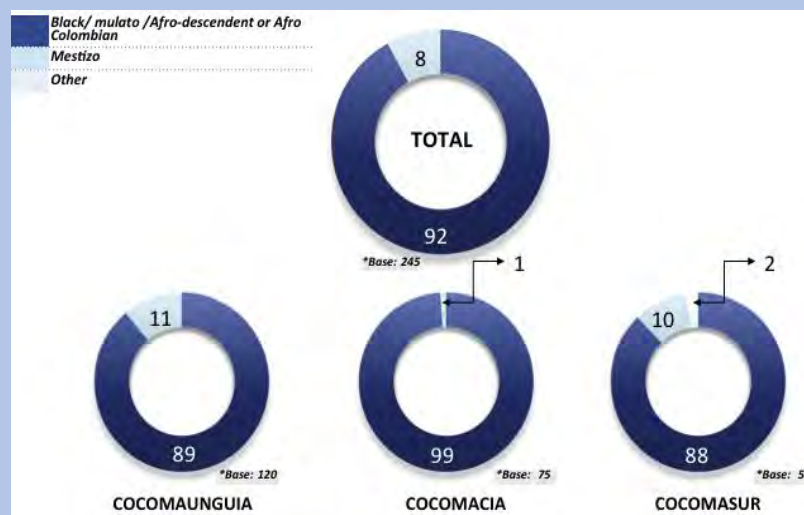
<sup>3</sup> Huertas Montoya, Román Alexis. 2014. “Mujeres, Hombres, Género y Territorio. Relaciones, prácticas e imaginarios de género.” Proyecto De Resolución Pacífica de Conflicto por la Tierra y Recursos Naturales. Mercy Corps - USAID, p. 24.

Finally, in the fieldwork the evaluation team observed that the community Mediation Centers had accessible, organized records of the cases. In interviews, men, women and community leaders recognized the importance of having this information systematized. They also valued the office space in which to operationalize their efforts and processes to regain their territories and

*Unintended consequences: inequality for mestizos in the Afro-Colombian communities?*

Though the majority of the community populations are Afro-descendent, 8% of survey respondents self-identify as mestizo, primarily in Cocomanguía (10%) and Cocomasur (11%). This mestizo population, called "chilapo" locally, reported that they were significantly excluded from the Community Councils' decision-making, based on their racial identity. They are not considered for representative or leadership roles, especially in areas of resource scarcity as Cocomanguía.

Figure 2.1. Racial identification of the survey respondents



resolve conflicts. However, the field visits showed little strategic use of the organized data.

**Conclusions**

PROTIERRA was successful in the resolution of land-related conflicts between and within communities. The program helped communities understand their territorial rights, define the boundaries of their collective territories as granted by the State, and use both conflict resolution methods and GPS technology to address conflicts that emerged from the titling process. While not all cases are fully resolved, the skills installed in the communities have proven worthwhile to community participants. The communities benefited from the GPS tools for territorial delimitation and from the ADR methods to resolve inter-, intra- and extra-community conflicts. These quantitative, replicable measurements are more objective and accurate than were the traditional methods, and the data have proven useful to the conflict resolution processes.

Second, both women and men have participated actively in the PROTIERRA trainings, including those related to mediation processes. However, the cultural context was not propitious for women to exercise full empowerment. Particularly notable was the continued tendency for women to exercise operational and organizational roles, without as much opportunity for

decision-making and leadership. Nonetheless in all Community Councils, the discourse has changed and almost all the respondents in the interviews and the focus groups recognized the importance of women's participation, at least in principle. In Cocomasur, despite men's traditional leadership in issues of mediation, new women's leadership is visible in part because young women are studying and both types of leadership coexist. The short time frame of the intervention can only be expected to produce limited results in changing deeply rooted cultural stereotypes about gender.

Lastly, the Community Councils have tools, such as the mediation centers and the physical records of their resolution processes, which allow them to keep and organize case information. However, this information does not appear to be in strategic use for identifying, preventing or resolving other conflicts.

## Question 2: Women's leadership

### To what extent was the project successful in increasing women's participation and leadership in land use planning, decision-making and resolution?

*Summary:* Women increased their participation in the spaces where they could exercise their leadership on issues such as planning land use and conflict resolution. However, during the fieldwork women were not observed leading community decision-making. This remained in the hands of traditional authorities, who are all men.

#### **Findings**

In the evaluation's qualitative fieldwork, the participation and leadership of women in the planning of land use and natural resources, in making decisions and in the process of conflict resolution was verified. Results were mixed on the degree to which women were able to assume leadership roles, but their participation generally did increase.

In land use planning, women participated actively, received usufruct titles, and are working their land as a result of the program. Those with usufruct were more motivated to participate in land use decision-making. New generations of women were also motivated to participate, and may well take on leadership roles in the future. Women were observed to be part of conflict mediation processes, including the use of GPS to demarcate boundaries. However, mediation was observed to be carried out by traditional male community leaders. Interviews and focus groups confirmed that men and women see mediation as part of the male leaders' roles.

Women are present in decision-making spaces but their participation is limited to administrative and logistics roles. Decision-making leadership continues to be masculine, based on traditional roles in Afro-Colombian communities and their internal government.

The degree to which women are able to participate actively and lead community activities is summarized in Figure 2.1, where positive (+) means that the women's empowerment was observed and negative (-) where women's participation was low or not observed.

**Figure 2.1. Women’s participation and leadership in community activities**

Leadership area	Women’s participation	Women’s leadership
Land use planning	+	+
Decision making	+/-	-
Conflict resolution	+	-

As discussed in the previous section, gender roles in Afro-Colombian communities have been changing irrespective of the contributions of the PROTIERRA project. Women are increasing their level of education, and this has resulted in women prepared to exercise increased leadership. Moreover, displacement, forced recruitment and violence have left many women as heads of household, assuming productive roles that were typically characteristic of men. The government’s direct cash transfer program “Familias en Acción” has also contributed to women’s greater economic independence, as the transfers are provided to women in most cases.

Despite these changes, Community Council leadership has been resolutely masculine; conflict mediation has traditionally been seen as the domain of these men. The exploitation of natural resources is also traditionally perceived as a masculine role, while caring for children, the elderly, and home, are perceived as feminine. Women do have some role in agriculture, such as in food harvest for the family.

The women in the focus groups reported that apart from their responsibilities at home, they often must accompany the men to carry out productive activities. The community does not perceive this as women doing that labor, but rather an auxiliary role “appropriate” for women. Neither do the financial benefits in such cases accrue to the women. This same “invisibility” of women’s actions in men’s spaces appears also to occur in collective processes, where women participate and contribute, while it is the men who gain the community’s recognition.

*"The wood is hard work and generates a lot of money. If the truckload of wood is sold here people say, "Alexander had a big payday" but it's with the help of his wife, who has to go and cook."*  
(Woman, focus group, Tagachi)

In these communities, gender roles tend to be quite rigid. Mercy Corps’ program has sought to make them more flexible, through their interventions. Historically, land and natural resource planning were considered masculine tasks. If women participated in these discussions, their contributions went unrecognized. In this sense, Mercy Corps’ activities have had an impact on women’s participation. Women now confidently participate with the required knowledge, and men are more aware of women’s contributions.

However, as noted, women’s full participation still faces significant barriers. The evaluation team observed resistance among some male leaders to allow women to take part in community decisions. Despite PROTIERRA’s encouragement of women’s participation and empowerment, the program has not transformed the assignment of gender roles to the point of achieving equity.

As for conflict resolution, the program has left trained women with the necessary tools for these processes: GPS management, knowledge of mediation methodologies, types of conflicts and participation in the mediation centers. However, mediation continues to be seen as an attribute of traditional male leaders. Although women are participating more in mediation processes as a result of PROTIERRA, leadership in the cases continues to be primarily male.

Survey statistics show a very positive picture of respondents’ satisfaction with the program: nearly all (96%) of survey respondents believe that PROTIERRA has influenced the

participation of women. Some 93% believe that the activities increased the number of women participating in the peaceful resolution of conflicts over land and natural resources. Fully 94% felt the program had encouraged the leadership of women in the region. And 97% believe that this program has increased participation of women in collective spaces.

Women report that they began to increase their participation in discussions about land use and natural resources thanks to Mercy Corps' program. The program has also encouraged their leadership: female respondents recognized that both men and women could pursue tasks traditionally associated with men.

According to the interviews with participants in Cocomanguía, Mercy Corps agreed with the Community Council on a selection process to choose the beneficiaries of the usufructs, based on a set of requirements. The first was to be included in

the census; the second was to attend meetings on usufruct titling. This selection process left out families who were not in the census or who did not attend meetings, for whatever reason. There were some responses from community members who did not believe that the process was going to have a positive outcome, which in turn created tensions within the community. Notably, those women included in usufruct titles reported greater motivation to continue participating in community decision-making on land and natural resource use.

*Women participate in the program because we are all interested in our territory being returned to us. Before, women did not participate. I don't know if they were ashamed or if they were afraid to talk.*

*You see your mom's life. When I started to learn about the process with Mercy Corps, something woke up inside me. I dreamed and I wanted everything to be different."*

Women, participants, Acandí.

## **Conclusions**

PROTIERRA trainings and activities have positively affected the way women talk about their roles and capabilities, and the perceptions of both men and women toward traditional gender roles, through greater parity in men's and women's participation and raising awareness about gender issues and gender rights.

The actual effects on behaviors around land use planning, decision-making and conflict resolution are limited for women by the social and cultural context in which men still dominate and the gender division of labor continues to prevail. Moreover, in community life the decision-making around natural resources and land conflicts continue to be, in the main, spaces for male debate. During the fieldwork it was observed that women have begun to participate in these activities to some degree, as a result of the program activities. The change in discourse and in some participation and leadership processes is promising, and indicates a positive trajectory that has resulted from program inputs. Nevertheless, the short duration of the program and the long time horizons needed for changes in social gender norms indicate that it is too soon to judge final outcomes.

## **Question 3: PROTIERRA's Gender Model**

**What is the gender model in the program, and does it show promise for scale-up/replication?**

**Summary:** The program's gender model derives from the Mercy Corps gender policy. Its principles are the inclusion of men, women, children, youth and senior citizens, and community consultation. A key element of the model is its flexible interpretation and implementation, based on community needs. The model acts through trainings and by encouraging participation in collective spaces through decision-making processes involving land use and natural resources. The model aims to improve men's awareness of women's leadership. The model is potentially replicable in the context of other ethnic territories. While many interventions discuss "scaling up," in the medium term it may be more appropriate to "scale down" PROTIERRA by bringing its activities to the many small and remote local councils that comprise the regional Community Councils.

## **Findings**

### ***The Gender Model***

The PROTIERRA model works under the hypothesis that the activities to empower women of the community councils will enhance the results and impacts of the intervention on land conflict resolution. The strategy for empowering women in this case was based, according to Mercy Corps' approach, on three objectives for their Afro-Colombian women beneficiaries:

1. Providing women with capabilities for land conflict resolution and tenure security
2. Strengthening women and women's groups through the exchange of related experiences
3. Strengthen women's roles in ethnic territory and land use planning

PROTIERRA worked to meet these objectives using a set of activities, some of which were observed in the evaluation fieldwork, and some of which were reported to the team by program beneficiaries:

1. Training for women and men on rights, territory, gender and new masculinities.
2. Training on management and interpretation of GPS devices and maps.
3. Distribution of guides to local councils on alternative conflict resolution.
4. Women's and men's participation in conflict mediation.
5. Providing land titles to women within the collective territories.
6. Women's participation in exchanges through the webpage *RedTierras*.

According to the program model, these activities will lead to greater participation of women in leadership roles and these roles of leadership exercised by women lead to greater impacts toward sustainable development. The model also builds on Mercy Corps' own, cross-cutting Gender Policy and the communities' own proposals around gender and equity. This policy compels inclusive, appropriate decisions about men's and women's participation through the project cycle. At the design phase, Mercy Corps implementation must include inquiry about the situations and concerns of women, children, adolescents and senior citizens, and that design then corresponds to these particular needs, including addressing gender inequities. Implementation must then include men and women equally, and program monitoring must disaggregate results by sex and age.

As observed during the evaluation process, Mercy Corps did apply its gender policy: the needs of women, children, adolescents and senior citizens were sought and included in design. Monitoring information is disaggregated by sex and age, and implementation was planned in response to the needs of the community, including the particular needs of women. For example, in Cocomacia, the Council's Gender Commission showed interest in participating. As a result PROTIERRA

held a workshop with women in which their interest areas were explored, including women's relationship with collective territory and gender inequities related to land ownership and use. Likewise, as activities progressed, PROTIERRA identified other gender issues: women's knowledge of software management, women's knowledge of their territorial rights, and women's access to justice on land-related issues. PROTIERRA brought these concerns into training in an attempt to increase women's equality across issues pertinent to the program.

Mercy Corps' diagnosis also uncovered issues around stereotypes of men's and women's community roles. This resulted in program training on gender and new masculinities, conducted inclusively with men and women. The objective of this training was to "create a space for socialization, sharing and construction that delves into the concepts and gender perspectives from the community councils and Afro-Colombian communities."<sup>4</sup> Using the councils' and communities' own perspectives as a starting point is an important part of the model: Mercy Corps worked differently with Cocomacia, for example, and its long-standing Gender Commission, than with the other two councils where gender equity is less institutionalized.

### ***Scale-up and replicability***

A replicable program could be applied under the same or similar circumstances and provide the same or similar results. Scaling up, by contrast, is generally taken to mean expanding a pilot program to provide greater coverage sustainably, without sacrificing quality. The program shows promise for replication, though scaling-up would require additional efforts.

Conflicts over land tenure and use are common to ethnic, Afro-Colombian and indigenous territories, not only in Colombia but also in the region, such as in Guatemala and Bolivia. Women in the PROTIERRA communities face gender inequality in access to land, allocation of traditional roles and weak participation in the public sphere. PROTIERRA has taken advantage of these parallel challenges through regional and international exchanges, to share lessons learned among participants in a set of south-south interactions. The program strengthened women's participation and affirmed women's land-related rights, while limiting conflict with traditional male authorities and tailoring the interventions to the different communities in which they worked. In this sense, the gender model could be replicable. However, because of the entrenched nature of traditional gender roles and the short duration of the current program, the evaluation has not found that women have come to exercise effective leadership roles and mediation in the same proportion as men.

In terms of scaling up the PROTIERRA program, the program has built capacity: mediation centers, GPS knowledge, and methodological guidelines for conflict resolution. The range of training has also provided knowledge about rights and territories, and familiarity with other community leaders in similar circumstances. Some leaders, such as the women of the Cocomacia Gender Commission, have been trained to provide training. These capacities remain available to share the program learnings with, for example, the geographically remote local councils who were not reached by

#### **Case Study**

Please see the case study: Cocomacia Gender Commission, in Annex III.

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<sup>4</sup> Huertas Montoya, Román Alexis. 2014. "Mujeres, Hombres, Género y Territorio." Proyecto De Resolución Pacífica de Conflicto por la Tierra y Recursos Naturales. Mercy Corps - USAID, p. 38.

the present implementation. This might be called “scaling down”, rather than up, as the councils use what they have learned to benefit additional groups at a grassroots level. In Cocomacia, the Gender Commission has already undertaken this type of scaling down, by conducting trainings with three of their 127 local councils.

Beneficiaries at the three councils were pleased with the results, but respondents from other local councils were displeased not to have been included. The exchanges of information among councils and communities were considered by many to be very valuable; however, these exchanges are also very costly due to challenging regional geographies. So, while the Councils have the capacities necessary to disseminate the knowledge to local councils, the high transportation costs will limit communities’ abilities to come together for such purposes.

As a pilot, the program was not designed with resources for replication or scaling. Nor were necessary preparatory activities for replication or scaling up – though some of the installed capacity could be availed. At present, no actor or agent has been cultivated to perpetuate the program; of course, the Councils can take it upon themselves to replicate elements, but this does not seem to be a focus for them or Mercy Corps, with the exception of the Cocomacia Gender Commission.

## **Conclusions**

Mercy Corps’ gender model uses a participatory methodology for women’s empowerment, training women in rights, conflict mediation, and GPS technology. The model also aims to raise awareness in men and women through gender and new masculinities trainings. The model supposes that the activities taken as a whole will encourage participant reflection on women’s participation in community spaces, and will open spaces for women’s leadership that is equitable to that of the men in their communities.

The gender model is replicable to the extent that there are ethnic territories (in Colombia and elsewhere in the region) facing similar conflicts over land and natural resources, and similar traditional divisions of labor by sex. Replicating the model as it stands is likely to result in similar outcomes for beneficiaries: success in imparting technological solutions to land conflicts, increased participation of women, and limited attainment of women’s leadership. Just as PROTIERRA attended to different needs in the three communities with tailored responses, efforts to replicate the model will likely meet varying needs elsewhere, and need to adapt. However, more time and greater intensity of focus on changing gender roles would be necessary to reach a more equitable level of leadership among women.

For scalability, the program has built capacity in the communities to share the program with others, but scaling to local councils would be costly. The notion of scaling the program up to Colombia, or the Chocó, has not been contemplated and, as a result, no structures are in place to do so.



## Question 4: Behaviors and attitudes about gender

### Were the PROTIERRA interventions (a) necessary and (b) sufficient to change female beneficiaries' behaviors and participation, and males' attitudes about women's participation? Why/why not?

**Summary:** The intervention incentivized women's participation, which had previously been lacking. As a result of the program, men's and women's discourse reflected their changing perceptions about women's participation in land-related issues. Some women also changed behaviors, increasing their participation. In these respects, the program was *necessary*. Nevertheless, decision-making and leadership roles were still mostly reserved for men. In this way the conclusions and recommendations for Question 4 are parallel to those in Question 1. Whether or not the program was *sufficient* on its own to change deep-seated beliefs and behaviors around "proper" gender roles depends on the extent of change desired.

### Findings

Women's participation differed by Community Council. In Cocomacia, the Community Council includes a Gender Commission that has actively sought and implemented resources from various sources, and has thereby become an important actor in the community. A woman holds the title of Legal Representative for the High Council. In this Council, then, women have greater participation in both quantity and quality than in the other Councils studied.

In Cocomasur and Cocomanguía women's leadership-level participation is significantly less. While in both cases there are visible and recognized women leaders, issues related to land tenure and resource use planning tend to be men's domain in these two communities. By tradition, women did not inherit land or, when they had land, it was not formally titled. Upon their husbands' deaths, they lost their rights to the land.

In this sense, women's rights have been impaired, and continue to be impaired today. This is due in part to the cultural traditions of the communities related to inheritance and land. Interventions such as that of Mercy Corps, which take up the issues of gender, rights and territory, are therefore necessary to ensure that women enjoy their rights.

PROTIERRA gave women important information about their rights and trained them to participate in collective spaces. At the same time, the program helped them obtain usufruct titles for the use of land within the community territories. Women saw that these activities bore fruit in terms of access to economic resources, making it possible that they improve their own lives. Respondents said that the value of women's participation was revealed in these interactions, in some cases for the first time.

Men in focus groups recognized that changes are occurring in how the women in their communities participate. While agreeing with the notion or principle of women's participation, they express significant ambiguity about these changes in gender roles. They report that they value women's participation and do not want to be seen as obstacles to it and that, in fact, their Councils have been working toward greater equity even prior to Mercy

"The program left me with greater understanding of how to claim what's mine."

"I learned that we must fight for our rights and not just be housewives. We must also grow through education."

*Women, focus group, El Puerto*

Corps' intervention. They note Mercy Corps' important contribution to opening these spaces for joint participation. They praise Mercy Corps for being inclusive, as in the case of Cocomacia's Gender Commission. A male respondent in Tutunendo said that "it's not a gender commission if they only help women and if only women can work on it."

We've been working on this ourselves, trying to bring women into the Council activities. Mercy Corps helped us do it. They gave us tools, methods, to bring women equally into the discussion.

*Men's focus group, Peñalosa*

In 2014, the program developed a gender and new masculinities component: a "soft" strategy that complemented the "hard" strategy of ensuring titling. This component was designed to support the "recognition and redefinition of the social relations between genders, and of the progress made in configuring masculinities and femininities as part of democratic, equitable and inclusive communities."<sup>5</sup> As a result, the evaluation found evidence of men becoming more sensitive to gender-based inequities, such as women's limited

access to land and unremunerated work in the home. One respondent in a Tutunendo focus group said, "Say the man and woman go to the mountain to plant rice. They do the same work, but when they go home, the man plays dominos or rummy, while the woman has to go care for the kids and cook. There's an imbalance in that."

Here you have to get in a canoe and pull yourself upriver or downriver. A woman can't do that. No matter what, she needs the man's help.

Change is coming, but slowly. It's a lot of work. But it's always going to be the man who rules.

*Men's focus group, Tutunendo*

Nevertheless, achieving a transformation in gender roles in community life is complex. That men recognize inequities is one step on the trajectory toward equity, but it is quite another to expect transformative changes in gender roles at home, particularly when such negative stereotypes continue to exist about domestic work. Similarly, while men in focus groups recognized aloud the "right" of women to participate in community decisions, their words also indicated they felt they were doing women a "favor" in "allowing" their participation, and

continue to assert that these public spaces and tasks "are not appropriate for women."

Important inequities still exist. In survey responses women reported owning less land than men. Among the landholders, men claim to have on average 9.4 hectares, compared to 7.8 on average for women. The largest gap is found in Cocomasur where men on average have 18.9 hectares and women have 13.3 - but Cocomasur participants average more area than in the other two sites.

In general, women spent most of their time on household chores (61% versus 1% of men) and only 24% reported having spent the previous week working. For men this figure was 85%. Women work in different types of jobs than men, as well: 65% of men are self-employed versus 26% of women. Around the same percentage of women work as government employees or community workers, and 14% work in the private sector. Their contributions to Council activities were also different than those of the men. The team observed women at the meetings with logistical and organizational roles, but not the leadership and decision-making tasks, which are still carried out mostly by men.

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<sup>5</sup> Huertas Montoya, Román Alexis. 2014. "Mujeres, Hombres, Género y Territorio." Proyecto De Resolución Pacífica de Conflicto por la Tierra y Recursos Naturales. Mercy Corps - USAID, p. 39.

Gender stereotypes still exist in the communities. More than a third (39%) of survey respondents agreed that women should not go into the street by themselves (44% of men and 36% of women), reiterating the idea that the public sphere is a male-controlled space. Two thirds of all respondents (65% of men and 67% of women) agree with the idea that changing diapers, bathing and feeding the children is the sole responsibility of mothers. In the focus group in Cocomasur, men reported little willingness to change traditional gender roles. In interviews, women participants said that they must convince their partners that they (the women) should be allowed to participate in the public sphere, so as not to cause conflict.

Evaluators observed that a woman's status prior to PROTIERRA – in particular, whether she was a leader or not – made a difference in her respective results. For women who were already community leaders, the program allowed them to increase their capabilities, legitimize their leadership and become empowered on issues of community interest (such as land.) This was shown in the cases of Nelly from Cocomanguía and Everildys and Luz Estela from Cocomasur. This was also true of the Cocomacia Gender Commission, which had built a leadership role in the community, in relation to human rights and gender issues, prior to PROTIERRA. As a result of their prior activities and leadership, they were able to advocate with the Council as the program entered and was implemented. Women with less prior leadership experience did not report the same kind or magnitude of gains.

Both women and men say that women participate more than before. This is also found in the survey, where 97% of the respondents believe that the program increased women's participation in collective spaces. In the focus groups, respondents reported that women have adopted a gender rights discourse and at the same time a discourse on land rights and the rights of ethnic communities. A woman from Acandí reported: *"In Mercy Corps' workshops they tell us about our rights, the rights that we have because we are black."*

Certain changes in the men's speech regarding to women's roles was also evident in the focus groups, but also they claim that women should not neglect their responsibilities in the home. In Cocomasur the men in the focus group called this "a responsible gender approach." In Cocomacia, the men in the focus group argued that women had not understood the gender approach well because, they reported, *"a gender approach does not mean that women can do*

***Change doesn't come cheap: unintended consequences of participation***

*Some men like that their wives participate, and others do not. You might get hit for even suggesting it.*

(Woman leader, focus group, El Puerto)

Participation sometimes came at a cost. Both men and women household heads lost work time and economic opportunities in order to attend program activities. In some cases, married men did not want their wives to participate. Some women report that their neighbors – also women – gossiped about those who participated, for stepping out of traditional gender roles and occupying visible public spaces.

*Here women talk about each other because they do not know what's going on when a woman ventures out.*

(Woman, interview, Peñalosa)

Mercy Corps was aware of these challenges and made efforts to respond. These costs for individuals are weighed against the collective benefits of participating in the long-term. PROTIERRA has included men and women in gender awareness training and activities, in an attempt to ameliorate the stress of change on relationships.

*whatever they want or start a confrontation, or the separation of men and women."* These findings are consistent with other behaviors observed in the meetings where women were not yet participating at the level of leadership in decision-making, even if they were more frequently present with organizational tasks.

## **Conclusions**

PROTIERRA's interventions were necessary, to bring knowledge of women's land-related rights to these communities. This breach of their rights has been related to the lack of women's participation in community discussion spaces on land. The program enhanced women's participation, provided tools for their contribution to these discussions, and through providing usufruct, motivated women to continue to be involved. Embedding gender in the program to improve land access was a useful tactic, rather than a more abstract program on gender.

At the same time the program engaged men on the issue of gender roles and equity in access to land. Though men have adopted some of the discourse on equity and in principle agree with the women's participation, it remains for the male leadership to eradicate their stereotypes and welcome fully equitable participation from the women in their communities.

## **Question 5: Community land management and women**

### **What, if any, impacts have the PROTIERRA interventions had on community land management and governance?**

**Summary:** Representatives from all three Councils acknowledged Mercy Corps' role as crucial in gaining access to their territories. PROTIERRA provided important tools to demarcate collective territories, delineate usufructs within their territories, set procedures and rules for the distribution and utilization of collective land, reconcile with external actors to resolve land conflicts, and carry out mediation and outreach to local actors such as the Mayors' Office, and national level such as INCODER. Due to its gender policy and extensive community consultation, the program opened spaces for women's participation in all these processes, including land titling.

## **Findings**

### **Administration**

The Mercy Corps' program had impacts on land governance and the administration of collective territories. First, the program supported communities at the right time with precise knowledge about the territories to which they were entitled and that had been awarded by the State. The Councils were unanimous in recognizing Mercy Corps' contribution. The communities were developing processes to access collective territories under Law 70/93. These awards, however, were not concrete, in part, because communities did not know the precise territorial boundaries.

Communities recognize that PROTIERRA helped to clarify those limits and to exercise control over land titling. With PROTIERRA support, the communities were able to construct precise maps of their territory, and advance their discussions on how to access the territory formally. It

does seem, however, as though existing mistrust can reduce the effectiveness of locally-implemented GPS efforts (see case study on “Unresolved Case”.)

In the outcome mapping the team found that the communities have developed a concept they call territorial empowerment, involving a symbolic appropriation of territory through knowing its resources and its limits. This has strengthened community identity and has generated power and capacity to engage in dialogue with other actors – neighbors (including landowners) and government bodies.

PROTIERRA contributed to this territorial empowerment. In particular, beneficiaries report, the GPS training tool has helped to delimit the boundaries of the territories, and these measurements show both the extent of their lands and what resources they own. Sometimes there is a greater knowledge of the territory by the communities than by state institutions, as a result of the GPS-based territorial delimitation.

### ***Conflict resolution***

With access to the collective territories came new conflicts: how should they deal with current occupants? How should the land be used? How should the land be distributed among the communities’ families? How could they ensure that women also had access to land? The program also provided Councils with tools to make decisions about land use within the collective territories, and a methodology for choosing the families that would make use of them. As a result, the Councils have plans for land use, defined boundaries for usufruct, and a set of protocols that allow the management of common land in a concerted manner.

PROTIERRA accompanied the communities to resolve inter-, intra- and extra-community land conflicts. This included cases of overlapping titles, with third parties from outside the community. In focus groups and interviews, respondents report important assistance from PROTIERRA to strengthen the Councils with mediation and conflict resolution tools. Community members report that they had traditional mechanisms to resolve conflicts through dialogue, but they also recognize Mercy Corps’ contributions to enhance the effectiveness and credibility of their mediation processes.

PROTIERRA’s targeted interventions on land tenure and use were nearly unanimously lauded. The GPS training added geo-positioning accuracy to measurements and boundaries; Mercy Corps’ guidelines for conflict resolution gave an understanding of the different types of conflict; the protocols and procedures allowed for the systematization of cases; and the mediation center provided a neutral space and one where they could organize and institutionalize their data. Respondents also report that PROTIERRA acted as a liaison in community claims against national and local institutions. As a result, communities have been successful in conflict resolution and the Councils have both men and women trained in the necessary skill sets.

*When the call for the GPS trainings was open I did not know what that was, and I had a desperate desire to learn. We went to the class and practiced and learned how to measure the points. It was spectacular.*

*Through our recognition walks we know what belongs to us from one point to another. Today we have an understanding about our territory, where we stand, what we have and what we must defend.*

Women, interviews, Acandí

## ***Women in land management and governance***

The program generated spaces for women to develop leadership, participation, mediation, and decision-making skills regarding their rights and territory. Participating women report feeling that the territory is theirs, and attribute this change to PROTIERRA. Some have successfully gained usufruct of collective land, allowing them to grow food for their households. Women have participated in discussions on land use, and have expressed their demands to the Councils. Participants say they are beginning to feel that these demands are being heard, and that gender and territorial relations have begun to change. The trainings have made territorial governance more inclusive.

## ***The Councils and state institutions***

The councils value Mercy Corps' support in creating relationships with state institutions and other external actors. From the early stages of the current program, in Outcome Mapping, the Councils were aware of the importance of these relationships to the success of PROTIERRA's objectives. As part of the legacy of the program, the Councils now have physical, technological and methodological capacity that permit them to present and defend their claims internally, with the state and with external actors. The Councils believe they now even have more up-to-date information about their territories, than do the local authorities.

### **Unintended consequences: Can the government keep up?**

The regional INCODER office in the Chocó reported that Community Councils are newly empowered in land conflict resolution, thanks in part to PROTIERRA's contributions.

However, INCODER respondents also note they lack the ability to respond to new demands emerging from these groups. They report that they have no communication with INCODER offices in Bogotá; and that there are areas of the Chocó that cannot be visited for security reasons. This puts them at a disadvantage relative to the communities, and in direct conflict with other claimants.

As a result the Councils have come to believe they have more advanced capacities than do the regional state institutions, on issues related to identifying and updating land boundaries. Such an imbalance provides the communities with leverage, but can also be a threat – such as to the local and regional landowners and others with vested interests in land conflict outcomes.

Despite these capacities, however, the evaluation team observed that the degree to which Councils feel empowered by what they've learned varies. The Councils feel that their voice is enhanced when an international NGO such as Mercy Corps accompanies them to make these demands of the state, for example.

In Cocomaungúa, where the Council and its local counterparts are more distant from local and national institutions, and where a history of violence affects their state relationships, the Council was more willing to seek Mercy Corps' accompaniment in its relations with institutions. This Council appears to continue to wait for other external actors – whether international or at the national level – to intercede on their behalf. Their expressed wish is for assistance in obtaining more land and in developing productive projects.

In Cocomasur, the community has worked autonomously to undertake its petitions for more territory from the government. They, too, take advantage of the relationship with the international NGO Mercy Corps in order to get the attention of the national government and its institutions, while also ensuring their own independence and leadership of the efforts. Cocomacia, by contrast, benefits from its closer physical relationship with the state, because of its location in the departmental capital. For all three

Councils, Mercy Corps' support has helped to alleviate important state deficits in terms of information and organization.

## **Conclusions**

Mercy Corps' program has contributed importantly to communities' territorial empowerment. As a result of their participation, the communities have greater knowledge of their territories, they have developed successful mediation processes allowing community access to their land, and they have tools for mediating inter-, intra- and extra-community conflicts. In parallel to all of these results, the program opened space for women's participation in conflict resolution and territorial empowerment. The GPS trainings and use of this technology have helped communities recognize the shared collective areas as well as areas of private family ownership, and the beneficiaries have been able to better plan their land use. Also, they have been able to establish, for example, rules for fishing, forestry and mining, among others.

Communities have their own traditions of conflict resolution. Afro-Colombian communities in Chocó traditionally solve their disputes through dialogue. With community and Council participation in Mercy Corps' trainings, they have added an important skill set to this dialogue: a conflict typology, established protocols and procedures, solid measurements with GPS, and their awareness of the need to balance the participation in such processes between men and women.

The relationship of the program with other local, regional and national actors varies between the Councils. The program has been a good mediator with some external parties, ensuring the reliability and credibility of different stakeholders (national institutions, local municipalities, etc.) This is in part because of Mercy Corps' international standing, which makes them a strong partner for the Councils in these negotiations. PROTIERRA left the Councils with important tools to face the state in their ongoing relationship over lands. Whether the Councils do so appears to be related as much to the Councils' own predispositions – trust versus wariness of the State – as it does to their capacity to mediate on their own behalf.

# **RECOMMENDATIONS**

## ***Keep what works***

### ***Customize the intervention community by community***

Mercy Corps' commitment to customizing activities based on locally defined needs and interests was universally lauded by the Councils. Though this makes any program more difficult to implement, it also promises greater appropriation at the community level and encourages learning. *Use Mercy Corps' model and standards in this area as guidelines for all programming in ethnic and other hard-to-reach communities.*

### ***Take advantage of gender trends arising in the communities themselves***

Relatedly, important community-level change in gender roles and relationships is coming about as a result of demographic changes, violence, educational attainment and other factors. PROTIERRA took advantage of the greater openness to change by ensuring the participation of the women heads of households and leaders. Women with new usufruct

rights were more motivated to participate and to insist on space in community decision-making. *Incentivize students, activists, leaders, women heads of households, and other progressive community members, to lead the way to acceptance of changed gender roles.*

### ***Embed gender in important themes***

Mercy Corps' gender strategy included women in all program activities. Embedding gender in a set of topics that are timely and of great interest to the community encouraged participation, and put contradictory perspectives on the table in an environment designed to resolve conflicts. Land is one such theme; livelihoods and productive projects would be another. *Don't isolate gender, rather make it an integral part of an intervention where it will be part of the discussion, instead of locked in a silo.*

### ***GPS training – a simple tool with complex outcomes***

Training community users in Global Positioning System (GPS) technology's quantifiable measurements has empowered Afro-Colombians, including women, in conflicts within and between communities, as well as conflicts with outsiders such as local landowners. *Include GPS training in any future programs on land-related conflict resolution with marginalized communities.*

### ***Active and interested local councils***

Involve local councils in trainings and exchanges to ensure their inclusion. Continue to sponsor meetings between local councils and between communities in different regions and countries. Not only does this allow for sharing experiences and techniques, it also opens spaces for women's participation. *Develop rules to ensure that the implementation of the program is disseminated more fully to the local level.*

## **Lessons learned**

### ***Maintain realistic expectations***

Land tenure and gender are two notoriously resilient challenges in developing countries. The pilot, with its short duration and narrow geographic scope, cannot be expected to produce contested behavior changes in such a short time. *Manage expectations where deep-seated traditions are in question, and funding allows only for a brief intervention.*

### ***Ensure equity across implementation***

Mestizos, women, and local council respondents made their voices heard in the evaluation: community goods, including international development projects, should be available to all. While implementers in closed communities need to build working relationships with the gatekeepers, there is a parallel need to ensure that programming does not exacerbate exclusion. *Consider out-groups (geographic, ethnic, age-based, or other) in design decisions, and work with gatekeepers to ensure their inclusion.*

### ***Meet resistance head-on***

The main barrier to greater women's leadership remains men's resistance to recognizing women's leadership capabilities, and relinquishing space for their full participation. The threat such changes represent must be addressed over time and with attention to likely backlash and resistance from in-groups, reacting to out-groups' challenge to their



authority. *Include in-group resistance as an integral part of program design and theory of change.*

## **Build on success**

### ***Duration and intensity***

Increase the duration and intensity of training to sensitize community members and institutions about the gender roles at the root of community inequities. Activities designed to change stereotypes and increase women's leadership will not be fully successful in less than a year's time. *Build a detailed theory of change into the model, making explicit the dimensions of change sought, on what grassroots basis the intervention is built, what treatment and resources are needed to effectuate such change, and the assumptions and resistance that are likely to present obstacles.*

### ***Communities and institutions of the state***

These relationships are not a "given" after the program ends: it will depend on the trust built (or not) throughout the life of the project. Given the weakness of some regional offices and the poor relationships municipalities can have with the Afro-Colombian communities, the incentives are present for a concerted effort. *Encourage projects that work in these communities to establish regular, proactive relationships with the relevant stakeholders for trust building across programming with these communities.*

### ***Sustainability does not happen on its own***

If scaling up, scaling "down" or replication are contemplated, planning and resource allotment must be appropriate for the challenging environments in which the program operates. *Design and implement relationship-building for participant communities, with the institutions with whom they will have to advocate after program end.*

### ***Participatory evaluation includes sharing findings***

When working with vulnerable populations, such as ethnic communities and women, sharing evaluation findings shows accountability and empowers beneficiaries with the results of the interventions that affect them. *Wherever possible, include sessions to share and discuss results with the communities that were kind enough to share their experiences and opinions with the evaluation team and USAID.*