



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE
AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE

EXAMPLES OF THE RESULTS OF PHASE 1

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS IN SOUTH AMERICA'S CHACO REGION: RECOVERING ANCESTRAL LANDS AND ENSURING THEIR SUSTAINABLE USE

2005-2009

This document contains just a few examples of the many results and “achievements” from the first phase of the Tri-national Integrated Program (PIT, its acronym in Spanish) implemented in Bolivia, Paraguay and Argentina by CWS partners CER-DET, CIPAE, ENDEPA, FUNDAPAZ y JUM. We have understood and presented these results on four levels:

1. **The indigenous women and youth** protagonists of PIT activities and initiatives.
2. **The indigenous communities** benefited by or participating in specific activities.
3. **The indigenous organizations** (first, second and third-level), and their representatives.
4. **The five partner organizations** that implemented the PIT.

1. EXAMPLES AT THE LEVEL OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND YOUTH

- a. Young men and women received support and accompaniment to advance or complete their high school, vocational, or university level studies to both strengthen their communities and serve as an example for other young people.

The Chaco program supported a large number of young leaders with funds to cover tuition and other costs, especially at the university level—in some cases, the first time a community member had the opportunity to access education at this level. One year eight young men and two young women were supported in Bolivia through an agreement with the Autonomous University Juan Misael Saracho (UAJMS). In Paraguay, ten indigenous youth received a university education, with six scholarships from a bi-national company and four from the Embassy of Venezuela to study in that country. Currently, two indigenous graduates of law school in Bolivia work for the Office of Indigenous Affairs of the Municipality of Villa Montes. In Argentina, one student graduated as a geography professor and another as an economics professor. The PIT also made it possible for one partner in Argentina to provide financing for the meals for indigenous youth who must leave their communities to continue their schooling. They rely on a student residence to complete high school or vocational training, and understand that their knowledge and achievements belong to their communities and will help them defend indigenous rights.

- b. Indigenous youth learned GPS mapping and use it to benefit their communities.

Several youth are using new knowledge of GPS to produce maps of their ancestral territories that are used to support their communities' land claims. One indigenous youth trained by the PIT in

GPS and information technology was contracted by the government of the Chaco Province in Argentina to accompany a government official from the colonization office in all of his work in indigenous communities and on inspections made for evaluating irregular land allocations.

- c. Women of various generations have participated in exchanges to learn about new experiences in food production and other issues from other peoples and have helped replicate them in their own and other communities.

In June 2008, three indigenous women from the Bolivian Chaco participated in a five-day course on the production of fish-based foods. After, they replicated what they learned in their community, where women and young people showed interest and learned how to make fish empanadas, soup, and other foods.

2. EXAMPLES AT THE LEVEL OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

- a. A community received support and accompaniment for the process of moving onto and living in recently recuperated territory.

With assistance from the Chaco program, 50 families who make up the Pozo del Toro community in Argentina received title to 270 hectares purchased for them by the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs (INAI)—the first time that this agency participated directly in such a purchase. By providing productive land, this purchase will help stem migration by indigenous community members to urban centers.

- b. A community leader gained access to a government position of importance for the rights of indigenous peoples.

The PIT workshops on legal tools have helped many indigenous leaders represent their communities by running for elected office. For example, a member of a Wichí community in Argentina (Francisco González) trained in PIT workshops is now a member of the municipal legislature.

- c. Communities used the media to disseminate knowledge acquired in PIT training events and to voice its concerns before public officials.

In Argentina, young members of various Wichí communities produce the content, host and direct radio programs, all in the Wichí language. Participants in the tri-national training on international legal instruments shared information over the radio on local and international laws that impact indigenous communities. Another community obtained equipment for and founded an FM radio station that is rural, bilingual (Spanish and Qom) and intercultural, with a 70 km coverage.

- d. A community resolved and prevented a conflict due to accompaniment from the PIT.

The community of Nueva Pompeya, concerned about the constant mistreatment of community members by the local police, mobilized to request that the police station be moved away from their community, which indeed, they achieved. In other parts of Argentina and in Bolivia, similar, direct support was provided to various communities for their interactions with municipal and departmental authorities.

3. EXAMPLES AT THE LEVEL OF INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS

- a. The leadership and membership of an organization was mobilized in a timely and effective manner in response to violation of a collective right.

The working group on land issues in the Argentine province of Salta took several actions, including a massive march and meetings with provincial legislators, to raise the issue of massive cutting of trees and the severe environmental degradation that results. They garnered excellent coverage in the media. In late 2008, a group representing 12 communities got the Argentine Supreme Court to halt the continued deforestation in four departments in northern Salta, and to order the national and provincial government to conduct an environmental impact study with ample participation from the communities that live in the area.

- b. An organization strengthened by the PIT was able to negotiate and reach new agreements with the State and its agencies.

In 2008, after months of severe draught continued to destroy food production and threaten human lives, the Paraguayan government convened leaders of various indigenous organizations that participate in the Chaco program, whom we assisted in formulating and presenting their proposals so that emergency aid would reach and help their communities. The indigenous leaders felt that their participation in the national plan helped secure the adequate provision of water, food and health services in dozens of communities during the drought.

4. EXAMPLES AT THE LEVEL OF THE IMPLEMENTING PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

- a. A partner organization strengthened its administrative-financial capacity thanks to the solidarity and generosity of another PIT partner organization.
- b. Partner organizations—including directors and field staff—acquired new capabilities in program design, negotiation, planning, implementation, communication and monitoring.
- c. The PIT board of directors (made up of the implementing partners) learned to grow as a learning community in which difficult issues were raised and resolved.

In a historic moment in South America, CWS and its partner organizations—though the PIT—are making an original and methodical contribution so that they indigenous peoples of the Gran Chaco are not passive witnesses of these changes but rather both protagonists and beneficiaries.