

COMMUNITY EXCHANGE AND CAPACITY-BUILDING IN COLOMBIAN HOUSEHOLDS

JOINT CAPACITY-BUILDING, NETWORKING AND HANDS-ON TRAINING OF SIX ORGANISATIONS IN COLOMBIA WORKING ON ENERGY ALTERNATIVES FOR LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION

Location:

Santander, Córdoba and Antioquia; Colombia

Technology:

Solar Photovoltaic
Biomass gasification
Biogas

Scope:

Capacity-Building

Costs:

Total: € 18,000
WISIONS financial support: € 18,000

Host Organization:

CENSAT AGUA VIVA
www.censat.org

Partners Involved:

Fundaexpresión
www.fundaexpresion.org

Otros Mundos
www.otrosmundoscol.wordpress.com

Exchange date:

06/2014 – 12/2014



Picture: WISIONS

The main objective of this exchange activity was to link the concepts of energy sovereignty and food sovereignty using a two-pronged approach: the provision of hands-on capacity-building in sustainable energy technologies for food production and setting up a participatory dialogue among civil society organisations in Colombia. The exchange was supported by the WISIONS supporting scheme SEPS.

EXCHANGE NEED AND OBJECTIVE(S)

Food processing in Colombian rural communities is typically fuelled by firewood in inefficient stoves, or by expensive diesel generators. Firewood combustion drives deforestation and causes health problems, as well as requiring significant time and resources. One key barrier to improving the situation is the lack of technical capacity and empowerment in rural communities. There

is a need to complement capacity-building with knowledge sharing and networking and to position energy as an essential component of sustainable livelihoods.

PARTICIPANTS & TARGET GROUP(S)

This project involved the creation of a social alliance and collective learning process between NGOs and rural communities from three regions of Colombia (Santander, Córdoba and Antioquia). Three recognised non-governmental organisations led the process: CENSAT Aguaviva, Fundaexpresión and Otros Mundos.

The exchange engaged six community-based organisations, all with experience in agroecology, local markets, food processing and the community conservation of ecosystems. Around 40 representatives from these organisations participated in both exchange visits. The organisations

were selected based on the interest they expressed, their experience in an area of alternative energy systems and their capacity and commitment to share and disseminate the lessons learned. The ultimate target groups were the members of the participating associations, i.e. subsistence farmers, fisher-folk, women and youth groups.

ACTIVITIES

The activities consisted of two four-day exchange visits to the region of Bajo Sinú (Córdoba) and the region of Soto Province (Santander). During the visits, the participants were able to appreciate at first-hand different community initiatives and the application of alternative energy technologies (solar, biogas and efficient stoves) for food production and water sanitation schemes in isolated rural areas.

The following objectives were pursued: a) the development of a holistic analysis of existing alternative energy initiatives related to food processing; b) capacity-building on the design and installation of energy systems and evaluation of impacts for families and microenterprises; and c) the organisation and empowerment of local communities based on the concepts of food and energy sovereignty.



RESULTS & IMPACT

The exchange enabled the participants to share the experiences, achievements and challenges they faced in promoting alternative technologies. The results included increased practical knowledge, stronger networks and the development of a series of action plans to promote the adoption of these technologies within community-based organisations.

The exchange itself provided the opportunity to install a plastic tubular biodigester and gave insights into various existing systems, including energy efficient wood stoves, solar dehydration units and PV-powered water pumps, which were used for practical demonstrations and assessments of energy balances.



The host organisations created a short video documentary, with interviews and testimonials from the local communities,

which is available online and will allow to continue promoting sustainable alternatives in different community and institutional settings.



LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the course of this SEPS exchange, communities from different regions came together and gained technical skills while sharing experiences and forming stronger networks. The particular approach – based on dialogue, local innovation and the empowerment of communities in the improvement of local livelihoods – shows potential for driving systematic change towards sustainable energy solutions.

Linking concepts and experiences in energy and food sovereignty within a diversity of cultural and territorial contexts allowed local practitioners to gain a broader view on options to improve livelihoods.

Source: Final Report submitted to
WISIONS by CENSAT
Pictures: WISIONS