

## Programa de Reconstrucción Rural



Programa Reconstrucción Rural (PRR) is a Honduran rural community development organization based in La Buena Fe and has been operating since 1983. World Accord has been supporting PRR since 1984 in their efforts to provide health care, education, livelihood assistance and agricultural extension. PRR is committed to building community capacities among economically marginalized, rural families. Much of their work is to promote economically viable and environmentally sustainable agricultural techniques in the mountainous program areas.

PRR is currently working in 80 communities in the departments of Santa Barbara and Comayagua on the southern and western sides of Lago de Yojoa. PRR currently employs 18 staff and recruits its extension agents from the local communities.

Its primary service is agricultural extension, teaching soil and water conservation techniques to campesino farmers. PRR also operates a loan fund for agricultural inputs, grain storage silos and home improvements. In addition to agricultural training, PRR provides adult literacy classes, operates a health clinic at La Buena Fe and provides regular mobile health clinics in all 26 communities. Perhaps most important of all is the efforts to create community based organizations called “investigative committees”. All loans, training and clinics are solicited through these local groups.

### *Development Context*

Notwithstanding its natural wealth, Honduras remains one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. Of its five and a half million inhabitants, more than 60% are considered rural and of these, 70% live in absolute poverty.

Life is considered difficult for isolated communities in the mountainous Central-West regions of Honduras where PRR operates. Most rural families practice subsistence level agriculture and lack many of the basic necessities of life. Many of the communities are fewer than 10 years old and lack both physical infrastructure and established local governance structures.

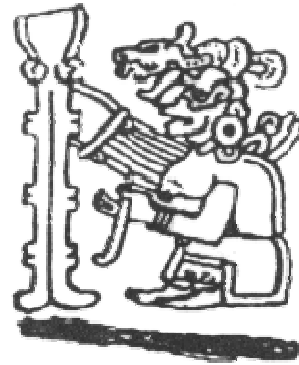
The average plot of land farmed by the campesinos is about 4 manzanas, however many of the farmers lack title to their land. Traditional crops of corn and coffee predominate however; vegetable and fruit crops are planted with increasing frequency. Farmers also earn money through the sale of coffee. Still common to the region is the practice of slash and burn agriculture, which is both economically inefficient and harmful to the environment.

Educational standards are very low in the communities. The literacy rate ranges from 25% to 50% throughout the region, largely dependent on the presence of schools but also according to the economic status of the families. Malnutrition although greatly diminished from the 1994 levels is still present amongst the children. Again, the actual rate fluctuates by community, however PRR estimates incidence between 15 and 25 %.

### *Project Goal*

To promote integrated participatory development with the people in the rural Honduran communities where PRR works. To achieve with program participants a higher standard of living with human dignity while conserving the natural environment for future generations.

## **Mujeres en Acción (MeA) - Guatemala**



### ***Introduction***

When World Accord began working with Mujeres en Acción in the early 1990's, MeA was a new, emerging NGO, under the direction of Felipa Xico Ajquejay. Today, MeA is a leader in the indigenous NGO community in Guatemala, and is making great strides towards unifying the many diverse voices in that nation. MeA is one of the great success stories to come out of World Accord's program in Central America.

### ***History of Mujeres en Acción***

World Accord's Guatemala partner Mujeres en Acción (MeA) has been an extremely valuable partner during the past three years. MeA's programming focuses around community organization in indigenous communities. MeA was organized and is run by Catchikal and Quiche women, and the vast majority of project participants are indigenous women of various tribal backgrounds.

Mujeres en Acción works in Guatemala with indigenous women's groups. MeA works to provide a holistic package of inputs, skills and livelihood training to provide Guatemalan women and their families with access to an acceptable standard of living. MeA seeks to train native women, especially widows as heads of households, in sustainable agriculture techniques in order to improve health, nutrition and food security. Appropriate agricultural technology has been introduced to the participants thereby increasing crop yields and providing income. Handicrafts and various cottage industries are financed through micro-credit loans and appropriate production and marketing assistance provided for the enterprise projects. Health, nutrition and sanitation are other areas which MeA training programs direct attention.

World Accord has been catalytic in forming this dynamic, indigenous NGO and helping to build its organizational capacities. MeA is now an effective partner, which continues to identify and meet the needs of indigenous Guatemalan women. MeA is a key partner in the World Accord program by working specifically with women's groups. Ideas and approaches generated by MeA around gender and development have been and will continue to be integrated into World Accord's program in other countries.

### ***Programming Activities***

MeA's program has a variety of activities, which work within World Accord's framework to empower the participants themselves to achieve sustainable benefits from their involvement with the program. Groups of indigenous women are organized and trained in a variety of organizational, management, and financial skills. Once trained, these groups are able to take advantage of MeA's micro-credit program. In this way, MeA is providing important skills, and the capital to put those skills into practice, allowing the women an opportunity to gain a measure of control over their economic destiny. This capacity building program has had powerful results in MeA's program area.