



The Community  
Practitioners  
Platform  
for Resilience

# COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AT SCALE: GRASSROOTS WOMEN DEMONSTRATING SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES



HUIROU COMMISSION  
*Women, Homes & Community*



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The Huairou Commission

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## FOREWORD

Over the years, the Huairou Commission's Community Resilience Campaign has launched a number of action research initiatives and published case studies in order to bring grassroots women-led practices and strategies to the international community. Contrary to mainstream misconceptions that grassroots women's initiatives are small, dispersed, and ad hoc, evidence from Asia, Latin American and the Caribbean, and Africa shows that grassroots women have sustained, diversified, and scaled up their resilience practices, resulting in formal recognition by and collaboration with government entities.

"Community Resilience at Scale: Grassroots Women Demonstrating Successful Practices" showcases four resilience-building practices designed and implemented by grassroots women in Kenya, Nicaragua, Honduras, and India through GROOTS Kenya, Unión de Cooperativas de Mujeres Las Brumas, Wagucha and Swayam Shikshan Prayog. Leveraging support from Huairou Commission's Community Resilience Fund, the women started new initiatives or expanded and deepened existing ones, and transferred solutions to new communities. Practices featured in this publication represent just some of the highlights of grassroots women's achievements from 1,156 communities in 21 countries that are part of the Community Resilience Campaign.

With 2015 being an important year for global agenda setting to reduce disaster risks, the Huairou Commission is eager to showcase grassroots women's tangible successes in building community resilience. By center-staging grassroots women's values, actions and scaling up strategies, we affirm women's empowerment as a priority in long-term resilient development. Moreover, the practices featured in this publication attest to the innovation of Community Resilience Fund as a financial mechanism to strengthen grassroots capacities to catalyze systemic change. We urge policy-makers, development institutions, and civil society actors to take this opportunity to address grassroots women's concerns and support our ongoing work.

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## INTRODUCTION

All over the world, grassroots women have been organizing to improve their homes and communities for decades. Long before it became a buzzword, grassroots women have been doing what is now called resilience. Living and working in areas of poverty and marginalized from decision-making processes, women have been addressing water and sanitation issues, upgrading infrastructure, and seeking sustainable energy source because conditions of the built environment directly affect their ability to improve their lives and their families. Similarly, in rural areas, grassroots women have been developing seed banks, rotating crops and organizing to build a collective asset base. What is new is the scale in which these resilience practices are happening, spreading across neighborhoods, communities, and across countries.

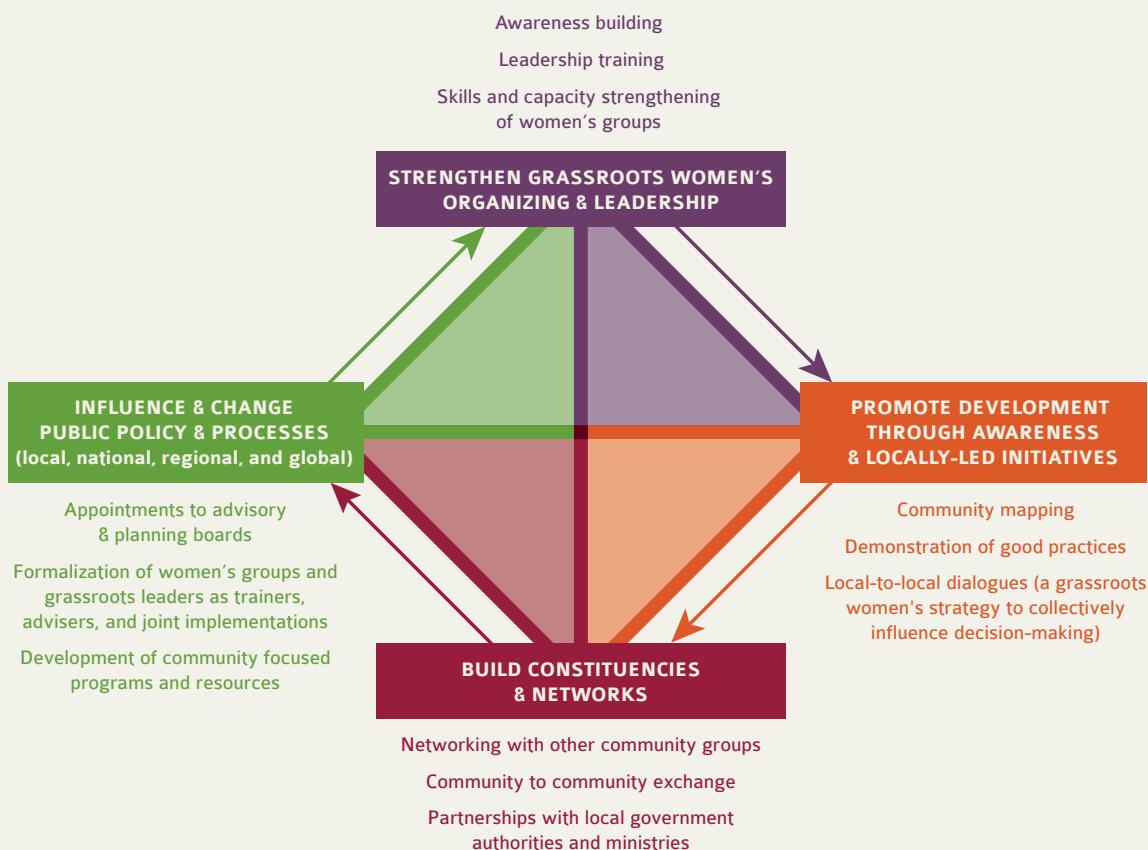
The current publication, “Community Resilience at Scale: Grassroots Women Demonstrating Successful Practices,” shares successful grassroots strategies for building community resilience to disasters and climate change. It showcases women leading sustainable development in their communities, and foregrounds scaling up strategies in order to influence global agendas such as the Hyogo Framework for Action 2 and the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

## ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR GRASSROOTS-LED RESILIENCE

Each grassroots women’s practice is situated within the context from which they were designed, implemented, and replicated. All of the practices are supported by the **Community Resilience Fund (CRF)**, a financial mechanism that channels flexible funds for grassroots women to develop their practices and leadership skills. Strategically invested in disaster-prone communities, the CRF enables grassroots women in rural and urban areas to demonstrate effective solutions to reduce vulnerabilities from severe storms, flooding, landslides, drought, food insecurity and other threats. Once grassroots solutions proved successful and scalable, communities would leverage change in local, regional, and national programs and policies. This phase is enabled by the **Community Practitioners Platform**, a networking and partnership mechanism that brings together different local, national, and regional stakeholders committed to supporting community-led resilient development by accelerating grassroots women’s public role in decision-making processes.

## CORE GRASSROOTS WOMEN’S STRATEGIES

The Community Resilience campaign conceptualizes a ‘Resilience Diamond’ to illustrate grassroots women’s strategies. Alluding to the geometric shape, the four points of the ‘diamond’ refer to four separate and distinct domains of activities that build community capacities for resilience. The horizontal and vertical axes connecting the top-bottom and left-right domains are mutual reinforcing. On the vertical axis, the internally focused “strengthening women’s organizing and leadership” is bolstered by outwardly focused work of “building constituents and coalitions” with broader community, local authorities, government agencies, NGOs, private companies, and other development actors. On the horizontal axis, practice-focused work



to “promote resilient development through awareness and locally-led initiatives” brings concrete benefits by providing technical capacity and resources to at-risk communities, and amplified by advocating for systemic change through “influencing and change public policy processes.” In short, the Resilience Diamond is a map of dynamic interlocking pathways that are continuously being developed, refined, and expanded by grassroots women working collectively with community and with external partners.

### GRASSROOTS SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALABILITY

Grassroots women have long-term agendas even if their entry points are sometimes short-term projects such as reclaiming water source or biogas programs. This is because the women are committed to empowering themselves in order to reduce their vulnerabilities to climate fluctuations and large-scale disasters. Rather than focusing exclusively on women’s issues, grassroots women look for solutions that benefit households and communities, thus they often work towards sustainable development goals. Their organizational structures are not only capable of self-organizing, but also learning and adapting to changing conditions.

While there is not one single definition or approach to scale up development practices, in general, “scaling up” refers to the expansion, adaptation, replication and sustaining of desired change in practices, programs, or policies. For grassroots women, scaling up is closely related to replication, with social mobilization as the underlying drive to shift their marginality and redress gender inequalities. Grassroots women’s scaling up combines both geographical expansion of coverage (i.e. horizontal scaling up) as well as institutional adoption of the program through governments, donors, and NGOs, (i.e. vertical scaling up).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> TSchnell, Sabina, and Derick Brinkerhoff, “Replicability and Scaling Up,” in *International Encyclopedia of Civil Society*, ed. Helmut K. Anheier and Stefan Toepler (Springer, 2010), p. 1312-18.

## COLLECTING GRASSROOTS SUCCESS STORIES

When members of the Community Resilience Campaign were invited to submit their successful solutions to collectively address risks, they were given a set of criteria that reflect the values and core elements of grassroots women-led resilience. We focus on 3 key elements from their stories that are deeply meaningful to grassroots women's leadership around the world. These were:

### **The practice must be women centered and promotes long-term processes of empowerment**

- a focus on capacity and skills building for individual women and their organizations;
- address issues that affect women's position in the communities in relation to disaster risk reduction and climate change.

### **Demonstrated tangible results that can be sustained over time**

- results in reduction of existing vulnerabilities;
- can continue in the absence of external funding.

### **Demonstrated significant degree of local adaptation of solutions**

- the group tailored the practice in accordance to their economic, social political and cultural context;
- while the solution may be a common-place practice (such as table gardens), it shows adaptation developed from sustained organizing and collective analysis.

## FOUR PRACTICES, THREE REGIONS

This publication features three agricultural and one alternative energy projects. Rather than seeing them in isolation, we show how through one practice, grassroots women are connecting to the multi-faceted work that the community-based networks and organizations are doing in disaster risks reduction and climate change adaptation.

There are multiple ways grassroots women utilize local, regional, and global learning networks to disseminate their practices, allowing each community to learn and adapt tools and strategies to local realities. Our examples illustrate two different approaches. In India, Swayam Shikshan Prayog facilitated cross-scale learning through peer exchange in three different states. In Nicaragua, Honduras, and Kenya, grassroots organizations/networks Unión de Cooperativas de Mujeres Las Brumas, Wagucha, and GROOTS Kenya facilitated learning within their member network of community-based organizations and cooperatives.

**SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES KENYA | NICARAGUA | HONDURAS | INDIA**



RURAL WOMEN LEADERS MEMBERS  
OF UNION DE COOPERATIVAS DE  
MUJERES PRODUCTORAS LAS BRUMAS,  
JINOTEGA, NICARAGUA



# GROOTS KENYA

## CONTEXT

The practice is set in the central highlands of Kenya, specifically in Gatundu, Limuru and Lari subcounties. Lari subcounty is particularly important geographically. The area is the main water source for Kiambu County and one of Nairobi's water catchments, where many of the rivers and streams that service villages and towns of the region originate. It is also where the Kereita forest is located. Its 4,722 hectares of greenery provide a vital carbon sink, absorbing more carbon dioxide than it releases. The forest has also been a source of firewood and food for the surrounding communities. However, in the last decades, illegal timber and commercial fuel wood harvesting, charcoaling, encroachment, and other human activities are over depleting the forest.

## FROM RISK MAPPING TO SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS

The biogas project began with 30 grassroots women leaders of 5 self-help groups – Lari Women Integrated Group, Tumaini Women Group, Limuru Pillars of Change, Gatundu Mwiririti Women Initiative, and Gatundu North United Women Initiative conducting risk mapping exercises in 2012. They agreed that the need for energy had driven the community to

rely on the forest to find firewood to carry out activities such as cooking and heating. The women also identified increased soil erosion, landslides and irregular rainfall patterns as risks and vulnerabilities in the communities. To help restore the ecosystem, among the practices identified was reforestation with indigenous trees, community and household woodlots and search for alternative sources of energy.

## LEVERAGING EXTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES

Ministry of Agriculture in Kenya has been promoting biogas technology as a source of alternative and environmentally friendly energy and offering technical advice to farmers. The women received training from partners such as Sustainable Agriculture Community Development Programmes (SACDEP), Biogas International, and Wambugu Agricultural Training Centre.

Grassroots women mobilized to identify households where biogas tanks were to be constructed. They also learned to become tank constructors themselves. In addition, they began to sensitize broader communities about biogas as a risk reduction solution. Thus planting seeds for replication in other communities at a future date.





**GROOTS Kenya** was founded in 1995 as a response to the lack of visibility of grassroots women in development processes and decision-making forums that affect them and their communities. It supports movement building by bringing together over 2,000 women-led self-help groups and community-based organizations throughout Kenya. It has been organizing women in Kiambu County to search for alternative sources of energy.

## PIVOTING TO MORE SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

The large cement biogas domes proved to be a challenge to implement. Grassroots women found that the cost of building the domes was high and the construction took time and effort from the women, who were originally looking to release some of their household burdens. Realizing this problem, GROOTS Kenya found a more flexible and mobile solution through Biogas International-Flexi Biogas Kenya in 2014.

Flexi Biogas utilizes a tent made with durable plastic polythene with 4 equal segments where waste is digested and no gas is released into the air. This process produces 99% of methane gas due to the high pressure aided by a greenhouse cover. Flexi biogas requires approximately 3 hours to install and within

7 days it can start cooking the waste. This makes it much more suitable for the women managing it. Since it is built with light materials, it can be relocated easily and even used in rental plots or houses. Likewise, local availability of the resources makes the scalability of the practice much more plausible than the older model. The community-based groups bought the units at affordable prices though money from their table banking,<sup>2</sup> which is another practice supported by the Community Resilience Fund.

With less time spent on collecting firewood for fuel, women realized that could dedicate more time for income generation and participating more in the public life of their communities.

<sup>2</sup> Table banking is a micro-financing practice where members pool together their savings and have access to small credit at low interest rates.

PHOTOS INCLUDE MEMBERS OF KIAMWORIA MWIRUTIRI MAKING BRICKS, GROOTS KENYA STAFF AND MEMBERS OF GAMWI INVOLVED IN CONSTRUCTION OF WATER HARVESTING TANKS, AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE DOME-SHAPED BIOGAS "DIGESTER". (ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF: GROOTS KENYA).



COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AT SCALE: GRASSROOTS WOMEN DEMONSTRATING SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES



# UNIÓN DE COOPERATIVAS DE MUJERES PRODUCTORAS LAS BRUMAS

## CONTEXT

In Jinotega, in the highlands north of the country, 72% of the women do not own the land they farm.<sup>3</sup> The rent or land loans represent a significant reduction of their net earnings. As many of them are heads of households, increasing production and security food becomes a priority in the context of climate change.

## GRASSROOTS WOMEN MAPPING THEIR REALITIES

In June 2009, a group of grassroots women organized by Las Brumas conducted a risk mapping of the area. After the mapping, the women were committed to staying organized, and they wanted to be trained in agricultural methods in order to improve their quality of life.

<sup>3</sup> This finding is based on action research conducted in 2013. Part of the results are published in Huairou Commission, *Mujeres Resilientes: incluyendo las prioridades de la resiliencia comunitaria en la Agenda post 2015* (2014).

## BUNDLING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL METHODS TO INCREASE PRODUCTION

Haydee Rodriguez, President of Las Brumas collaborated with Helen Toruño, a farmer and president of one of the Union's member groups who has formal training in agricultural engineering to introduce three agricultural methods -- diversified plots, table gardens, and plant nurseries that would reduce the community's risks from floods and drought.

**Diversified plots** are parcels of land divided into subplots (1 block = 7,026 m<sup>2</sup>), each is planted with a different variety of crops, e.g. combining annual and perennial crops such as fruit trees and coffee. The size of each plot is appropriate to each woman's capacity, for they have to divide their time between farming, daily household chores, and caregiving work. They also rotate crops to prevent soil degradation and control pests.

**Table gardens** are raised on an elevated surface approximately 1.20 meters high, 1 meter to 1.5 meters wide, 2 to 4 meters long, and 25 to 35 cm deep. Soil in the table garden is a half and half mixture of wild and organic soil to ensure good quality vegetables. The table garden does not require a lot of water and it is possible to have



**Unión de Cooperativas de Mujeres Productoras Las Brumas (Union of Cooperatives of Women Las Brumas), Nicaragua** was created in Jinotega after the civil war in the 1970s, when women from both sides, most of them widows with children, had to agree to rebuild their villages and their livelihoods. The only asset some women could count on was their land on which they began to farm. Thus, organizing farmer cooperatives became an effective reconciliatory practice. Las Brumas is now a network of 22 cooperatives and over 1,320 women, working towards food security, livelihoods, land tenure and more transparent service delivery from local and national governmental programs.

up to four vegetables productions annually. Table gardens complement diversified plots because women could combine producing for household consumption and selling at the market.

**Plant Nurseries** are set up in confined spaces that provide ideal conditions for growing different types of seedlings. Once the seedlings reach appropriate height and strength they are transplanted to their final plot. The women of Las Brumas use nurseries to produce an array of indigenous and drought resistant crops that would be planted in the diversified plots and table gardens. All three methods can be implemented continuously all year round.

With resources from the Community Resilience Fund, the women purchased seeds, tools and other materials to begin the project. As the women already have the knowledge on how to work the land, they determined the optimal use of available plots of land, used organic fertilizer for crop improvement, as well as soil and water conservation practices as preventive measures to avoid erosion and runoff.





### IMPACTS ON INCOME AND HOUSEHOLD FOOD CONSUMPTION

From 2009 to 2014, the number of diversified plots in the community increased four-folds, from 50 to 200 plots. Products found in one diversified plot are beans, corn, taro root, plantains, chia, yucca, sugar cane, green onions, granadilla (sweet passion fruits), pumpkins, chili, squash, carrots, cucumbers, shallots, cacao, and coffee. During the same period, each farmer's annual net earnings increased from C\$2,200 to C\$13,700. In the meantime, farm produce reserved for household food consumption increased from 200 to 1,500 *quintales*.<sup>4</sup> During the start of the project in 2009, crops were almost completely dedicated to coffee production. When

women started to integrate more crops inside one plot, household consumption of beans, a main food staple in Nicaragua, increased from 80 to 1,500 *quintales* from 2009 to 2014, representing a 19-fold increase.

Being organized, trained and implementing these sustainable agricultural practices has allowed grassroots women to gain recognition from local and national authorities, who now consider the women experts on resilience. In the case of Wiwili municipality, the government has allocated part of their budget to address grassroots women's priorities. Other stakeholders have also recognized women as leaders and representatives of a broader, well integrated and cohesive network of community-based organizations in Nicaragua.

<sup>4</sup> 1 quintal = 100 pounds





**ALBA LUZ HERRERA PÉREZ**

*“The war was difficult. We were left widows and without husbands we had no resources. As women we had the same needs and this united us. At the beginning, the thing that interested us the most was how to start to work. The diversified plots, the table gardens and nurseries have meant a change of life for us. We have food available, we get more agricultural outputs in a smaller space and even the school is receiving our help. We have something to eat and we are getting that from the table gardens, our diversified plots and nurseries to harvest, eat and sell. We don’t use any poison: the fertilizer is organic, made by ourselves, the women of the cooperative. The best thing has been the training received to learn how to improve what we already know how to do. We are grassroots women that now have a voice and our own money. I do with my harvest whatever I want. The authorities now listen to us because we are organized. We have the need for land. The owners rent it for us. The challenge now is to have our own land.”*



**MIRIAM RODRIGUEZ**

*“I see the relationship of my father and my mother and I think it is unfair. My dad took all the decisions. Now it is not like that. I feel strong and confident. In the workshops we talk about all we do and what we have learnt. If we do not build our skills, how are we going to help the other women? I love supporting other women, it comes within me. I can help with what I have learnt and I feel good. I was a blind woman before, shy. Now I can see and talk. In the cooperative we work together and have accomplished to have our own resources. I was able to educate with this hands. I was illiterate and learnt how to read. I was another woman but now I am not the same as before. I feel I accomplished to improve my life and I am grateful because of it.”*

RURAL WOMEN LEADERS AND MEMBERS OF THE UNIÓN DE COOPERATIVAS DE MUJERES PRODUCTORES LAS BRUMAS (UNION OF WOMEN FARMER COOPERATIVES LAS BRUMAS) IN JINOTEGA, NICARAGUA. (ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF: ANA LIZ FLORES.

MIRIAM RODRÍGUEZ, ALBA LUZ HERRERA AND ISIDORA RODRÍGUEZ. WIWILI, JINOTEGA.



# WAGUCHA

## CONTEXT

Situated in disaster prone region of Central America, grassroots women and men identified the following natural disasters they have experienced: flooding (78%), extreme heat (58%), storms (44%), drought (38%), and hurricanes (30%).<sup>5</sup>

## INTRODUCING MORINGA TREE CULTIVATION

In the last few years, Wagucha has been leading economic diversification that is also environmentally friendly. With support from the Community Resilience Fund and in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (SAG) in Honduras, Wagucha initiated seed banks, nurseries and sustainable agricultural practices in multiple communities. It is in this context that Wagucha started to introduce moringa (*moringa oleifera*) cultivation. Moringa originates in India, but it has been cultivated in tropical Asia, Latin America, Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific Islands. In fact, moringa cultivation is on the rise in Honduras – promoted by national government as a strategy to recuperate basins and reforestation. The plant has substantial market potential, given it

is easy to grow and drought resistance, and the fact that its leaves and seeds are highly nutritious.

Starting in the municipalities of Trujillo and Rio Esteban in Colón Department (in the north Caribbean coast), and in the municipality of Cantarranas in Francisco Mozarán Department (in the center of the country), Wagucha introduced moringa cultivation. The women began by growing moringa seedlings in black plastic bags in the nurseries. After a month, the seedlings are placed in the ground with compost. At eight months, it flowers and its leaves and pods can be harvested as food, or processed to be sold locally or in the capital city Tegucigalpa.

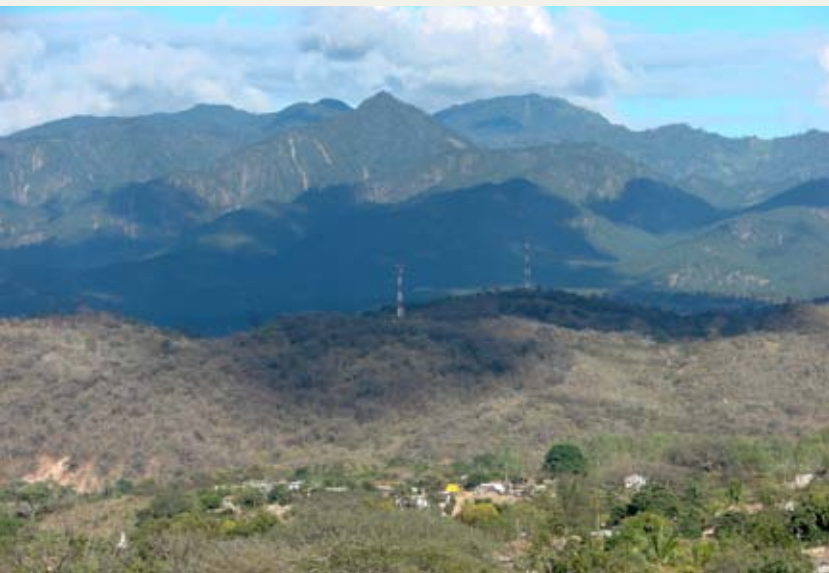
## RESULTS AND IMPACTS

Bringing moringa cultivation to Garifuna community in Honduras has directly benefited over 1,700 people in Trujillo, Barranco Blanco, Rio Esteban, Iriona Cusuna and Ciriboya. As it is an ongoing practice, more inhabitants in these communities are expected to adopt the practice. Currently, the grassroots women are registering to guarantee sanitation of moringa processing in order to commercialize on a larger scale. In addition to livelihoods, moringa has been used to reforest watersheds and conservations of soil in highly vulnerable areas.

<sup>5</sup> Huairou Commission, *Resilient Women: Integrating Community Resilience Priorities in the Post-2015 Agenda* (2015).



**Wagucha** was founded in 2005 in Honduras as a grassroots women’s organization working in sustainable development of communities. It focuses its work within Garifuna communities, who have historically been marginalized from socioeconomic development of the country. “Wagucha” in Garifuna language means “our root.” Its organizing strategies affirm Garifuna traditional values and ways of life. The organization also leads the Community Practitioners Platform for Resilience in Honduras, a multi-stakeholder mechanism for community based organizations and development actors, such as government agencies. Wagucha’s origin is in the Garifuna Emergency Committee, formed as a community response to hurricane Mitch (1998) in the coastal communities of northern Honduras.



**EVANGELISTA GARCÍA**

*“Moringa for us is an opportunity to obtain economic resources for our communities, through their use and commercialization. We can also use it as food and as medicine to heal ourselves and keep each other healthy. This practice, in conjunction with the other ones we are developing, builds our capacity and helps us to be prepared and respond to the climate change effects we are experiencing today.”*

GRASSROOTS WOMEN LEADERS OF WAGUCHA IN HONDURAS (ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF: MIRELIS MORALES TOVAR.



# SWAYAM SHIKSHAN PRAYOG

## CONTEXT

Gandhora village in the Tuljapur sub-district of Osmanabad district in Maharashtra state has a population of 4,000. Approximately 90% of the village relies on agriculture as main source of income. Traditionally the farmers of Gandhora depend on seasonal rains to irrigate the crops. In the past two decades, high returns from cash crops attracted farmers to move away from traditional crops such as sorghum (*jowar*), millet (*bajra*) and cereals to water-intensive cash crops such as cotton and sugarcane. With the change in climate and rainfall patterns, farmers are pressured to add agricultural inputs (e.g. seeds, fertilizers and pesticides). The cost of additional inputs has become less and less financially viable for most families, so their quality of life dropped considerably. On the other hand, the intensive and widespread use of chemicals and borewells<sup>6</sup> for cash crops adversely affected the ecosystem, leading to soil degradation, pesticide resistance, and decreased availability of ground water. As reservoirs and wells dry up, clean drinking water and fodder become less and less available, livestock rearing also began to decrease.

<sup>6</sup> Borewells are vertically drilled water wells encased with tubing to keep it from collapsing and keep the sediments out.

## ORGANIZING A WOMEN FARMER GROUP

A women's federation organized by SSP in Tuljapur sub-district held a meeting of 9 self-help groups of Gandhora village to understand the hazards, vulnerabilities and resources in the community. This eventually led the women to undertake a community risk mapping in May 2011. Community leaders, self-help group members, youths and *panchayat* (village councils) members participated in the mapping process.

Grassroots women identified water scarcity, drought and the risks these impose to their livelihoods as priorities to address. As a next step, a women farmer group composed of 25 members called *Krishi Mahila Mandal* (KMM) was formed in the village to lead the design and implementation of solutions. The formation of KMM gave the women a space for learning, thinking, and expanding agriculture practices and livelihoods.

## SEEKING TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Women of KMM in Gandhora met several times with the village assembly to explore plausible solutions to declining farm production. However, the men and the village elders were skeptical about the women's ideas. Undeterred, the women assessed





**Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP)** in India, meaning Self Education for Empowerment, is a learning and development organization that empowers grassroots women to access social and economic opportunities by providing technical support, promoting women’s entrepreneurship, and facilitating partnerships with institutional actors. This movement of women’s self-help groups dates back to the aftermaths of the Maharashtra earthquake in 1993. Grassroots women’s groups were mobilized by SSP during the reconstruction process to take public leadership in the government-led self-help housing repair and strengthening program. Today, SSP works in 4 states of India (Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Bihar) with 5,500 self-help groups representing approximately 80,000 grassroots women working collectively to address their long-term development concerns.

the need to have more technical knowledge from agricultural experts. Through the women’s federation, they partnered with Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK - a national network of vocation training centers for agriculture) at Tuljapur, an agricultural university at Parbhani, and the State Department of Agriculture to receive training and technical support.

## ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AND WATER SOURCES REVIVAL

The participatory process and community organizing to assess risks and search for solutions led to the development of two practices that are replicable:

**Organic and sustainable agriculture:** through the Community Resilience Fund, women farmers leased small plots of land or negotiated with their husbands for the control of a small parcel of

land and started experimenting with indigenous seeds, bio-pesticides, organic fertilizers such as *amrut jal* (cow manure) and *amrit mitti* (fertile nursery soil).

**Water sources revival:** with the support of a government program,<sup>7</sup> grassroots women recharged water sources through de-silting and channeling to improve the ground water level. Furthermore, the de-silted soils were deposited in the farmland, which improved soil fertility considerably.

<sup>7</sup> Upon learning from the district administration that the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNRREGS) could be utilized to build or repair water-harvesting structures on their lands, grassroots women made applications to village councils to select their lands for digging wells or rehabilitating other water harvesting structures. Women also regularly followed up with district and sub-district officials to ensure that applications from their villages were received and registered.

GRASSROOTS WOMEN LEADERS FROM BIHAR, TAMILNADU AND MAHARASHTRA, INDIA. (ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF: SWAYAM SHIKSHAN PRAYOG (SSP))



COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AT SCALE: GRASSROOTS WOMEN DEMONSTRATING SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES



## RESULTS AND IMPACTS

The participating women are now able to support their families by sending their children to school, consume good quality local food and increase nutrition of pregnant women and children, ensure local food security, reduce risk of drought and flooding with informed disaster task forces. They now have the knowledge to form partnerships with government, prepare local seeds, bio-pesticides and organic compost to increase production and quality and discourage dependence on outside markets for agricultural inputs.

Moreover, women's public role in promoting resilience is now recognized by their husbands and the community at large. After seeing successes from the women farmers using only small parcels of land, the men began to shift their practice from cash to food crops. Women become leaders in organic farming, attended state and national fairs invited by government, participated in radio broadcast discussion on agriculture, visited as trainers and in other villages invited by KVK.

After their success, the KMM wants to bring more women to adopt these innovations. They have started awareness program for new members, and the membership of KMM has grown from 17 to 50.

## SCALING UP SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

The organic and sustainable agriculture practice started with 20 women and has been transferred to more than 150 households in Gandhora Village.

With the facilitation of SSP and Community Resilience Fund, the women of KMM participated in learning exchanges with other grassroots women's groups in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Bihar States. Currently 2,260 women are implementing the agricultural practices, which directly benefit 2,800 families.





### THE STORY OF ANITA KULKARNI

One of the Krishi Mahila Mandal (KMM) members, Anita Kulkarni, has undergone various training programmes on organic farming organized for the group. She started vegetable cultivation in organic manner in one acre of her own land. She prepares her own seeds, uses organic fertilizer and bio-pesticides. Ms. Kulkarni took a loan to start farming, began inter-cropping, made three crops a year, and made a profit of Rs.10,000 to 15,000 per harvest. She was a key motivator and with the other members of the group, started the eco-friendly approach. She led by encouraging other women to contribute labour and seeds together. On the other hand, KMM was active in bringing new knowledge and partnership with specialized organizations.

This paved the way of to get recognition among male farmers who have been planning single cash crops. Since Ms. Kulkarni was successful in preparing seeds for her own farm according to the methods taught by the KVK, the latter made her an offer to buy seeds from her and promoted it because her seeds proved to be of higher yield. Ms. Kulkarni was interviewed by All India Radio and by describing her experience, requested the listeners to adopt her way of farming and marketing.

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