Global Programme Responsible Land Policy
Good Practice

PERU: DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN TWO AMAZONIAN REGIONS

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Programme

THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME RESPONSIBLE LAND POLICY (GPRLP) IS PART OF THE SPECIAL INITIATIVE 'ONE WORLD, NO HUNGER' OF THE GERMAN FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (BMZ), WHICH AIMS TO REDUCE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER.

The programme is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in countries across Africa, Asia and South America. Its main objective is to secure access to land as a major prerequisite for poverty and hunger reduction in rural areas, especially for women, marginalized groups and indigenous peoples.

**THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME IS IMPLEMENTED ALONG THREE FIELDS OF ACTION:**

- Improving procedures to secure land ownership and user rights for the rural population

- Strengthening civil society

- Improving the framework conditions for responsible agricultural investments

The last aim does not apply to GPRLP implementation in Peru.

In Peru, ProTierras Comunales (PTC), as part of the Global Programme, aims to improve access to land and natural resources for native communities in the Peruvian Amazon, in the regions Ucayali and San Martín. PTC gives priority to capacity development and institution building of government and indigenous partners, emphasizing indigenous women and youth. The project implemented several activities to strengthen the capacities of indigenous women with a focus on participation in mixed indigenous organizations. In the context of accelerated digitalization following the COVID-19 pandemic, methodologies were developed to enable their digital inclusion.

Starting point

THE INDIGENOUS MOVEMENT IN PERU CONSISTS OF INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS, which have representative bodies at the community, regional, national, and international level. They defend their rights to territory, access to resources and cultural values, while monitoring and safeguarding the progress of land
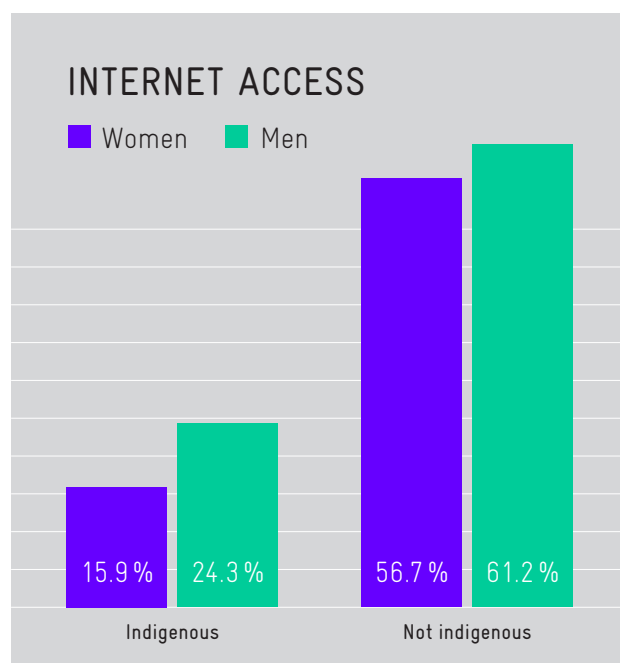
INTERNET ACCESS

Internet access, disaggregated by gender and indigenous population (Graph based on the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics INEI Report, 2019)

titling projects. In recent years, about a dozen projects or initiatives of international development partners have supported the land titling process of native communities in the Peruvian Amazon.

PTC established a strategic partnership with the indigenous national umbrella organization AIDESEP (Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest) and its regional bodies in San Martín (CODEPISAM) and Ucayali (ORAU).

So far, public and representative community participation is mainly by men, which prevents women from taking part in political life. Therefore, PTC and AIDESEP jointly started several activities to promote greater female participation in decision making and land titling processes in their organizational structures. As part of this endeavour, PTC alongside with the women's secretariats of CODEPISAM and ORAU, organized workshops (2018 – 2020):

1. to contribute to improve women's self-esteem,

2. to strengthen communication skills to overcome their fear of speaking in public and

3. to reinforce cooperation and solidarity among women.

However, the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 (and subsequent strict sanitary measures) threatened to reverse this progress by imposing new and additional challenges for indigenous women's capacity building. The pandemic accelerated digitalisation, yet indigenous women are the Peruvian population group with the worst access to the internet (see graph), including weak internet coverage, precarious communication infrastructure in their regions, and lack of devices (smartphones, laptops, or routers) to access the internet. When communication within indigenous organizations and with the government was rapidly digitized, due to the precarious conditions mentioned previously, many women did not have access to virtual meetings convened by male leaders. Thus, women's participation, which was already lacking before the pandemic, worsened even more. Following the *Leave No One Behind* principle of the 2030 Agenda, PTC organised workshops that contributed to the inclusion of women in digitalisation processes.

Positive changes

The workshops were successful in enabling women's digital inclusion as an important step towards ensuring women's equal participation in land titling processes during the COVID-19 pandemic. This inclusion has empowered women in various ways and allowed them to take advantage of the growing digitalisation induced by COVID-19.

1. Digital communication enabled women to **maintain and create new networks**. Unlike face-to-face meetings, this form of communication was an **opportunity for women to be connected without being absent from home for long periods of time**. This had advantages for women, their organizations and government agencies and/or development projects.

2. The learning process and videoconferences also **enabled intergenerational dialogues and exchanges** between women with extensive leadership experience and youth with less experience. The elder leaders were supported mainly by young indigenous interns (see *'Good Practice: Indigenous Professional Internship Programme'*).

3. In addition, it was evident that **women's self-esteem increased** as they participated in the video conferences, gave their opinions and told their husbands and children that they are also **capable of handling the digital tools** that are currently one of the few windows of communication with the outside world. The women were happy to see and talk to each other through the screen after a long quarantine, and they helped each other gain confidence and lose their fear of public speaking.

4. The women's digital exchange promoted a **process of self-organization**. Nowadays, some **women are invited as speakers or participants at national and international virtual meetings**. Women have **gained confidence and security** in their own organizations. This is visible in the **demand for more female representation** in their organizations (50 % - 50 % composition of leadership boards is slowly becoming a rule) and in dialogue platforms between government and indigenous organizations on the land titling process (in San Martín, now at least one woman per indigenous organization).

"I never thought I could handle a laptop and be a panellist in a virtual conference", said Rosa (62 years old) from San Martín after the training

A virtual training in Ucayali is captured.

5. **Saved transport and travel costs can be used to improve other training aspects**. With the digital training, women already are better equipped to take advantage of virtual trainings, meetings and exchanges, which indigenous organizations are invited to.

Due to their geographical remoteness and climatic conditions, many Amazonian regions still face major challenges in terms of internet access, which sometimes hamper the development of courses. This might require major investments in IT infrastructure.

Approach

TO CONTINUE ADVANCING INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION in land titling processes and related organizational structures, PTC developed trainings to allow women's inclusion in digital processes and found ways to ensure their access to the internet. The workshops' organization followed four steps:

1. 20 women beneficiaries (aged 20–62) were selected for the workshops. They were active in the women's secretariats of regional organizations and local federations in both regions. Selection criteria were leadership position, access to internet coverage (at or near their homes) and literacy.

2. Internet access had to be provided for the women through mobile recharges. Thus, the women's secretariats were supplied with 19 laptops and user manuals. The laptops strengthened the secretariats and were essential for digital learning processes. In some cases, the women had to borrow smart-phones of their husbands, sons, or neighbours. They learned to use them as routers to share mobile internet with the donated laptops.

3. The training itself was virtual, taking place both individually and in small groups at times that suited the women's schedules. It applied a cultural-sensitive methodology that allowed step-by-step learning and explanation in the women's indigenous languages (for women who were not fluent in Spanish). In the process, learning pairs were established between elder female leaders and young women and/or family members who supported their learning progress.

4. The participants gained confidence and courage in the digital safe space created during the learning process: They displayed their newly found digital inclusion in videoconferences open to a bigger audience. The women themselves defined the topics they wanted to discuss at the conferences, like medicinal plants used to treat COVID-19 symptoms, women's entrepreneurship and women's relationship with their territories and forest.

For each conference, rehearsals took place to manage technical limitations and to reinforce the women's experience in these spaces. They learned some moderation techniques and worked out the programme and questions. The sessions were successful in moderation, time management, participation, and responses to technical difficulties.

A woman from the Shipibo-Conibo indigenous people receives face-to-face training in Ucayali.

For replication

IN 2021, PTC TOGETHER WITH CODEPISAM CONTINUED AND EXPANDED ITS TARGET GROUP of the San Martín training, now including indigenous male leaders. Two NGOs at the national level and one of the projects supporting land titling showed interest in building on the experiences of PTC in San Martín.

The experience was also presented in different exchange spaces as a concrete contribution to the digital empowerment of indigenous women. It attracted the attention of organizations and international cooperation agencies. Its replication could benefit more women through learning digital skills and thus enable greater participation in the processes of land titling, natural resource management and other relevant issues that empower them.

The following aspects are key for replication in other rural regions of Peru and in other countries:

- Start by diagnosing the situation of connectivity and signal coverage in your target areas as well as the availability (or requirement) of devices to connect to the internet as a basis for defining the target group and technical requirements.

- Try reaching the target group in different ways: Trainings could be divided by geographical areas depending on the possibilities of each project or institution that implements the training, which could also facilitate connecting women leaders through a network at the local, intermediate and national level.

- Create supportive learning mechanisms: Identify partnerships or reinforcements at the family or community level, with young people as allies, as they can learn the new tools more easily and support women in the initial learning phase.

- Practice newly learned skills through video conferences on topics of interest to the target audience, such as on indigenous rights, entrepreneurship in an intact and healthy environment, implementation of medicinal gardens, study opportunities with scholarships, etc.

- Lobby for improvements in the communication service infrastructure in remote areas with the government.

- For the implementation of a similar empowerment initiative, make sure the following is available:

Interculturality and Gender Working Group of GIZ Peru 2020: ↗ Checklist for mainstreaming gender and intercultural approaches in training events – The PTC experiences were the basis for this publication.

- Trainers
- IT technical support in case of internet access difficulties
- Pre-paid mobile phone top-ups (where necessary)
- Coordination with the indigenous organization for support and convening

Further information

↗ Indigenous women participating in the organizations and the management of their territories, Boletín Informativo GIZ Perú (2019) (in Spanish, accessible for GIZ staff only)

↗ Leave no one behind. Indigenous women in San Martín and Ucayali reclaim their voices with new digital tools, Boletín Informativo GIZ Perú (2020) (in Spanish, accessible for GIZ staff only)

↗ Strengthening of the Women's Secretariats in relation to the titling of their territories and territorial rights, Presentation at a workshop on Digital Training Experiences with Indigenous Populations (2021) (in Spanish, accessible for GIZ staff only)

↗ Checklist for mainstreaming gender and intercultural approaches in training events, Interculturality and Gender Working Group of GIZ Perú (2020) (in Spanish, accessible for GIZ staff only)