



‘Marenass is our project’

Peru: Management of Natural Resources in the Southern Highlands (Marenass)

Marenass is an innovative rural development project focusing on the management of productive natural resources to overcome poverty in the Andean communities of the southern highlands of Peru. One of the causes of the high levels of poverty is directly related to the deterioration of natural resources. The management of productive natural resources and full participation of the beneficiaries was thus the starting point to alleviate rural poverty in the southern highlands. The government of Peru is now monitoring the results achieved by Marenass with a view to defining a rural development policy in the Andean region at a national level.

To strengthen project successes, the interim evaluation of Marenass recommended:

- **consolidating the management capabilities** of the communities to ensure that empowerment is dynamic and sustainable
- **strengthening supply and demand** for services, the transfer of farmer-to-farmer technology and identifying alternative forms of finance, to ensure sustainability
- **helping communities develop strategies** to deal with their economic situation such as gaining better access to and forging stronger ties with markets, and diversifying their sources of income
- **improving social and family equity** through further gender training and providing support for women’s groups.

Project data

Project cost	USD 15.2 million
IFAD loan	USD 12.3 million
Borrowers’ contribution	USD 2.9 million
Cooperating institution	Office for Rural Development Operations of the Andean Development Corporation
Loan effectiveness	April 1997
Closing date	December 2003

Community empowerment

The newly-strengthened communities are now able to make their own decisions regarding community planning, financial management, conservation, upgrading of productive natural resources, and managing the use of water and land. Through community assemblies, villagers plan project activities and are responsible for putting into practice the commitments agreed during the project

Main results

The successful methodology used by Marenass was based on: the transfer of decision-making and responsibility for planning and financial resources to the communities; privatized services of technical assistance and farmer-to-farmer training; the supply of technology to farmers with low external input. In strengthening the social fabric of the communities, the project has succeeded in respecting and maintaining local values and culture. An innovative aspect of the project is the use of competitions to evaluate and reward the best approaches devised by communities to natural resource management. Twenty-five thousand families have moved from a subsistence existence and are now small farmers producing a surplus and enjoying greater physical and financial assets and food security. It is estimated that the return on project investments in terms of increased value of beneficiaries’ assets ranges between three and five dollars for every dollar spent by the project on the communities. There is a high level of participation in community activities, people identify closely with Marenass and have endorsed the methodologies that seek the best alternatives and adopt the most relevant technologies. The communities say: *We are Marenass. We do the work, we make the decisions, we irrigate and we improve our homes, our farms, our pastures... what we do, we do for ourselves and it remains here for us.*



planning stages. Villagers are particularly keen to balance better living conditions (better housing, for example) with improved management of productive natural resources. Capacity building has also enabled communities to administer their resources directly and negotiate within and between communities and with local institutions and government. It is still necessary, the evaluation suggested, to consolidate the capacity of communities to manage natural resources and to negotiate with stakeholders within and outside Peru.

What is *Pacha Mama Raymi*?

Literally, *Pacha Mama Raymi*, means 'Festival of Mother Earth'. It is a methodology that draws upon the cultural, mythological, and religious traditions of the local Andean communities that relate to the cultivation of 'Mother Earth' and which allow for the management of productive natural resources whilst respecting the vision and needs of local farmers. *Pacha Mama Raymi* uses competitions to promote new technological practices amongst villagers to improve natural resource management, agricultural production and living conditions. The families or communities who best apply the advice provided by technical staff and who achieve the top results earn a cash prize presented at a Mother Earth festival. The competitions are a catalyst, an efficient and effective means of sharing, disseminating and replicating local technological innovation throughout the entire project area.

Farmer-to-farmer training

Marenass provides technical services based on the transfer of resources to the communities enabling them to hire, supervise and evaluate technical staff directly. The communities themselves select those to be given farmer-to-farmer training. This methodology has allowed for low service costs and the broad-based acceptance and adoption of new technologies by the communities. Continued support for the development of the local service markets to ensure that supply meets farmers' demands by strengthening training programmes and ensuring adequate financial resources will be important.

Economic outlook

Marenass has shown that the key to overcoming poverty in the harsh conditions of the southern highlands of Peru is to rehabilitate and conserve productive natural resources. The surplus generated by agricultural production and small businesses, including the prizes won by villagers in the competitions, has led to increases in beneficiaries' financial and fixed assets such as housing, corrals, terraces, irrigation infrastructure, and pastureland. Further substantial increases in production are expected and farmers will need to enhance their linkages with markets and diversify production to ensure that they can sell surplus produce.

Women as key decision-makers

Women's groups were entrusted with the administration of small funds providing small amounts of credit for the development of micro businesses such as agricultural production and livestock breeding and fattening. Some groups are also working to preserve biodiversity through the recovery of seeds of native species and the development of small nurseries. The fund has been successful: average capitalization is around 50 percent. Ideas about social and family equity disseminated through gender and other types of training, combined with the increased empowerment of villagers, have led to a fairer distribution of benefits among the poorest. Women especially, now enjoy improved status due to training and their increased ability to manage funds. The greater visibility and prestige of women – of their productive and reproductive roles and contribution to the family – have also led a more equitable sharing of responsibility within families, further enhancing women's status and position. Women and children have more free time to spend on improving their living conditions and concentrating on education. Women will need to have access to further training in managing microcredit and micro businesses as continued support for their roles as key decision-makers ■

Further information

República del Perú: Evaluación Pre-terminal del Proyecto de Manejo de Recursos Naturales en la Sierra Sur (Marenass), Interim Evaluation, Report N° 1316-PE, October 2002, available from: Office of Evaluation, International Fund for Agricultural Development, Via del Serafico 107, 00142 Rome, Italy. This *Profile* (also in Spanish) and the main report are online at www.ifad.org/evaluation; email I.daniel@ifad.org or telephone +39 06 5459 2526.



IFAD photo by Susan Beccio

Focusing on issues such as animal health and farm hygiene, *Pacha Mama Raymi* – the celebration of Mother Earth – is an innovative methodology using competitions between rural villagers to disseminate new technological approaches to farming. Families and whole villages participate voluntarily in a bid to win cash prizes. An effective empowerment tool, *Pacha Mama Raymi* is grounded in pre-Hispanic traditions and run by the villagers themselves. It strengthens community organisation, enabling villagers to optimise community resources management. Above, villagers from Concacha discuss the benefits of participating in the competitions.