

Horizons of Friendship

Partner Visit - 2013

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Simiente Foundation for Human and Community Development



Connecting North and South

Horizons

HORIZONS OF FRIENDSHIP

Building Partnerships to End Poverty in Central America and Mexico



www.horizons.ca



Fundación Simiente

PARA LA PROMOCIÓN DEL DESARROLLO HUMANO Y LOCAL



Simiente Foundation for Human and Community
Development

Honduras



- Honduras, a country located in the heart of Central America, whose geopolitical location makes it a strategic country for the region.
- As of June 2012, the total population of Honduras was 8,385,072 people, of whom 4,254,358 are women and y 4,130,714 men.

Notes on the Reality of Honduras

- The Lobo Government is defined as a post-coup d'état government, throughout its mandate it has been characterized by delegitimization and international isolation.
- The first two years of the government were aimed at re-integrating into formal spaces from which Honduras had been excluded after the coup d'état in 2009, such as the United Nations, Central American Integration System (SICA), Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) amongst others.
- The emigration of international cooperation with the Honduran State (Cooperation from Switzerland, Denmark, and the Netherlands)
- The political polarization of Honduran Society (Pact of Cartagena allowed for former President Manuel Zelaya Rosales to return to Honduras).
- Worsening of human rights violations including assassinations of journalists and social communicators (49), members of the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgendered communities (110); 54 percent of murder victims in Honduras are youth.
- The expansion of international and foreign capital through various types of investments: mining, charter cities, pharmaceuticals.
- Deterioration of the educational system as it becomes privatized and more directly controlled by the Church.
- Strengthening of monopolies such as service providers to the State like medical services, and advertising.
- As of 2012, 66.5 percent of households were living in poverty, this is approximately 5.8 million people.
- High levels of insecurity, with statistics of 92 murders for every 100,000 Hondurans
- Militarization of society
- 1.4 million youth are unemployed



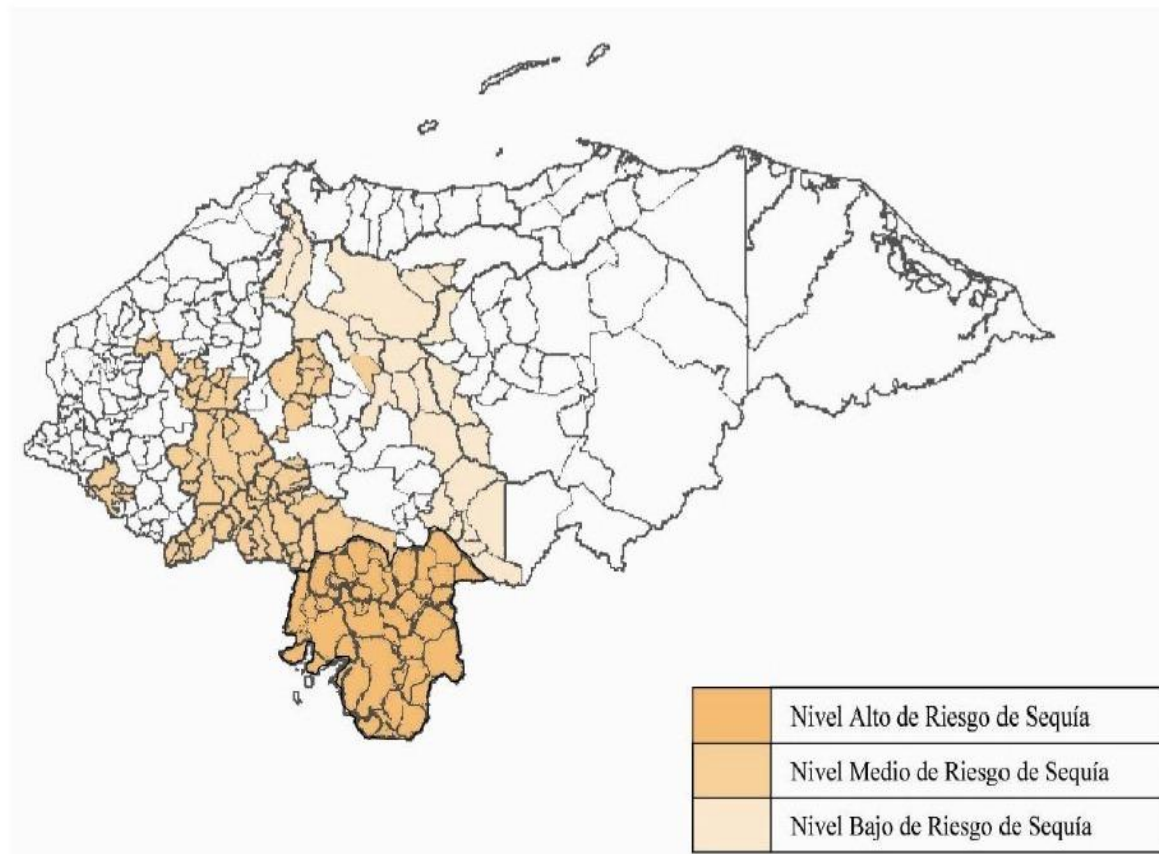
Women in Honduras

- In Honduras, there is a femicide (or killing of a woman for being a woman) every 15 hours; in San Pedro Sula 51 women are killed monthly.
- “The violent deaths of women have increased by 35 percent in the last 3 years, given that in 2010 385 murders were recorded, 512 in 2011, and 520 in 2012” Centre of Women’s Rights (CDM).
- The rate of education for women is 56.9 percent versus 57.8 percent of men.
- The average income for the male population of Honduras is 5,592 Lempiras (\$285 CAD), but for women it is only 4,811 Lempiras (\$245 CAD).
- Honduras has the second highest rate of adolescent pregnancies in Latin America, where one of every four births is by a woman or girl under the age of 19. Currently, in the hospitals in Tegucigalpa there are several cases of girls as young as 13 and 14 years old who are pregnant.
- According to a study by the Honduran S Prosecutor’s Office on Children, 50 percent of underage pregnancies are caused by rape, many of which are committed by family members.
- In the rural areas, women have an average of 7 to 8 children and in the urban areas women have an average of 4 children.
- Of the 128 Congressional Representatives only 31 are women which amount to only 24 %. Of the “replacements” or “alternates” only 27 or only 21 % percent are women.
- Even though this result does not reflect the representation of 50 % of the population, this is the first time in 23 years of democratic life in Honduras that this percentage has been reached; this is almost 3 times the results in the previous elections.
- Of the 298 municipalities in Honduras, only 24 have women as Mayors or just 8.05%. In relation to previous electoral process, this has been a reduction by 1.05 % of women being represented at the local level.
- Since 2000, we have seen an escalation of violence against women; this year alone we have seen between 2,000 and 3,000 reports of domestic violence. By 2012, we have seen an increase to about 22,000 annual reported cases of violence against women and only about 15 percent reach a resolution in the Courts because after the initial complaint most women never return to the Police Station or Prosecutor’s Office let alone to the courts.
- The 22,000 cases are not only domestic violence, but also include sexual abuse and these numbers are just in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras.

Where We Work

Map of the Areas Affected by Drought in Honduras

Mapa de las Áreas Afectadas por la Sequía en Honduras



Southern Region of Honduras

Characteristics of the Southern Region:

- Despite the fact that it is a region that boasts an extensive area of national and communal territory or land, in the communities there are many families that rent land in order to plant basic grains and can only plant a small plot near their house.
- The realities of climate change are presenting themselves around the increased shortages of water. Amongst others, the shortages of water are having a large impact on family and agricultural use of water.
- In the agricultural sector, the reduction in rain and precipitation will cause water deficiency, which will intern even further diminish the humidity of soils and change the permeation levels, and reduce runoff. The increase in temperatures (maximum of 40 degrees) will cause more days of extreme heat, heat waves, heavy rains, and increased risk of drought.
- The situation described above has negatively impacted the production of food, causing the population to migrate in search of income sources to maintain their families; the migration has caused the disintegration of farming and rural families, often leaving women as the sole head of the household.
- In the municipalities where Simiente works, the levels of poverty are between 81 and 90 percent, with the resources and prosperity remained in the hands of few.
- In the limited areas where cultivation is possible, families live off of basic grains, whereas the crops such as melon, watermelon etc. are destined for exportation.
- It is a region where the migration of men is incredible high, particularly amongst young men, leaving women with the responsibility of raising the family.



Our Work



- The social actors that Simiente has chosen to focus on are women and youth. This is because of the exclusion both of these actors face as agents of development and the high levels of male migration in the Southern region which has resulted in large numbers of homes being headed by women.
- At the beginning, we found that women lacked experience organizing due to the subordination in which they live. Women with many young children, needed to ask permission to participate in meetings, or women were afraid to participate because they were not accustomed to doing so.
- Amongst the causes that we have found that have given rise to this situation, we can say women are not taken into account as social actors in development. Most programs organized by NGOS or local governments define men as the main actor in their activities, adding to this the inexistence of development programs that incorporate a gender perspective directed towards women. Ultimately, this has a direct impact on the lack of training and organization for women.
- The women we work with tend to have little knowledge and appropriation of their rights which would allow them to create an organization through which they could struggle to change their conditions of poverty and lack of poverty.
- They experience many physical and mental (stress) health problems because they cannot meet their families needs.
- With the emigration of men, women have to meet all of the social, affective and economic needs of their families.
- Because of the shortage of water, women have to carry water on their heads, with the help of their children. We have investigated with them that they carry on average 52 barrels (@ 200 litres per barrel) of water each year or approximately 10,400 litres.
- Currently Simiente accompanies more than 1800 women, they develop and strengthen their agro-ecological systems in order to sustain their families, and at the same time they develop leadership skills that allow them to participate and have an impact in the broader local structures.
- Today these women have livelihoods that allow them a certain autonomy, higher self esteem, and deeper knowledge of their rights.

Agroecology

Food production is fundamental to women's lives, which is why we work in the following subcomponents:

- Water use, homes do not have drinking water services which means women have to carry water from long distances.
- The technologies used optimize storage and use of water with the construction of recycling waste water systems, harvesting of rain water, wells with rope or lift pumps.
- The construction of these technologies always seeks to carry water for domestic use in order to help alleviate the burden of this work.
- The cultivation of food in their yards or patios is a strategy that takes into account the area of land that each family has.
- Agroecology is dedicated to the defense of natural resources and the environment.
- We promote food production for local consumption, favoring native species and biodiversity which is implicitly against monoculture production.



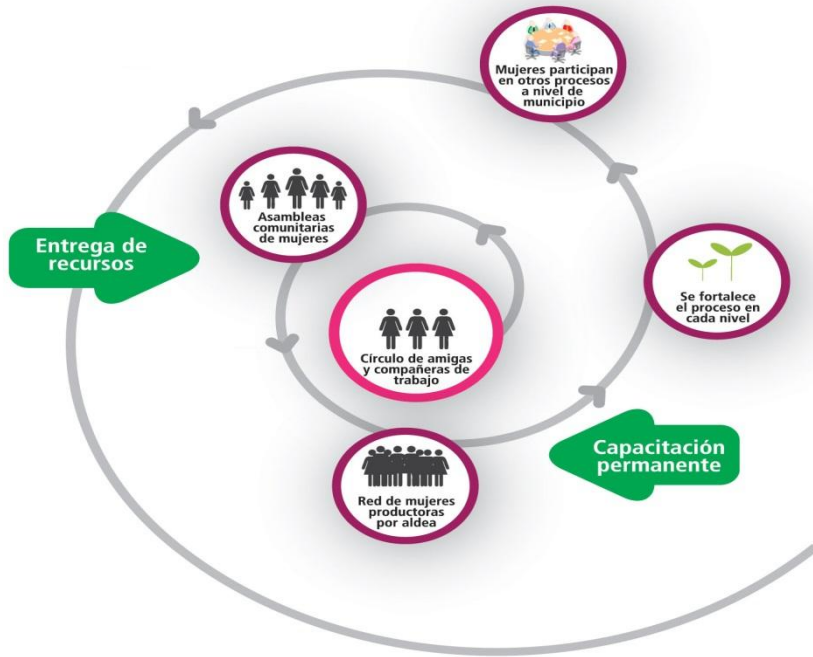
Agro-ecological Production



- The plots that families have are between 200 and 400 metres. Those who have the largest plots of land are on average 4800 metres.
- The agro-ecological methodology is based on the concept of the small plot of land which is worked by all of the family and later is developed with other components such as water management technologies, soil conservation, and small and large animals.
- We promote agro-ecological production and soil conservation, crop diversification (each producer has at least 4 crops). The crops include onion, sweet peppers, carrots, cilantro, yucca, sweet potato, Mexican turnips (jícama), hibiscus, chipilín (leafy green), tomato, papaya, chives, beets, squash, and gourds (pataste o güisquil).
- There is lime, avocado, pineapple, and plantain production.
- Grass to feed birds, goats and cows.
- Elaboration of organic insecticides and fertilizer.
- Construction of eco stoves, compost systems, and filters aimed at improving family health and the conditions of household work.



Organization



This development can be seen or approached through 3 areas: the BEING, HAVING, and KNOWING.

That the women organize themselves is important for work in these areas:

The being is worked through values, their self-esteem, identity, and enjoyment of their rights, as well as counting on friends that support them in this process.

The having is approached through the area of agroecology and small businesses;

The knowing is addressed through all of the workshops and trainings.

The Micro Level

- The organization needs to be addressed at the micro level with the “circles of friends and colleagues”, so that the women who live on the periphery and are the most vulnerable can participate.
- The circles are small groups of people (no more more than 10), who meet regularly to organize activities together.
- We encourage the women to meet with people close to them and who they trust. It is fundamental that they feel safe in this space, and because the circle is not meant to limit itself to only being an organizational space, but also a space where the women can share about their daily experiencies.
- Each circle defines its values, a name that identifies it, and rules that guide their relationships and management of their savings.
- They receive training in this space.
- A single community can have 2 or even 4 circles.



The Community Assembly

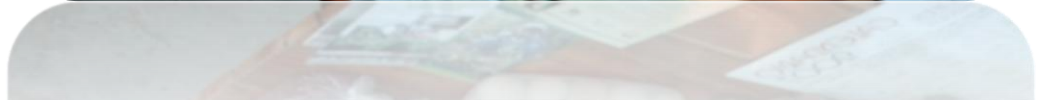
- When the women along with their families experience start to experience concrete changes in food production, their confidence in themselves, and improve their income, the circles will begin to organize in community assemblies and organize a Community Board who will lead this work.
- They will meet once a month, and each woman is expected to contribute 1 lempira (5 cents) so that Board can travel to the Municipal capital for meetings or other preapproved activities.
- The community board undertakes the monitoring of projects, given that one of the values that we promote is good administration and control of resources, along with solidarity and co-responsibility so that each neighbor, family member, and friend can overcome poverty together.



The Network

- The networks are organized geographically (villages with their hamlets).
- They meet every two months and their principal function is to have an impact on the local authorities.
- They make women visible in the Municipality including their rights and demands.
- They articulate the women around an organization as means to struggle and create change.





Savings and Small Businesses



- From the moment women start to organize, they begin to save, and from these resources they initiate their own new ventures such as:
 - Purchasing and selling of basic grains such as beans and corn.
 - Selling veterinary services and products
 - Selling of basic food goods
 - Provision of low interest loans
- There is a percentage of their savings that are also directed to sustaining their organization.

Local Solidarity is rooted in Values

- The methodology of “passing the chain” allows for the charing of resources between the organized families;
- Responding to the mission of helping change the life of other people, multiples the resources that reach them.
- A fundamental strategy of work is delivering project resources into the hands of the local organizations in order to empower the women and strengthen solidarity and other values.



The Accompaniment of Horizons in this Journey

- We started the relationship of solidarity and cooperation with Horizons in 2004 with projects on food security, emotional recovery for families affected by migration, rights and citizenship. As well as some special projects such as eco-stoves.
- This relationship has strengthened the institution's work, allowing us to position ourselves around issues at the local and national such as food sovereignty, women's rights, and the indiscriminate exploitation of resources, especially by Canadian companies investing in mining.
- Building the capacity of the organization's staff and partner population through exchanges and systematic training around themes such as violence against women, gender, planning amongst other issues.
- The solidarity that Horizons of Friendship has shown Simiente has been to accompany women and youth in their search for equity and social justice; and in promoting the empowerment of the people, so that they themselves have developed the capacities to decide about their own future. This has been Horizons for Simiente. Principally in the context of mining exploitation, food insecurity, human rights violations and so forth.
- The relationship has been established in an environment of respect and camaraderie, this is the feeling of partnership in solidarity.



MUCHAS GRACIAS