

# Participating Organizations

APRIL 2008

## Bolivia

Fundacion Apachita

## Brazil

Rede Pintadas

## Ecuador

Movimiento Nacional de Mujeres Luna Creciente

## El Salvador

ACUDESBAL

## Guatemala

ACODIMAM  
Asociacion Ak'Tenamit  
Asociacion K'Aache  
Fundacion Guatemala  
JUNAJIL Environmental Project  
PNUD-CARE  
Municipal Office Puerto Barrios  
CONRED  
Red de Pescadores Artesanales del Caribe

## Honduras

Comite de Emergencia Garifuna

## India

Swayam Shikshan Prayog

## Jamaica

Construction Resource and Development Centre

## Mexico

Unidad Agricola Industrial de la Mujer

## Nicaragua

Centro Comunitario Oscar Arnulfo Romero (CCOAR)  
Coopertiva Las Brumas  
Movimiento de Mujeres Ingniluhita

## Peru

Estrategia  
Mujeres Unidas para un Pueblo Mejor  
LUNDU

## Global Representatives

American Jewish World Service  
Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo  
GROOTS International Team  
ProVention Consortium  
Swedish International Development Agency



## GROOTS International's Thematic Program on Community Resilience

GROOTS is an acronym for Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood. GROOTS International is building a global movement of rural and urban grassroots women's groups who are improving quality of life in low income, marginalized communities in the South and North through community-driven, pro-poor solutions. GROOTS International is committed to the empowerment of grassroots women to:

- Develop their communities using pro-poor, equitable, policies and solutions
- Advance governmental and institutional accountability to grassroots women
- Strengthen women's leadership to access and transform power at different levels
- Bridge the local and global by bringing grassroots analysis, solutions and voices to local, national, regional and global decision-making.

GROOTS International's Thematic Program on Community Resilience is supported by: American Jewish World Service, UNDP, ProVention Consortium, the Ford Foundation and the Huairou Commission.

For more information on the workshop or how your organization would like to learn more about this approach, contact Sarah Silliman at [Sarah.Silliman@huairou.org](mailto:Sarah.Silliman@huairou.org) or Sandy Schilen at [grootsss@aol.com](mailto:grootsss@aol.com)

For more information on partners of GROOTS' Thematic Program on Community Resilience visit [www.huairou.org](http://www.huairou.org) or [www.disasterwatch.net](http://www.disasterwatch.net)



# RECIPES FOR RESILIENCE

APRIL 2008

## LATIN AMERICAN GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S PRACTICES FOR BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

**From the experiences shared at the workshop it was evident that grassroots groups had extensive constituencies and capacities to respond to natural disasters. However, they expressed the need to develop more collaborative relationships with their local authorities and governments.**

*"We work through common actions for a common goal, we call ours a movement because for ages these actions have survived. We have organized through marches, walks and creating common strategies. We have worked for daily survival, in situations of poverty and exclusion, because we are an ethnic group and because we are women. Groots [International] supports this process and it also harvests our practices and after these academy gatherings we have proposals and search for ways to get resources and implement what we want to achieve. Issues like resilience we didn't know this before yet when we looked at what we've been doing for years, like protecting our communities from disasters because it is what happens in our communities, we see we've been working on resilience for a long time."* Analucy Bengochea of the Comite de Emergencia Garifuna of Honduras

Most participants represented communities living in poverty. They reiterated the need for development approaches that foster women's public participation as well as sustainable, risk reducing approaches to secure tenure, upgrade informal settlements, agriculture, infrastructure and other investments.

More than 50 leaders representing 25 grassroots and indigenous organizations participated in a three day workshop entitled, "The Role and Power of Grassroots and Indigenous Women's Groups in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)." Collectively representing more than 30,000 citizens living in disaster prone communities, the women's groups from 10 Latin American and Caribbean countries shared their five to twenty five years of work experience of responding to natural disasters and crises, explaining the effective practices they developed to reduce risks and vulnerabilities along with their efforts to secure food and livelihoods. All the women called for actions that will ensure their public representation in disaster related policy and local decision making. They decided to launch a regional networking platform that would sustain this momentum and keep them linked.

The consultation brought together women living in diverse situations spanning rural and coastal communities who are isolated and/or marginalized from government by geography and cultural/ethnic identity; to urban and semi urban communities, who live in informal settlements with limited basic services. Explaining and debating their approaches for recovering or reducing the damage and losses caused by natural disaster, environmental degradation and climate change, participants demonstrated a wealth of knowledge and

experiences.

GROOTS International, supported by the Pro-Vention Consortium, convened and facilitated these local experts in a 'pre-forum' workshop to draw upon and amplify the knowledge and skills they have gained from coping with the short and long-term impacts of floods, droughts, hurricanes, tropical storms, frosts, earthquakes, and erosion of natural resources as the result of climate change. Fundacion Guatemala organized Guatemalan grassroots leaders to participate, take care of logistics, and arranged the Spanish International Cooperation Agency's Antigua regional training centre for the meeting.



Participant countries included: Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru (plus India and the US).

Report from "The Role and Power of Grassroots and Indigenous Women's Groups in Disaster Risk Reduction," a ProVention Consortium workshop held from March 12-14<sup>th</sup> 2008 in Antigua, Guatemala facilitated by GROOTS International with the support of Fundación Guatemala

## Emergency Response: Entry-Points for Sustained Participation in Development

### FROM EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO LONG-TERM COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

EL COMITE DE EMERGENCIA GARIFUNA, HONDURAS

The Comité de Emergencia was formed in 1998 in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch when their isolated community was forced to organize its own rescue and relief activities when national and international agencies failed to reach them for three days.

The Comité organized community committees in 16 Garifuna communities, visited schools, churches and community centers to establish safe spaces for displaced families, and mapped the vulnerable and high-risk areas in the community. This exercise they did because they realized that Santa Rosa de Aguan would be permanently at risk of flooding and hurricanes. To support the immediate restoration of livelihoods, they established community farming tool banks and they fought for new housing and land titles to go to affected residents. Over the past seven years, they have worked to reconstruct homes, negotiate with local government for additional construction supplies, and have now successfully settled almost 200 families in homes in a new higher elevation community of Santa Rosa de Aguan. The Comité also works for long-term resilience by focusing on reforestation, preservation of cultural identity, organizing youth, and increasing food security through yuca processing, food storage and the creation of indigenous seed banks.

Traditional emergency rescue and response features humanitarian aid delivered by government officials and foreign professionals/volunteers who rescue, provide medical treatment, food, temporary shelter and other basic supplies. These approaches often are top down, bombarding disaster-struck communities with 'resources' that don't match with community needs or lifestyles and tend to treat women as victims or aid recipients, not responders themselves.

In contrast, grassroots and indigenous women at the workshop have tremendous experience organizing emergency response and relief (particularly in physically isolated and socially marginalized communities). Their public roles include: sending early warnings and coordinating evacuations, providing medical aid, operating community kitchens and child care services, organizing temporary shelters, and lobbying government to stop land grabbing and provide public information on entitlements.

Several women's groups, as a result of their effectiveness and level of organization in relief, used the experience as an entry point for public participation in community development efforts.



El Comité de Emergencia Garifuna, Honduras

### ORGANIZING COMMUNITIES FOR RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

In Peru, LUNDU, an afro-Peruvian group, worked with local authorities to organize youth and women in Chíncha after the 2007 earthquake to provide humanitarian aid, to support the relocation of displaced families, and to organize communities to design and build interim housing for 320 families from four different communities whose lives were being degraded in the camps. Now they are developing a permanent housing plan so that communities can ensure long-term and sustained development for the future.

Another Peruvian group --Community Kitchens (Comedores Populares) which was established more than 12 years ago by women to address extreme hunger in urban communities by providing food to families in need, organized to provide food relief to the earthquake struck population near Chíncha in 2007, demonstrating how organized women's groups can be key assets to the community when emergencies strike.

## Grassroots and Indigenous Women Call for Action

As the workshop evolved, women started naming the knowledge, skills and constituencies they could pledge to assist governments in responding to and reducing the risk and impact of disasters. They saw enormous potential in their ability to use their organized groups and social networks as a platform for information collection, dissemination and planning associated with disaster risk reduction; and analyzed how their track record in conserving and maximizing natural and human resources for long term survival could be a platform for defining and investing in resilient development approaches.

Noting they would need to develop certain capacities to strengthen their involvement (hazard mapping, contingency planning, etc), participants underscored how playing these roles could publicly legitimate women's groups, promote gender and cultural equity by validating male and female decision making processes.

Calling for public policies and institutional standards specifying the roles and resources available to at-risk communities and marginalized groups, grassroots leaders endorsed the recommendations issued by GROOTS, Huairou Commission and Prevention in June 06 and called for regionally specific development and mitigation programs that would finance the:

1. Transfer and strengthening of indigenous knowledge and practices that have been critical to the survival of at-risk communities for generations.
2. Rapid scaling up of community women's participation in DRR through peer training programs that adapt and transfer effective, grassroots women-led practices to reduce risk and promote resilience.
3. Capacity development of grassroots women's networks so they can undertake community research and risk mapping, propose appropriate action plans and collaborate with government to reduce potential damage.
4. Creation of community and culturally accessible communication systems (e.g. community radio networks) that reach out to rural and indigenous groups in their local languages.

**To foster equitable partnerships with at risk communities, women called upon their local and national governments to:**

5. Recognize the diverse and sizeable constituencies women's groups represent and the range of contributions they are already making to DRR and resilience building;
6. Establish and implement public policy targets that would require and reward the formal participation of grassroots and indigenous women's groups in designing, implementing and monitoring disaster response and risk reduction programs.
7. Model transparent and democratic decision making by collaborating with citizens groups on response and contingency plans, gender-equitable and accessible public entitlements, information and planning processes, and public development projects that expand housing, basic services, livelihoods and protect natural resources; and:
8. Include grassroots and indigenous women's networks in regional and national DRR coordination platforms such as CEPREDENAC (Central America) and CONRED (Guatemala)

Guatemalan representatives from two institutions validated the significance of women's call to action, noting:

*"I'm aware that CONRED has placed people in a cultural context that they are not responsive to. Here we have spoken about joining efforts and having organization. Communities' experiences need to inform policies and there is still time...communities also have a role."*

*"I am personally very impressed and admire the work that you have developed. My work is close to yours, but I can't even imagine the scope of the work you do in your communities. One of the possibilities I see for Guatemala is to take advantage of organization...and create a model from the grassroots. If we are able to replicate the experiences of your country, your models, and take it to the national level mechanisms...we could have great success."*

### LAUNCHING A REGIONAL GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S NETWORKING PLATFORM

Women present agreed to launch a regional networking platform to sustain their advocacy and their linkages to one another for peer learning and community-to-community capacity building. Institutional partners in Guatemala and the region agreed to brief their colleagues on the content and outcomes of the workshop and identify ways their institutions could support grassroots women's participation in current projects and future initiatives. It was agreed that a workshop film and representatives from four countries would take the lessons and recommendations of the pre-form to the ProVention Annual Global Forum in Panama City, Panama from April 8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> 2008.

## ADDRESSING DROUGHT THROUGH BUILDING SUSTAINABLE AND PRODUCTIVE NETWORKS

### REDE PINTADAS, BRAZIL

Located in the semi-arid region of Bahia, the women-led Pintadas have organized themselves since the 1970s to address the recurring problem of drought in their region. Today, the women's association has its own credit cooperative that supports producer groups to undertake community enterprise activities such as irrigated horticulture, milk production and bee-keeping to promote economic self-reliance within their communities. Working across thirty communities with more than 5,000 residents, the women have led a series of strategies to address drought through the construction of: cisterns for water storage which are now accessible to each home in the communities; collection of water through rainfall; desalinization of salt water ponds, and have organized food and fodder reserves. With these initiatives the Network of Pintadas have transformed themselves from a water and food-scarce community, where women walked 6six kms. daily to fetch water, to self-sufficient communities with adequate food and water for people and animals. The accomplishments of the Pintadas along with their efforts to educate communities and governments on their alternative approach to resilience and development have led the National Government of Brazil to recognize Pintadas as the first municipality in the drought-prone areas to successfully manage drought. Today the Pintadas are proud of their ability to use appropriate technology and promote sustainable self-sufficient community development.



Network of Pintadas, Brazil

Strategies for resilient development represent ongoing efforts by grassroots women to strengthen citizen's platforms, build capacities and scale up solutions that promote economic self-sufficiency, community access to basic services, and increase women's participation in public decision making in ways that create pro-poor development programs and protect the development gains of communities. This base of organized constituencies with capacities and collaborative relationships with authorities are vital for sustaining long term efforts to reducing risk in disaster prone communities, and for coordinating emergency response in the face of disaster.

A number of participating groups were able to demonstrate the impact of large-scale community organizing to build resilience. Often in response to long-term vulnerabilities such as drought, conflict or the impacts of climate change, participating organizations showed that they could not only redress the impacts of such vulnerabilities, but also build sustainable livelihoods for their families and communities and open the doors of communication with their local and national governments.

*"There is no drought or tragedy when people are organized in solidarity and in consciousness of the reality in which they live."* - Nereide Segala of the Network of Pintadas in Bahia, Brazil

## ORGANIZED WOMEN'S COOPERATIVES FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

### UNION DE COOPERATIVA LAS BRUMAS, NICARAGUA

In Nicaragua, the Union de Cooperativa Las Brumas consists of 20 cooperatives representing over 1200 women farmers across 45 communities in 10 municipalities of Jinotega. Founded in 1991, the cooperatives work on sustainable and organic farming methods producing organic coffee, ornamental flowers, organic pesticides, and other basic food products (amidst civil war, flooding and extensive environmental degradation). Las Brumas is federated into a union of cooperatives and have created committees for women's land and secure tenure. They address environmental degradation and create campaigns on soil preservation and reforestation, and have collaborated with local emergency services providers through their emergency response committee. The cooperatives prioritize capacity and skills building and work through their structure to transfer skills and expand leadership.

## UTILIZING GENERATIONS OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE TO SECURE LIVELIHOODS, REDUCE RISK AND ESTABLISH SELF-SUFFICIENCY

### FUNDACIÓN APACHITA, BOLIVIA

Indigenous women's groups working within Fundación Apachita, have a wealth of knowledge passed on by their ancestors that they have utilized to respond to drought, impacts of climate change, and to preserve the social fabric of their culture for future generations. Organized in producer groups, women farmers produce quinoa, wheat, potatoes and milk. Using ancestral knowledge, they practice organic farming, soil conservation and crop rotation, and produce organic insecticides. They have created seed banks to preserve indigenous crops and have adapted their farming techniques to preserve soil nutrients which increase productivity of harvests.

In response to prolonged and severe drought, the groups harvest rain water, construct water tanks to generate water security for people and animals, and cultivate drought resistant food crops to ensure the preservation of natural resources and food security for their communities. Women have developed their own indigenous early warning systems by observing the natural environment for changes in weather, plant and animal behavior, etc. that prepare communities for impending droughts, torrential rains and frosts.

Through the permanent forum of Amarya women, the women analyze the varied problems that impact their lives from political, to environmental to social issues. Fundación Apachita promotes indigenous knowledge and culture, maintaining oral traditions of passing their history and collective lessons and teach future generations to observe their natural surroundings and practice sustainable livelihoods and agriculture that reverse environmental degradation.

### INDIGENOUS WOMEN FROM GUATEMALA

Indigenous Guatemalan participants from diverse communities across the country presented a range of good practices they had created to counter poverty and discrimination through empowerment within disaster-prone communities. Among the creative examples were:

- ❖ Indigenous women's groups who created networks so women could secure land and housing after the loss and displacement due to civil war (Comite de Mujeres Fe y Esperanza);
- ❖ Regional networks of producer groups that organize to manage and handicraft producer groups who ensure market access for 125 Mayan communities (Ak'Tanamit);
- ❖ Regional networks that preserve natural environments (via river clean-ups and reforestation) central to food security and income generation, and to link women to international markets (Red de Pescadores de Livingston);

National environmental networks that annually transfer sizeable grant monies to multiple grassroots women's groups so they can implement environmental management and protection projects e.g. education, rain water collection and ecotourism (PROGAL).

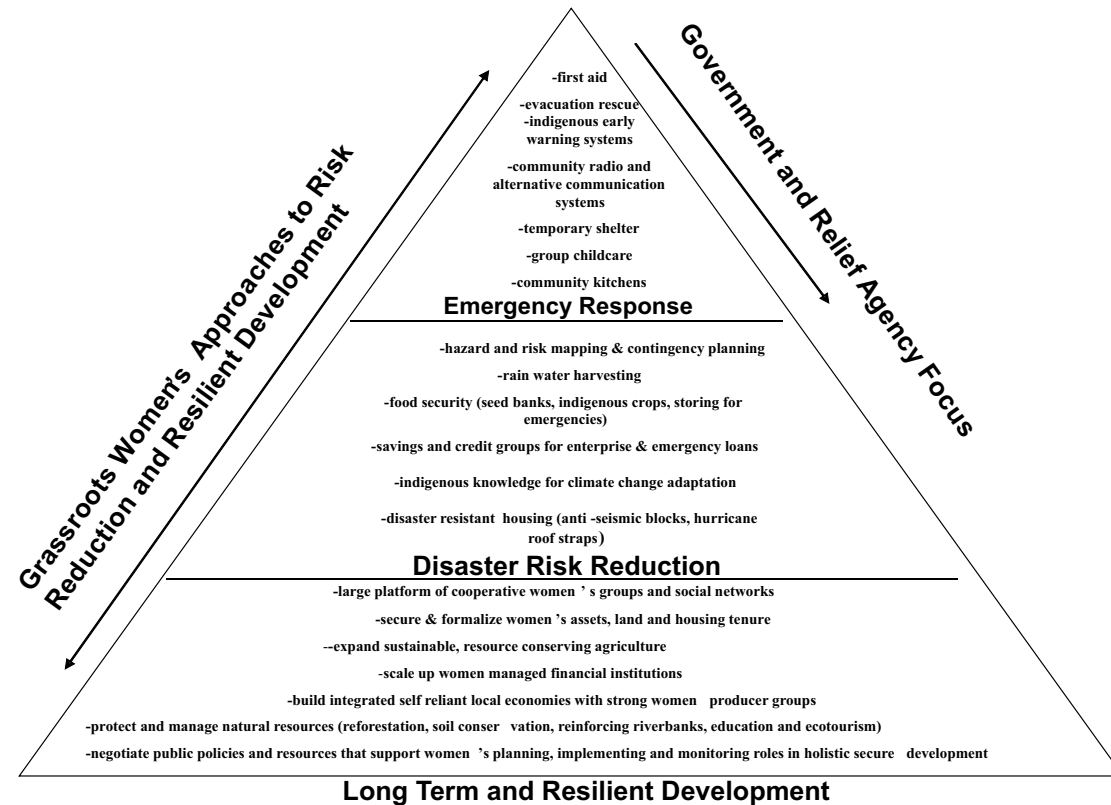
The predominance of indigenous and Afro-descendant women's groups in the practice sharing underscored how important indigenous knowledge of historically marginalized people is to coping with harsh circumstances and unexpected hardship. As women shared their practices from Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Peru participants learned about rich, cultural knowledge and value systems that foster community cooperation and respect for history, traditional ways, elders' wisdom, and nature.

The types of strategies women described painted a vivid picture of how indigenous knowledge is comparable to the technical and scientific methods so highly valued in DRR work (for predicting and warning communities and governments of impending disasters) and of the wide gap between government dominated response and locally and culturally trusted ones.

The priorities women set, in turn established guidelines for what it would mean to move gender equality and culturally inclusive mandates from rhetoric to real implementation.



# Lessons Emerging from Grassroots Women's Practices in the Region



Grassroots women believe they can strengthen their practices, refine their knowledge and influence public policy if they are supported to undertake public roles to:

### 1. Build and Strengthen Citizen's Platforms

Grassroots women in the LAC region are organized to as savings groups, tool banks, community banks, cooperatives and federations as a means of sustaining their long term efforts and develop citizen's platforms to leverage their organized social networks and constituencies.

### 2. Build and Disseminate Knowledge and Practices

Grassroots and indigenous women have a wealth of knowledge and a range of practices that they bring to the field of disaster reduction and resilience building. Women are reviving and transmitting indigenous knowledge and practices. Grassroots women need to be supported to transfer and scale up their practices by providing technical assistance to one another.

### 3. Collaborate with Local and National Governments

While grassroots women shared that they were often disconnected from their local authorities and government and did not have formal recognition or opportunities to engage them, they expressed a need to engage with government and local authorities. These collaborations and partnerships are keys to ensuring a coordinated response to disasters in the short term and building public accountability that ensures that development processes reduce rather than increase vulnerabilities of communities in the name of development

#### What grassroots women bring to the discussion on resilience:

- Diverse grassroots constituencies, representing different hazard prone/affected communities,
- Effective practices demonstrated for different stages: relief, recovery, reconstruction to development.
- Practical actions to conserve natural resources and upgrade our housing and basic services
- Strategic, long term actions that promote women's empowerment, democratic governance and safe/resilient development

#### What our network wants to change:

- The terms of grassroots women's participation in pre and post disaster programming and policy making
- How women and their communities are approached in relief
- Enable grassroots trainer teams to transfer their effective practices and skills
- Strengthen grassroots women to assess and provide feedback on programs and policies to NGOs, Governments and donors.

# Community Risk Reduction Practices



Mujeres Unidas presented their brick-making technique to the workshop participants

Grassroots women's groups in disaster prone communities live on scarce cash and a limited resource base. Many have survived multiple disasters and developed innovative, practical solutions for reducing risk-thus protecting the lives, livelihoods, homes and assets of communities. While organizing to reduce disaster risk, women are also advancing their public roles as community leaders and decision-makers.

## HURRICANE SAFE CONSTRUCTION TECHNOLOGY CONSTRUCTION RESOURCE AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER, JAMAICA

In the face on on-going threats from hurricanes and tropical storms, the Construction Resource and Development Centre (CRDC) of Jamaica is a pioneer in training women heads-of-household in simple construction techniques that strengthen timber roofs to be more resistant to high winds common to tropical storms and hurricanes by installing hurricane roof straps. In addition to empowering them to upgrade their homes, the CRDC also uses these simple improvements to qualify community residents for lower insurance premiums on their homes.

## LOW-COST ANTI-SEISMIC BLOCKS MUJERES UNIDAS PARA UN PUEBLO MEJOR

In Peru, Mujeres Unidas para un Pueblo Mejor developed techniques for constructing earthquake-resistant bricks using inexpensive local materials (with supported from a NGO Estrategia). Producing these bricks as an income generating enterprise, women built affordable, earthquake resistant houses in a 20 home pilot some years ago. They have sold bricks to municipal government in recent year for use in public facilities. Although they have been sharing the technique with local communities in and outside of Peru through peer exchanges over time, it took the 2007 earthquake to get the government's attention on how they could support building affordable, safe houses in informal settlements using anti-seismic bricks produced by grassroots women's enterprises.

**Community Hazard Mapping: A tool to amplify community voices and to generate collective community data**

The CRDC has worked with 27 communities to assess risk and vulnerability through community hazard mapping. In a brief presentation during the workshop, Carmen Griffiths, Director of CRDC, took the group through what community hazard mapping entails:

- Engage community members in physically identifying local hazards and vulnerabilities using participatory processes and neighborhood meetings.
- Create visual maps that reflect community inputs so they can see their ideas and analyze the bigger picture.
- Engage grassroots women in proposing actions to reduce risk and make this into a plan. Present the plan in a larger community forum where local government and other stakeholders participate and move forward.