



Fund for Innovation and Transformation

Fonds pour l'innovation et la transformation



LA SOCIÉTÉ MER ET MONDE

Learning Community and Incubator for Gender Equality Projects in Nicaragua

Context

Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries in Latin America, with a quarter of its six million inhabitants living below the poverty line. Women and girls are especially vulnerable as they have little access to education, are expected to perform all domestic and childcare tasks, and face high instances of gender-based violence. For these reasons, it is essential that development initiatives in the country integrate gender equality (GE). Prior to testing their innovation, Mer et Monde had only been able to achieve mixed results when incorporating GE into projects, as its local partners did not have the essential knowledge and capacities to effectively integrate it.

The Innovative Solution

Supported by FIT, Mer et Monde tested an innovative solution aimed at creating a local learning community and gender equality project incubator for civil society organization (CSO) Agents of Change, supported by ongoing coaching and support. Through alternating between GE capacity-building activities and opportunities for practical application through microprojects, the innovation facilitated the transition from theory to practice for the participants, thus ensuring greater ownership of their learning. Microprojects included: entrepreneurship and small businesses for women and youth; empowerment of women farmers and resilience to climate change; and reducing the vulnerability of girls and boys caused by gender inequality.

Advancing Gender Equality

A gender analysis was conducted by a Canadian gender expert, working alongside a local consultant with strong gender analysis skills, to ensure a clear understanding of the GE issues specific to the region, particularly the barriers faced by women and girls. Testing project outcomes were measured using gender sensitive or gender-specific indicators. The gender equality strategy for the innovation was cross-cutting and included:



COUNTRY
Nicaragua

AMOUNT
\$236,526

TESTING PERIOD
15 months
Ended Dec 2021



SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY



GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE (GE3)



THEME: GENDER EQUALITY

- a commitment to the community (providing salaries for time invested).
- equal participation of men and women (both as participants and facilitators).
- accessibility for all (accessible venues, compensation for travel, etc.).
- use of internal resources (including local consulting services).
- accessible training methodologies (engaging and appealing ways of relaying information).
- evaluating microproject processes to ensure GE was integrated.

Testing Framework

The testing framework was divided into four phases:

- Start-up: Participatory diagnosis with CSOs, design of monitoring and evaluation tools, development of the training curriculum.
- Experiential learning: Training session in GE with the Agents of Change, call for collective projects integrating GE, implementation of microprojects aimed at increasing the GE capacity of CSOs.
- Mid-term evaluation: Assessment of the results, adjustments to the methodology.
- Project closure: Final evaluation, systematization of the experience, presentation.

Results and Impact

The innovation allowed for collaboration between six CSOs in Carazo in implementing gender equality interventions and building links with experts at the regional and national levels. It also strengthened relationships between Mer et Monde and its regional partners. At baseline, 47% of randomly selected beneficiaries of CSO partners acknowledged the existence of gender inequalities, compared to 94% at endline. CSO members have increased their knowledge and understanding of GE, in addition to establishing a stronger institutional basis for working on this issue with their team. The lessons learned from the microprojects allow for a better understanding of the needs of the Agent of Change participants and thus, better practices in GE for future projects.

Key Lessons

1. Both participating CSO members and the Mer et Monde team found that time was a major limitation to the full development of activities and the achievement of certain desired results. The training cycles, as well as the implementation of the microprojects, would have benefited from more time.
2. The microproject budgets were initially quite large. CSO members noted that it would have been desirable to work on only one or two immediate or intermediate outcomes. The budgets for the microprojects were overestimated in relation to the time allocated.
3. CSOs experienced some difficulties in integrating men in the same way as women in their microprojects. Agents of Change requested strategic elements to support this.

“This kind of project was very beneficial. The learning community really helped. For example, we had never developed or implemented a microproject that had to do with gender equality. We had been trained but never had this experience. We never had the opportunity to develop these aspects and put them into practice. We went from passive to active. As an organization we really needed this.” - Agent of Change

PARTNER ORGANIZATION

- La Société Mer et Monde (Nicaragua Office)

TARGET PARTICIPANTS

12 Agents of Change from 6 civil society organizations (CSOs) (4 Women, 8 Men)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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ABOUT FIT

The Fund for Innovation and Transformation supports Canadian small and medium-sized organizations (SMOs) testing innovative solutions that advance gender equality in the Global South.

