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Strengthening the Participation of Women in Development Plans of Extractive Reserves and Women's Health in Rondônia, Brazil.

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and Valéria Rodrigues*

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*Daniela J. de Paula,
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April, 2003

Part I: Strengthening the Participation of Women in Development Plans of Extractive Reserves in Rondônia, Brazil.

Daniela J. de Paula and Ronaldo Weigand Jr.

Translation by
Richard Wallace

Abstract

This work describes the strategies adopted by the Technical Cooperation Project team for the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Rondônia Agro-Pastoral and Agroforestry Plan (PLANAFLORO) in promoting the empowerment of women during the participative creation and implementation of development plans for two extractive reserves in Rondônia, Brazil. The strategies utilized included the formation of a mixed team of facilitators; separate household interviews with men and women; separate interviews with groups made up exclusively of men and women and a comparison of group results; special planning sessions for women; and the formation and training of women's groups. The results were very encouraging, with a great increase in female participation in the reserves and in the benefits gained by women and families.

Background and Context

Extractive reserves (resexes) are defined as areas for the sustainable development of traditional populations that base their livelihood on the extraction of products (fruits, saps, oils, animals, fibers, etc.) from the natural environment (land or water). They are public areas, with use given through concession to the associations that represent the inhabitants. Extractive reserves were a response to the process of appropriation of Amazonian lands occupied by extractivists, and the need for a model of tropical forest conservation that included the local

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populations in Brazil (Allegretti 1989 and 1994; for arguments against extractive reserves see Browder 1992 and Homma 1989 and 1992). Today, extractive reserves (and agro-extractive settlements, equivalent forms of natural resource protection and use through concession) account for more than 5.8 million hectares in the Brazilian Amazon, an area larger than Costa Rica (Table 1). In the state of Rondônia, extractive reserves encompass a total of 1.2 million hectares.

Rondônia has two federal extractive reserves, created by the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA), and 21 state extractive reserves, created through the implementation of then Rondônia Agro-pastoral and Agroforestry Plan (Planaflora). In 1996, the

Technical Cooperation Project of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for Planaflora initiated a project for the adaptation and application of participatory methodologies for the creation and implementation of management instruments for the reserves, known as "development plans" (Weigand Jr. and Paula 1998). A participatory process involving agencies from the State Government and the Rondônia Rubber Tappers' Organization (SRO) created a proposal for development planning that differed from the proposal of the National Center for the Sustainable Development of Traditional Populations (CNPT), a unit within IBAMA (of the Federal Government). While the proposal of the CNPT/IBAMA is more oriented to the ordination of activities in the resexes, in the Rondônia State resexes, the development plans reflect the objectives and strategies of development chosen by the communities, and

include community improvement projects based on the efficient utilization of locally available resources. The first development plans for extractive reserves in Brazil were

created for the states resexes in Aquariquara, Rio Cautário and Rio Pacaás Novos, all in Rondônia (Figure 1).

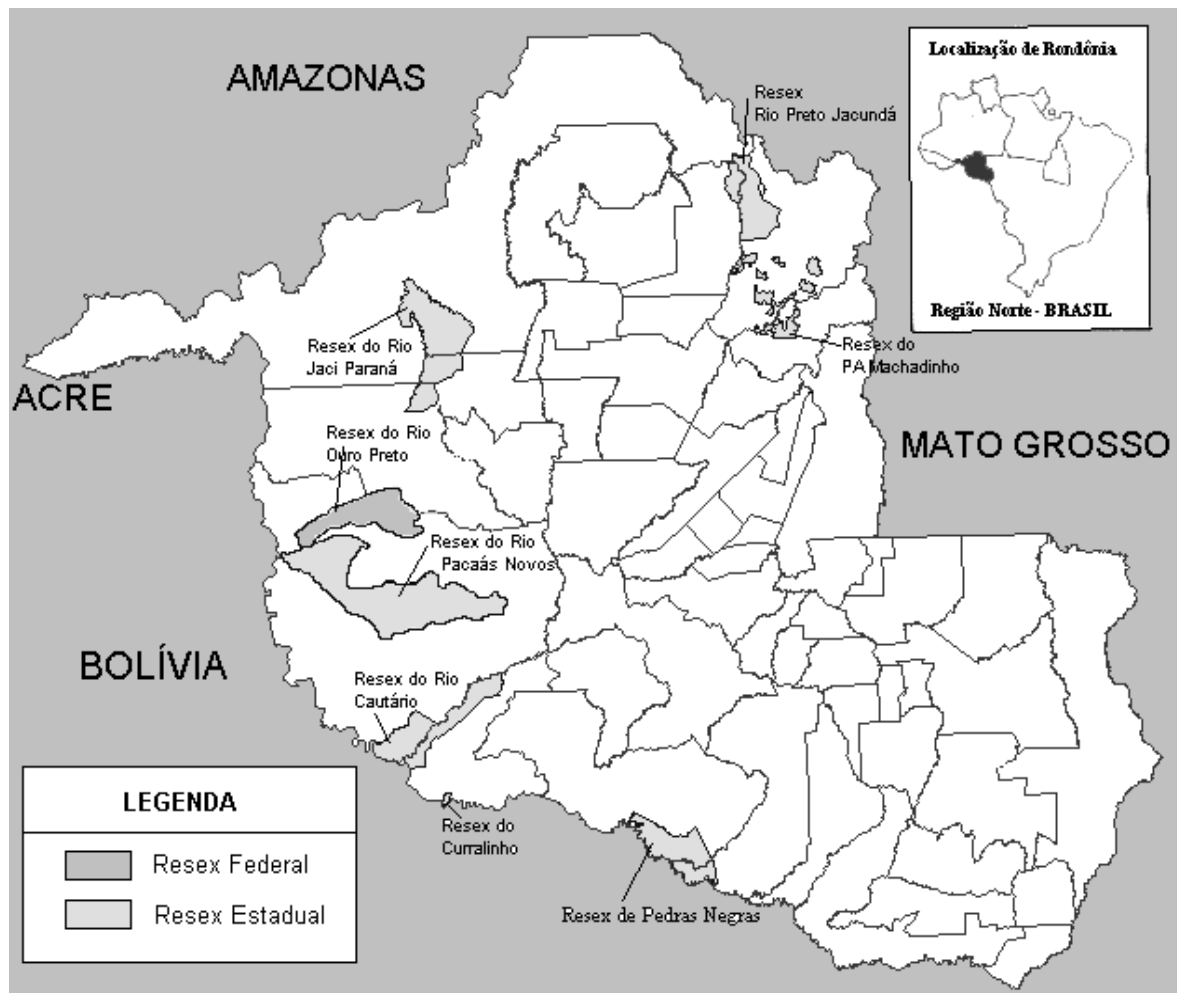


Figure 1: Map showing the location of the extractive reserves in Rondônia (the Resex Aquariquara is the largest reserve of PA Machadinho, found in the upper right corner of the map).

Source: Rondônia (1998a).

The Problem

The creation of extractive reserves does not consist only of the delimitation and legalization of their lands. The challenges for the development of resexes include the decreasing value of traditional products, the lack of schools and health service, and the disrespect of their boundaries by invaders that pillage resources and occupy lands. As a result, many families are leaving the reserves. In Rondônia, with a typical area for each family, on average, 500 hectares, resex areas

should support at least 2,400 families. Current data on the occupation of resexes is not available; however, based on the occupation of the resexes in which we worked, and considering that these are the reserves that receive the most support, we estimate that less than half of this number of families are, in fact, in the resexes. The participatory process was employed to strengthen the resexes of the State of Rondônia, first, adapting a methodology in pilot reserves, and later disseminating this experience to other reserves. In the pilot reserves, the federal

extractive reserve model proposed by IBAMA was revised and adapted to the context of the state reserves. Participatory methods were employed for the creation of Development Plans, strengthening the extractive communities so that they could secure the reserves in which they live.

Methods for the Preparation of Development Plans.

With the task of assisting communities in the preparation of their development plans, we had the following objectives: 1) the development plans would not be only on paper, but reflect the aspirations, reflections and collective actions of the communities; 2) the plans would actually have a significant effect on the quality of life of the communities; 3) the plans would train the communities for collection action, even without outside assistance; 4) our work would create guidelines for the creation of development plans in other resexes in Rondônia. It is not an objective of this case study to discuss the results of the development plans. We believe that the above noted objectives were met to different degrees, and describe the results from the Aquariquari and Rio Cautário Extractive Reserves in another publication (Weigand Jr. and Paula 1998).

However, it seems worthwhile to orient the reader to the methodology utilized. The creation and implementation of the development plans were based on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methodology, following the recommendations of the PRA manuals, such as NES et al. (1991), Odour-Noah et al. (1992), WRI e Grupo de Estudos Ambientales (1993) and articles such as Rocheleau (1992), and adapting them to local conditions. The process of adapting PRA methods to Rondônia and the job of creating the extractive reserve development plans began with two workshops to train local

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professionals, exchange experiences and evaluate the method (Rondônia 1996a; Rondônia 1996b).

Through the development plans, the communities organized themselves to implement the objectives and strategies that they themselves defined. This involved three phases: 1) appraisal, 2) planning, and 3) implementation. In this article, we describe the three phases for the Aquariquara e Rio Cautário Reserves. In the Resex Rio Pacaás Novos, the process was interrupted shortly after the planning phase due to difficulties in renewing project support. Thus, we do not describe what was done in this resex as we do not have data regarding results.

In recent years, there has been a growing critique PRA with regards to its capacity to empower women in the development process (see for example, Slocum et al. 1995). As will be demonstrated in this case study, we consider that PRA is not incompatible with the empowerment of women, but requires particular cautions, to be discussed later, for PRA to work in this manner.

The Situation of Women in the Extractive Reserves and the Origin of Efforts to Strengthen Women's Participation.

The inequality between men and women was perceived at the outset of the appraisal phase of the development plans, with women at a disadvantage. The activities carried out by women were not considered "work" and few women participated in the decision-making process in their communities. Even when they worked in activities that generated income, women extractivists did not normally have control over the money earned (See also the results of the appraisal carried out through the application of a questionnaire by women leaders in the resexes in the following

documents: Rondônia 1997a and Rondônia 1997b). The division of duties did not correspond to an equivalent distribution of benefits. This was anticipated by the facilitating team and was one of their concerns regarding the development plans.

This situation, already perceived by the extractive leaders, brought about a request from the SRO to the Technical Cooperation Program of UNDP/ Planaflores, to implement activities to strengthen the role of women in the resexes. Therefore, this activity was integrated into the assistance previously requested by the OSR to UNDP/Planaflores for the creation of the development plans.

Including Women in the Stages of the Development Plan.

In our previous experience with extractive communities, we learned that communities place barriers on the work of male facilitators/interviewers with local women. There is a lack of confidence in relation to outsiders, and it takes time to establish the required trust. Although less severe, barriers also exist to work by female facilitators with male community members. Therefore, to include the perspectives of women and men in the creation of the development plans the facilitating team was mixed, formed by men and women. Nevertheless, to have a mixed team does not resolve all of the problems as women outsiders carry as many preconceptions about the local women as do male facilitators. In any case, the presence of facilitators in a team established greater possibilities for learning about the conditions of local women.

Another desirable approach would be to have a multidisciplinary team. Our project team was not multidisciplinary as this requires the participation of many professionals. It would not be sufficient that the team be "bi-disciplinary" (with a biological scientist and social scientist), since many questions about health and education would not be within the specialization of either professional. An ideal team would have professionals from the biological, agrarian, social (including education) and biomedical

sciences. However, this would greatly increase the cost of the work.

Our team was made up of professionals from the agrarian sciences with interdisciplinary educations. To cover technical areas in which our team was perceived to be more limited in the first development plan (Resex Aquariquara), in the appraisal of Resex Rio Cautário, we had the participation of voluntary consultants, university professors and advisors to non-government organizations, who assisted us without increasing the project cost. The voluntary consultants did not accompany us to the field, but based on their experience with extractive reserves and specific areas of the development plans (health, education, income-generation and environmental protection), they identified questions, problems and suggestions for solutions from reading the participatory appraisal reports. In this way, the inclusion of various points of view and men and women's access to planning was facilitated.

1. Appraisal:

From the start of the appraisal, separate interviews were carried out with men and women, and when possible, with children. Gender spaces were respected in a natural manner, following local traditions. Upon arriving at a house, after introductions, it was common for the women to go to the kitchen to prepare coffee, leaving the men of the house to speak with the facilitating team. The facilitators soon after offered help in the kitchen, and there the conversation unfolded, often very easily. The kitchen was a very comfortable space for the women, and it was there that a great part of the interviews and other activities with them took place. The men, during the interviews, normally stayed in the living area or went outside to walk around the house with the facilitators.

In the general meetings with the communities, all were invited, but the presence and participation of men was always greater. We determined that this occurred due to the tradition of greater involvement of men in the community organization, the lack of custom of participation by women in decision-

All of the work in the Resex development plans involved an attitude of learning and reflection on the part of the facilitating team. In the process, the methodology was being adapted and consolidated in response to the specific challenges that

making, and the domestic activities of women, such as taking care of the children and preparing meals, that made their participation difficult.

All of the work in the Resex development plans involved an attitude of learning and reflection on the part of the facilitating team. In the process, the methodology was being adapted and consolidated in response to the specific challenges that arose. When we perceived that a mixed team and separate interviews were not sufficient to strengthen women (despite providing good data regarding their situation), the team adopted special strategies for the inclusion and empowerment of women in the following development plan phases in Aquariuari, and from the start in the Rio Cautário Reserve.

In our appraisal, through the use of "PRA tools" (seasonal calendars and tables to analyze activities), we identified a division of work and roles by gender. This was important to make visible the role and function of men and women within the community and the family.

However, we learned that some caution ought to be taken in the group interviews (as well as in households). In mixed groups, many women were inhibited to state their opinions and contradict opinions of males. Thus, we proceeded to use the participative research techniques with a gender emphasis separately with groups of men and women, to obtain more reliable results.

In the meetings exclusively with women and in household interviews (in which women were interviewed by women facilitators in their typical spaces in the landholding), some interviews revealed that the appraisal was the first opportunity for women's opinions to be heard in the community organization process. The participating women expressed, many times with resignation, their disadvantages in relation to men, and their specific needs. The meetings with women were important so that these problems would rise to the surface and might later become a target for planning. The content of these interviews will not be described or analyzed here (this was done in the development plans of the two reserves) but they were essential for the creation of a

more complete picture of the realities in the reserves. Many times, women gave responses that contradicted responses given by the men, even in the case of "objective" facts, indicating that one of the two (or both) were lacking the truth about the subject. The team tried to be impartial in these cases, but created hypotheses regarding what might actually be occurring in the family and the community, testing them in interviews and subsequent meetings. All of this created a much more complete appraisal than if the activities had been done with only males or females, or with only mixed groups.

However, the development plan appraisal was not just a phase for understanding and learning. It was also important to lay the groundwork for the following phases: for example, the identification of leaders among the women, who might later serve as motivators within the community. This identification was based on the enthusiasm

demonstrated by women during our first contacts and meetings. Rather than create a formal role of "motivator," we sought to respond to the synergy generated by the interaction between the local women and facilitators, creating an atmosphere that might nurture leaders (by providing orientation, support, and space for conversations

about dreams and expectations).

The local women appeared to feel more self-worth due to the attention provided by the facilitators. The search for this attention was an important motivating component for the adoption of new roles for women in the community. The addition of outsiders to the community's "universe" brought both positive and negative feelings -- sometimes increased self-esteem, other times jealousy. However, it created an environment (at least temporarily) for the adoption of certain behaviors by women. Eventually it had a greater social impact by changing the traditional behavior of extractivist women to behavior that was more engaged, independent and participating.

However, one of the lessons learned is that participation should not be forced, but rather achieved by women. We learned that women may feel restricted by the "obligation to participate" and this can be harmful to project

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activities. For example, in the Rio Cautáurio Reserve, we made a special effort to invite the women and organize the meetings in a manner that would permit their participation. However, as the women were not accustomed to meetings, many behaved in a manner unsuitable for meetings, holding parallel conversations and not paying attention. This lack of experience ended up justifying men's preconceptions about women's participation. Yet, this is not to say that female participation should not be stimulated or favored. In the meetings exclusively with women, the lack of women's experience with participation as well as the preconceptions against women's participation in the mixed meetings began to be resolved. Little by little, as learning was achieved in the spaces created specifically for women, the women integrated themselves and gained a place in the "mixed" spaces traditionally occupied by men.

2. Planning:

The planning stage followed different strategies on different occasions in the two reserves. The basic technique employed involved group interviews taking the following steps: 1) discussion of the appraisal; 2) prioritization of problems; 3) dividing into groups; 4) use of a list of questions to generate a discussion of objectives and strategies for development; and 5) use of a project matrix for the planning of actions to resolve prioritized problems. The women participated in the planning meetings, but as had occurred in the appraisal stage meetings, male presence and participation was greater. As always, the participation of women in the mixed group, while they were sometimes present, tended to be lower.

As a result, in Aquariquara, few of the planned actions of the first plan reflected the specific needs of women. Thus, during implementation, assistance directed at strengthening their participation became necessary. After two months of implementation, the women of one community were invited to a meeting in which they

identified their problems and planned activities.

This meeting in Aquariquara was the first one that we had with the women and took place in the kitchen of one of the reserve inhabitants. The discovery of the kitchen as a space for participation was surprising. Often, when we think about strengthening women's participation we think of questioning the conventional spaces and roles imposed upon women. The idea that "a woman's place is in the kitchen" must be confronted and defeated. However, we learned that with the women of Aquariquara, the kitchen can also be a place for meetings, participation, and solidarity among women. As it is an exclusive space of women, the kitchen can be a departure point for the liberation of the woman

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rubber tapper, in which her power is prepared and seasoned, just as is done there with meals, to be served at the appropriate time in public spaces. This experience in Aquariquara is described later when we discuss the development plan implementation, but it profoundly influenced the carrying out of our work in the Resex Rio Cautáurio.

In the creation of the Rio Cautáurio Plan, building on our previous experience, an interview was carried out in the appraisal stage with a group of women to survey their expectations, specific problems and skills. A second meeting took place for planning specifically for women, to identify their priorities, objectives and strategies, and to prepare a simple project. That same was done in the revision of Aquariquara Plan, where a participatory planning meeting was held specifically to improve the situation of women. A group interview (only women), with the help of a script of questions, was used to prioritize problems and prepare a project.

3. Implementation:

One strategy used in the implementation phase was the formation of groups of women to achieve a specific objective. The groups were suggested by the facilitation team, and were an effective method as an educating space for decision-making, reducing inhibitions, and self-management. The

“women’s group” is a unit of community organization – it is not separate from the community context – and little by little it inserts itself into decision-making spaces.

In the meetings of these groups, in addition to the exchange of ideas or specific training sessions (in gender and community organization, and in the production of flour made from the babaçu fruit in the Resex Aquariquara; and in health – see Part 2 of this case study -- in Resex Rio Cautário), practical handicraft activities were undertaken, such as crochet, cloth-painting and soap making, all suggested by the women’s group and taught by women from their respective communities. Initially, the facilitating team provided the materials for the classes, but the women continued to conduct these activities on their own account, using their own materials. These practical activities of the women’s meetings were one innovative aspect related to our work. In general, the meetings with the men tended to be more focused on discussion alone, and the most that they took home was weariness and a work plan, but often as well, enthusiasm to implement it. Through crochet, making soap or painting, the women returned to their homes with a new skill, one that gave concrete results to the meetings, justifying the time spent discussing and practicing women’s participation. These activities also helped the women to relax and increased the identification of participants as group members.

While appearing to reinforce the traditional role of women, these activities, because they were typically feminine, provided safe ground from which empowerment of the women might emerge. In the groups, the exchange of experience, and the use of local resources and popular knowledge were valued as sources of improving the life of women and the entire extractivist family.

4. Implementation in the Resex Aquariquara:

In Aquariquara, work was initiated in one of the communities through a class on cloth painting with a group of women. The other community, aware of the work that took place, also became interested in forming a group. A

meeting was held in which they learned to prepare sweets and preserves, taught by a woman leader of the local rubber tapper movement. However, recreational activities, such as painting, or purely domestic activities, such as the preparation of sweets, were not sufficient to satisfy the women for long. They needed a more ambitious objective as the crisis in the rubber market paralyzed sales and income became the primary preoccupation of everyone. Possibly as a result of this crisis, the men’s reaction to the participation of the women’s groups was very positive (there was also work carried out by the team to demonstrate the value of the activities of the women’s group to the men). The urgency of the situation probably helped make the traditional gender roles more flexible.

As stated above, after the first group of women in one of the communities of Aquariquara was formed, the women of the other community began to ask themselves why they did not have a group as well. Given this demand for organization, the next step was an activity to form the group, which took place through with a workshop on community organization and gender relations. The themes were explored through dynamic activities, music and reflection. After the workshop, a “home remedies group” spontaneously formed in this second community. It functioned in an autonomous manner (without advising from the team) and

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was formed only of women, meeting every two weeks, with one of the women serving as the group “monitor.” Some young girls of the community also participated in the group, and they surprised us with how much they had learned about medicinal plants.

Later, in the six-month evaluation of the Aquariquara Development Plan, with the creation of new projects, a specific plan for the women was made. In this plan, increasing income was prioritized, and the production and marketing of flour made from the babaçu palm fruit was the strategy suggested and chosen by the women to meet this objective. In one workshop, one of the women taught the others how to make the flour. The facilitating team

advised on the marketing of the product. Initially, as it was a product still little known in the municipality, the women held a "babaçu day," with the distribution of pieces of cake and *mingau* (a dish similar to oatmeal), accompanied by informative pamphlets prepared by the team, in one small local supermarket. In just an hour and a half, the women sold 15 kilos of flour. The women were also accompanied by a reporter from the local radio and were interviewed about their activities, promoting the product. Later, through more intensive support, the women's group received additional assistance to improve product quality. Although they did not receive further assistance, the groups continued commercializing the flour and expectations were that the activity would expand. For some families, it was estimated that income from the sale of flour corresponded to a 10% increase in family income in the initial period; however there is no data regarding current sales. In addition to being a source of income exclusively for women, babaçu flour has also helped to diminish the household expense for wheat flour, as babaçu flour can be substituted for 50% of the wheat flour used to prepare pies and cakes.

Among the results of the work in Aquariquara, one highlight is the increase in women's participation in the decisions of the reserve communities. Over the period of project activities, the number of women members of the Association increased substantially. In one of the communities, the number of women members increased from one to seven, including more than half of the families. In addition, some women ran for community offices, though they were not elected.

5. Implementation in Resex Rio Cautário:

In the Resex Rio Cautário, as a result of the planning meeting exclusively for women, health improvement was prioritized and the creation of women's health "monitors" was established as a strategy to meet this objective (See Part 2 of this case study). Three training sessions were held with the following themes: women and children's

The participation of women in these training sessions was so great that a majority of families had a "monitor," which decreased interest in creating a special group of "health monitors."

health; methods to diagnose illnesses; worm illnesses; traditional home remedies; and medicinal plants. Currently, each community depends on a basic pharmacy of medicinal plants and women capable of carrying out pre-natal exams. The participation of women in these training sessions was so great that a majority of families had a "monitor," which decreased interest in creating a special group of "health monitors." There is no data regarding the impact of the monitors on the health of the Resex Rio Cautário inhabitants. However, the design team for the "State

Health Plan for the Extractivist Population of Rondônia" noted that the women of Rio Cautário had a greater knowledge of health in relation to women in other reserves in the state (Marta Duarte, personal comm.)

The Male Reaction

In strengthening the participation of women, we awaited a reaction from the men. According to Townsend et al. (1999), men in different societies view gains in power by women as a threat to their own power. According to these authors, power is a zero-sum game; it is not possible for women to gain power without men losing it. Maybe idealistically, our team worked under a different premise, that both could win. Therefore, besides stimulating the formation of women's groups, activities were carried out in an integrated manner, attempting to include women without isolating them and without reinforcing discrimination against them. Despite the fact that the extractive communities often resisted mixed activities, during project implementation their positions became more flexible, improving the work of men and women in the same group.

One method of avoiding the development of male resistance to our work with women was to involve men in encouraging women's interests. Rather than emphasize differences, we emphasized common interests. The benefits that would accrue to the entire family through the increased participation of women were emphasized in meetings and activities with the men. Except in a few isolated cases, men appeared very pleased with the work that was carried out with the women.

In the Resex Aquariquara, men expressed this in an exclusive meeting among themselves, stating that “now women are happier, more animated.”

In fact, we cannot expect that male domination over women will not produce resistance by the women. The women resist domination, and in many cases they likely used resistance tactics, such as reducing their work, and others described by Scott (1989). As women gain power, part of their resistance becomes less necessary, and therefore women are “more animated,” resulting in greater benefits for everyone, including men.

In Resex Rio Cautário, men demonstrated this same support of the strengthening of women’s participation, by for example, taking charge of the house and children during the four or five days that women were participating in a training course on health. By carefully making visible the benefits of empowering women to the entire family, adjustments required of both men and women, to this gain in power, became easier.

The Relevance of Gender

Gender is a basic concept that refers to the roles and relationships between women and men not characterized by sexual characteristics, but by history, ideology, religion and economic development of a culture. To adopt a gender perspective is “to distinguish between what is natural and biological from what is social and culturally constructed, and in the process, to renegotiate the limits between the natural, relatively inflexible, and the social, relatively transformable” (Kabeer, 1990 cited by INSTRAW-UN 1995).

In this article, we do not discuss the origins of female inequalities in extractive reserves, but focus attention on the impact of specific strategies, based on gender, in strengthening women’s participation. We held as a general premise that inequalities were due principally to the history of extractive production, with traditional products acquiring economic value through commercialization

(rubber and Brazil nuts) dominated by men, as a result of their relationship with a patron. However, these unequal relations are also

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reflected in the standing of women in Brazilian society, in general, in the past and the present. Our premise should have led us to propose income alternatives for women in the three reserves. However, this was not the case. We preferred to prioritize community participation over our theoretical views of the

cause of local problems. We worked with women’s participation and left the identification of problems and causes, as well as proposals to empower women, to emerge from their groups. This resulted in different strategies, such as the prioritization of an increase in income of the women in Resex Aquariquara and the improvement of health in Resex Rio Cautário.

Participatory methods are essential to strengthen women’s participation. At the same time, a gender perspective is vital to ensure that community participation results in female empowerment. There are many justifications for the inclusion of the gender perspective in participatory projects, including:

- inequalities among men and women are great, with women discriminated against; overcoming inequalities is an indispensable condition for development;
- participatory programs and projects that do not adopt a gender perspective tend to benefit half the people, generally men, and do not efficiently meet their objectives;
- including the gender perspective facilitates the better use of available resources (human and material), and not including this perspective weakens various initiatives;
- further, its inclusion results in the fair distribution of improvements, contributing to sustainable development.

The gender perspective values the role of women as promoters of development. Improving women’s standing improves the lives of all the family members, as women have fewer tendencies to divert resources from economic activities for personal use (Rojas 2000). On the other hand, as confirmed by Suarez and Libardoni (1997), the

emphasis given to the feminine side of gender is a result of inequalities, but only the sum of the forces of men and women will be able to reach the desired objectives of the collective group.

The goal of incorporating the gender perspective in programs/projects is to stimulate the productive potential of men and women as promoters of development. Both men and women should have the power to make decisions regarding the manner in which they are able to contribute to the strengthening and the well-being of families and communities.

Another advantage of investing resources in the strengthening of women in the context of development is the possibility of a greater return on investment. In *resexes* in Rondônia, women respond more rapidly and better than men in activities to mobilize the community for development. Further, they have a greater commitment with established goals and are more likely than men to innovate in their search for alternatives to improve family income. While men were more skeptical in their behavior -- avoiding risk, which is likely a consequence of their prior experience with failed projects and their role as "provider," the women have less to lose in their projects¹ and have lower expectations than if activities were paternalistic.

In addition, the women's projects were simpler than those of the community in general as they did not have to respond to larger issues such as education, health, protection and income, which often arise at the same time. Their planning was a training exercise, while the planning session of the men was not only theirs -- it was for the whole community, and had the job of responding to the demands of everyone. Because of this, the work of the women, which concentrated on a few objectives that were more easily executed than that of the community in general, had greater success. Therefore, it stood out in the implementation of the development plans in Rondônia.

Implications for Practice

Working with a gender perspective is not the same thing as favoring women's empowerment. A gender perspective can also be used against women and perpetuate their submission. For example, by knowing the

impediments for women to participate in meetings, one can try to resolve them, or strengthen them. However, considering gender differences is fundamental to open opportunities for women's participation.

Yet, we should not presuppose that just by opening opportunities for female participation in projects, that participation will occur. There are many barriers to effective participation by women in extractive reserves, from cultural barriers to the lack of practice and training in the process of organization. In our work, many of the impediments to female participation were removed or reduced by strategies adopted by the team. Previously, in the *resexes* described in this article, female participation was limited by the manner in which community participation was organized: meetings always took place at the same place (making the participation by women who lived far from the meeting difficult or impossible); the women were obligated to cook for the meeting; there were no arrangements for taking care of the children during the meetings; and women were not specifically invited (contrary to men). The lack of a revolving meeting place allowed women living near the locale to participate more (when they were not preparing food for the participants), although the more distant inhabitants did not participate, as they had to take care of their domestic responsibilities. In addition, there was a local preconception against female participation in mixed meetings.

These limitations to participation were identified little by little. We were careful to alternate the location of meetings to encourage the participation of more distant male and female inhabitants. We planned the preparation of meeting meals in advance, so that women would not be confined to the kitchen. In some cases, such as assemblies, or special meetings, a local cook was contracted, to allow the participation of other women. Arrangements to take care of children were more difficult, but the women often rotated childcare responsibilities, and all the participants had patience with the cries of babies during the meetings.

Therefore, we detail the following implications (some new, others already known) of our experience in participatory management of natural resources with a gender perspective as well as a perspective to strengthen women's participation:

- 1) We should not presuppose a particular division of labor. Each community represents a unique division of labor, and variation exists among all the communities.
- 2) When a project includes local participation without strategies to balance participation and benefits for men and women, inequality tends to increase. While non-participatory projects are a "shot in the dark" that may benefit men or women, participatory projects without special strategies to equalize male and female participation tend to score a "bull's-eye," benefiting only men.
- 3) Extractivist women are not as prepared as men to participate. The formation of groups of women and training in community organization can help to diminish inequalities. Female participation should be gradually incorporated into projects, in a form in which their abilities to participate together with men continue to develop.
- 4) However, experience can be a barrier to activities. The rapid response of women to the strengthening activities could have resulted from their being less exposed to the practices of paternalistic projects than men. As women have been a less frequent target of development projects, they are less addicted to paternalistic practices, and more open to experiment with simple projects. Women tend to be more confident in themselves in defining goals and dividing tasks, as they are less accustomed to being given things for nothing. Because of this, they are more realistic. In our experience, this also was the case with the communities (men and women together) that received less attention from previous projects. Generally, these communities responded more quickly and better than the communities with a long experience with projects.
- 5) Group activities gave the women extractivists a special satisfaction, and the community organization became less a weight and more a social event. On one side, the women extractivists are very practical and expect results, even if very basic, from their activities. Thus, simple activities, such as crochet, were important to maintain the enthusiasm because of the immediate results that they provided while greater challenges were attempted.
- 6) Although the experiences of the women extractivists were positive, there were occasions of conflict and jealousy. For example, in one reserve there was a certain climate of dislike between protestant and catholic women, but this did not impede their participation in the same group. Conflicts of this type are normal in small groups. In addition, there was a certain competition among women for the attention of the facilitators, which required the facilitators to take great care to not hurt feelings and maintain equal treatment of all members of the groups, despite personal feelings. This was not always possible.
- 7) The timing and continuity required for a job well done are very important. Our best results were attained in the Aquariquara Reserve, the first to have a development plan and activities to strengthen women's participation, despite the fact that at this site we had less experience with this type of work. In the Resex Rio Pacaás Novos, we cannot talk about results, as the accompaniment of the PNUD/Planafloro Technical Cooperation Team ended before the implementation of the development plan. Implementation of the plan was left to the local association that had only one male advisor. Thus, it was not enough to have participatory appraisal and planning. It is through implementation that results are seen and it is the results that give meaning to participation.

Table 1: Extractive Reserves and Extractive Settlements in Brazil

State	Category	Name	Area (hectares)
Acre	Federal Extractive Reserves	Alto Juruá	506.186
		Chico Mendes	970.570
		Nova Esperança	2.576
	Extractive Settlements	Porto Dias	22.145
		Riozinho	35.896
		Cachoeira	24.973
		Sta. Quitéria	44.000
		S. Luiz do Remanso	39.572
Amapá	Federal Extractive Reserves	Rio Cajari	481.650
	Extractive Settlements	Maracá I	75.000
		Maracá II	22.500
		Maracá III	226.000
Amazonas	Federal Extractive Reserves	Rio Jutai	250.000
		Médio Juruá	253.226
		Carauari	450.000
	Extractive Settlements	Antimari	260.227
		Terruaã	139.235
Maranhão	Federal Extractive Reserves	Ciriaco	7.050
		Mata Grande	10.450
		Quilombo do Frexal	9.542
Mato Grosso	State Extractive Reserve	Guaribas / Roosevelt	57.600
Pará	Federal Extractive Reserve	Tapajós-Arapiuns	640.000
Rondônia	Federal Extractive Reserves	Rio Ouro Preto	204.583
		Lago do Cuniã	70.000
		Roxinho	882
	State Extractive Reserve	Seringueiras	537
		Garrote	802
		Mogno	2.450
		Piquiá	1.448
		Angelim-Jequitibá	8.923
		Itaúba	1.758
		Ipê	815
		Jatobá	1.135
		Massaranduba	5.566
		Maracatiara	9.503
		Sucupira	3.188
		Castanheira	10.200
		Aquariquara	18.100
		Freijó	600
		Rio Preto Jacundá	115.278
		Rio Jaci-Paraná	191.324
		Cautário	144.371
		Curralinho	1.757
		Pedras Negras	124.124
		Rio Pacaás Novos	342.903
	Federal Extractive Reserve	Extremo Norte do Tocantins	9.280
		BRAZIL	5.797.925

Source: CNPT/IBAMA, PNUD/PLANAFLORO, PNUD/PRODEAGRO, Menezes (1994).

Part II: Gender and Women's Health in the Rio Cautário Extractive Reserve, Rondônia, Brazil.

By

Valéria Rodrigues

Introduction

Since the creation of the extractive reserves, many projects have been implemented, most of them focused on conservation of the forest, improvement of income and agroforestry. However, the people who live in the reserves need health assistance and education, in addition to these other aspects of development. The Brazilian Health System is inadequate for people in extractive reserves. It is difficult for people to receive health care because that system is based on hospital assistance or curative medicine, and most of the extractive reserves are too far away from the cities. In addition, many problems could be resolved with prevention.

Recently, Rondônia's State Government has created some health posts inside these reserves. In general health agents selected to work in these health posts come from within the communities. This has brought some opportunities for health care. However when communities select these health agents they generally select only men, because of cultural and practical constraints for the women to leave temporarily the community and be trained in the nearby towns. The Brazilian Health System, and sometimes even rubber tapper organizations, does not consider gender relations within the extractive reserves. This hinders the work of the health agents. In some cases, health agents cannot do their jobs, because most people they assist are women and children. Women feel uncomfortable to talk to male health agents, especially in relation to their reproductive health. Unless this problem is solved, the permanence of families within the reserve will continue to be unstable. Therefore, the conservation of the forest is dependent on an adequate health system, which takes into account the gender differences within the community and adjusts health assistance to the conditions of extractive reserves.

However, few of the publications about extractive reserves focus on this topic. Studying the relations between gender and health care is important for community-based conservation projects. This paper intends to call attention to these issues and reflect about a health system adequate to the extractive reserves.

This case study is the result of a course intended to train female health agents in Rio Cautário Extractive Reserve, in Rondônia. The objective of the course was to improve women's situation, by focusing on their highest priority: health. After planning discussions with women in the Rio Cautário community, the UNDP/PLANAFLORO Technical Cooperation team requested the training.

The course was carried out at the Canindé landholding, a two-day boat trip from the city. The three-day course was given from July 27 to 30, 1997, with the participation of thirteen community women, of whom only four were literate. The course was developed with the women's involvement in problem appraisal and in the discussion of solutions adequate to the reality of the community. The discussion in this paper is based on the following sources of information: interviews with key-informants from the community, including midwives, teachers, health agents and several community leaders; non-structured interviews during travel, in which community health problems were discussed with the women, a community leader and a midwife; interviews with participants in the training sessions; and direct observation of health problems during the short time in the community.

Community Health Agents

There were three community health agents in the Rio Cautário Extractive Reserve. A health agent does malaria diagnosis and gives medicine to the people who have malaria. The National Health Foundation hired one agent, who was trained only to do curative medicine. Rondônia's State Government

recently hired the second health agent, who was not yet working because he was waiting for the health center to be built. He was trained in the hospital, and his training focused on curative medicine.

A third health agent worked for the Community Health Agents Program (PACS). This program was created to work with preventive medicine and women's health. However, this arrangement had not worked well in the reserve. The problem was that the agent applied the same health system used in the cities in the extractive reserve. Moreover, the health agent was illiterate. In his visits to the households, another man who accompanied him helped him to take notes in the interviews with women about their health problems and reproductive health. Therefore, because the women were inhibited to talk about this kind of problem with a man, especially when he was accompanied by another man from the community, they did not express their health problems nor ask the agent questions. The problem was even worse because these health agents were men, and the women did not have the choice to consult with a female health agent. The agents thought that the women did not want to talk about their health issues or did not have any health problems. Because of these issues, the health agent's performance in the community was unsatisfactory, and the community health programs did not achieve the objectives of preventing diseases and of improving women's health.

Health Problems Found in the Rio Cautário Extractive Reserve

People's views about hygiene and illness in the extractive reserves reflect the different conditions found there. On the first day of the course, the women elaborated their health concept, which was a combination of: pure air; quality of health care; food; bathing; smiling; relaxation; beauty; sunlight; caring; satisfaction; a clean body; women's meetings; disease prevention; domestic cleanliness; tranquility; and happiness. Starting from this concept they began to identify the health problems in the community.

Because the women were inhibited to talk about this kind of problem [women's reproductive health] with a man, especially when he was accompanied by another man from the community, they did not express their health problems nor ask the agent

Intestinal Parasites

Intestinal parasites in children and adults were the first health problem identified. They were caused by contaminated water from the river. In general, houses are built near the river and they utilize the river water for cooking, drinking, bathing and washing clothes.

The river is also used as means of transportation. Most families built latrines, but some families did not and continued using the river as their bathroom, causing contamination of the river water. Another problem was that they did not wash their hands after they used the latrine. Women discussed ways to reduce this problem. One of the solutions to the parasite problem was for children to wear sandals. Another solution was to teach children to wash hands after they used the latrine and before they ate. The latter solution was difficult because children usually played outside and it was not possible to observe them all the time. These solutions could help to decrease intestinal parasites, although certainly they would not resolve this problem completely. A better way would be to treat everybody in the community, and at the same time, to treat the water, to build latrines in each household, to build wells to catch potable water far from latrines and from the river, and to continue health education together with the health agents. Moreover, the community must participate in this process, discussing and seeking solutions to this problem.

Tetanus among Newborn Children

Most women in the course had had one or two babies who died from tetanus. They did not know what had caused their children's death but knew that it was something they used at the time of birth. This topic caused much controversy, because everyone did something different at the moment of birth. They did not know what was causing tetanus, which they knew by the traditional name "mal de sete dias" (seven days' disease). Some women had heard the term tetanus in the maternity hospital but they did not know what it meant. Some women thought that it was

some kind of hereditary disease. It was complex to explain to them, because most women were illiterate. Instructions to prevent tetanus were given on how to prepare the materials for the birthing process.

After it was explained how newborn children died from tetanus, women began to discuss another problem. They did not know that they should have the tetanus vaccine during pregnancy. Women who had been living all their lives in the extractive reserve never took this vaccine, nor had pre-natal exams. Discussion turned on what they could do to resolve this problem. Women began to think about why the government boats entered the reserve with people who came to fish, but not to vaccinate people.

Undesired Sterilization of Women

Undesired sterilization of women became a big problem in the extractive reserve because when women went to the maternity hospital in the nearby town to deliver their children, doctors asked how many children they had, and the doctor decided to do sterilization surgery without the woman's permission. Thus, many extractive women were sterilized and did not know what had happened. However, for women from the reserve, having many children was not seen as a problem. They believe that to give birth is healthy and if they do not get pregnant, they think they are ill. Most of them wanted to become pregnant again. In Brazil many health professionals think sterilization can resolve the

poverty problem. Certainly this is not true, and furthermore it disrespects women. Health policies must prepare adequate programs to attend the women who come from the extractive reserve, respecting their beliefs and culture.

Conclusion

On the one hand, health problems in Rio Cautário Extractive Reserve could be resolved with prevention practices that are relatively easy to do, but this is dependent on the performance of institutions working in this area. On the other hand, non-governmental community-based conservation projects need to focus more on health problems because improved health can contribute to better local livelihoods, allowing local people to remain in the area and protect the forest. If local people do not have basic living conditions in the extractive reserve, they will want to move to the cities, which could undermine conservation of natural resources in the area. Another problem of migration to the cities is that people who go to live in city slums find other problems, sometimes even more difficult to resolve. Thus, community-based conservation projects should also consider gender roles, health and education. The women in Rio Cautário Extractive Reserve expressed great interest in getting organized to improve health in their community. Material support and orientation are essential for their success in meeting this challenge.

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Notes

¹ An example can be found in Aquariquara Resex. A priority in the second planning carried out by the men was "the price of rubber," an issue which solution was beyond their control and which, year after year, since the Second World War, has not been resolved. There, as well, only some adopted the various income alternatives chosen, while others waited "to see if it went right." Some inhabitants were extremely successful, for example, selling seeds from the forest. The women had a much more uniform adoption of planned alternatives.