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Lessons Learned from the Indigenous Communities Development (ICD) Project in Argentina

SITUATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ARGENTINA

The indigenous peoples in Argentina continue to be the most marginalized. Lacking official census data, few non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and indigenous organizations have estimated that the number of indigenous peoples is between 800,000 and 2,000,000. It is believed that a very high percentage reside in rural settlements and in communities representing approximately between 3% and 5% of the country's total population. According to the sources, there exist about 24 indigenous groups and more than 800 communities in the whole country. In some provincial cities, there is a very high concentration of indigenous families due to urban migration (CELS, 2002: 5).

The last National Census of Population, Household and Housing of 2001 contained a specific question on indigenous descendants. However, the definite results are yet unknown and the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) is working with representatives of indigenous communities on a complementary census.

LEGAL AND POLITICAL FRAMEWORK OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The 1994 Argentine Magna Carta is a very important document in the Latin American constitutionalism and it includes almost a dozen indigenous concepts contained into a single article. It offers a wide spectrum of securities by utilizing an updated language referring to indigenous as "peoples" as stated in the 169 Convention *Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples* (1989), which Argentina ratified on July 2000. Moreover, the Magna Carta recognizes the "ethnic and cultural pre-existence" of indigenous peoples as having the collective right to their own identity. It also establishes a "bilingual and intercultural education," which is another concept introduced by the international organizations (Art. 75, clause 17). The indigenous peoples in Argentina possess important rights over their lands, for which collective property ownership and participation in the management of natural resources are acknowledged. Such land ownerships are non-transferable and intransmissible and they are to increase with the State's handover of "other suitable and sufficient [lands] for human development" (Barié).

CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARGENTINA, August 22, 1994

Article 75: Clause 17

Recognize the ethnic and cultural pre-existence of indigenous peoples in Argentina. Guarantee the respect to their own identities and the right to a bilingual and intercultural education; recognize the legal entity of their communities, and the possession and collective ownership of the lands they traditionally occupy; and regulate the hand over of other [lands] suitable and sufficient for human development; none of these [land] will be transferable, transmissible, or susceptible to liens or

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Indigenous Communities Development (ICD) project began in 1997 when a donation from the World Bank became effective through the Institutional Development Fund (IDF). The Fund carried out a program towards strengthening the capacity-building of organizations and of indigenous peoples in Argentina emphasizing the understanding of such programs financed by the World Bank. The program was carried out during the period of January 1997 through December 1998 under the responsibility of the National Center of Community Organizations (NCCO), which was part of the Secretary of Social Development at the time. .

One of the results generated from the execution of the program was the presentation, from the part of the indigenous organizations, of a series of initiatives, in which there were specific proposals for the sustainable development of communities with ownership to their lands.

The World Bank expressed its technical and financial support to the project and its design began on October 1998. The project's objective was to establish an Indigenous Areas Pilot (IAP) to strengthen the capacity to manage, use and control the land and its natural resources by avoiding intensive capital activities and promoting stimulus based on the ancestral culture of indigenous communities who inhabit the areas mentioned.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The main objective of the ICD project is to establish the basis for community development and the protection and management of natural resources in the lands of indigenous communities. It includes the social and cultural strengthening of indigenous communities, the improvement of indigenous capacities for sustainable management and, the increase of capacity-building within the communities. That is in relation to all government levels and other actors involved in the pilot areas and, with respect to the indigenous peoples in general. The project would develop "models," in which to extract lessons focusing on a future extension of the program in other indigenous areas. The three selected pilot areas are:

- **The Mapuche of Pulmarí IAP, in the Province of Neuquén**
- **The Diaguita-Calchaquí of Amaicha del Valle and Quilmes IAP, in the Province of Tucumán and,**
- **The Kolla of Finca Santiago IAP, in the Province of Salta.**

The Kolla Community in Finca Santiago

Finca Santiago (125.000 ha) is located at the basin of Alto Bermejo in the Province of Salta. The population is concentrated in four communities: Isla de Cañas, Río Cortaderas, Volcán Higueras and Colanzulí. The indigenous peoples who inhabit Finca Santiago identify themselves as Kollas, which Magrassi (1982) defines as a "generalized

denomination for the Puneños, their descendants, few Quebradeños and even Vallistos, and every other population of Quechua-Aymara origin.” The four communities targeted in the project, which inhabit Finca Santiago, are Kollas. They are bearers of the Andean form of life with their cultural norms (such as the *Pachamama* cult of mother earth), pastoral economy, potato and corn agriculture, locust tree collection, housing construction, traditional medicine, musical instruments such as the *erques*, *quenas*, *cajas*, etc. peculiar rituals and social practices. They are the inherit race of the original inhabitants of the Northwest that were established during the XIX century differentiating themselves from other mestizos in the area and concentrating in the dispersed settlements of the high lands of Puna and Quebrada de Humahuaca. The Kollas incursions in the low lands of the Yungas may be, however, very recent and related to the nomadic system of cattle management.

The Mapuche Communities in Pulmarí

It is composed by six communities spread within an 110,000 hectares land administered by the Inter Estadual Pulmarí Corporation in the Province of Neuquén in the locality of Aluminé. It is known that long ago, in the plains of the south of what it is now Argentine territory, the land was occupied by the *Pehuenches*. This was the tribal name given by the Araucanians signifying that they were “*people of the pine trees*” (*pehuén*: pine tree; *che*: people) because they were settled among the pine trees of Neuquén and the pine kernel of *Araucaria* was their basic food staple (COPADE, 1987; Martinez Sarasola, 1992). The indigenous peoples inhabiting Pulmarí identify themselves as Mapuches, “*people of the earth*,” descendants of the araucans of the south of Chile and, commonly referred in textbooks as part of the “*culture of the plains*.”

The Diaguita/Calchaquí Communities in Quilmes de Amaicha del Valle.

The Diaguita Calchaquíes Communities of Amaicha del Valle are located in the Tucumán portion of the Calchaquíes Valleys in the region of the Tafi Department, northwest of the Province of Tucumán. The Amaicha del Valle community is integrated by the Rural District of Amaicha del Valle and part of the Rural District of Colalao del Valle. The members of the Amaicha and Quilmes communities targeted by this project are part of the generally “mountainous culture” and descendants of the Santa María culture, which settled since the year 1000 in Tucumán, Salta and Catamarca. The community is found within the limits established by the *Cédula Real* in 110.000 hectares recognized by the Diaguitas of Quilmes concentrated in five main settlements: the Collado del Valle, Bañado, Anjuana, Tala Paso and Pichao, which are located in the areas of the Amaicha del Valle.

The project is implemented through **three components**:

- **Social and Cultural Strengthening of Indigenous Communities.** It entails the development of activities that strengthen the capacity for self-development and the promotion of activities closely linked to traditional knowledge and culture.

- **Sustainable Use of Natural Resources.** It formulates natural resources management plans for the indigenous areas from the part of indigenous organizations through the preparation of: environmental and sociocultural analysis; assessment of resources; services for soil, water and forestry planning and management; specific mechanisms to reduce environmental risks; preparation and execution of community subprojects (CSs) in the Indigenous Areas.
- **Project Management.** This component is intended to guarantee the efficient management of the project at the central as well as the local level.

The total cost of the project is US\$ 5.8 millions, in which US\$ 5 millions constitute a loan from the World Bank and US\$ 0.8 millions come from the Argentine government. The type of credit is a Learning and Innovation Loan (LIL) and its duration was of three years (2000-2003), which was extended by another year until December of 2004.

SITUATION OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES DEVELOPMENT (ICD) PROJECT IN 2004

Throughout the years in which the project was approved and begun its implementation, it encountered diverse contingencies and its execution did not surpass the 8% of the US\$ 5,800,000 available by the end of 2003. From August of 2003, the Ministry of Social Development decided to carefully follow the project, which task was concentrated on the Institutional Strengthening of the Unit of International Financial Administration and Coordination (UIFAC) of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). As a result of this technical assistance, the performance and management components of the project was ironed out by December 2003, which it translated into the approval of the first community subprojects (CSs) and subsequent loan disbursement to the indigenous organizations.

The active participation of the Consultative Indigenous Council has allowed for the continuance of the project, especially with the transfer of government which brought about the change in the direction of the Indigenous Communities Development (ICD).

However, the situation of the project continues to be deficient requiring strong intervention and following by the Ministry through the UIFAC. Among the main issues to be addressed, it can be pointed out the necessity to count with a coordinator and a subcoordinator selected through competitive recruitment and the formation of a Project Execution Unit (PEU). This unit can be composed by professional experts with particular experience in management and organization of projects or programs with international financing at the national level that can efficiently facilitate and accelerate the execution of ICD.

With respect to the Local Management Unit (LMU), it is required to continue monitoring and following the project to achieve definitive conformation of their work groups on one hand and, to guarantee the workings as well as the correct execution of the CSs on the other hand

The Ministry of Social Development, through the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs (NIIA) and the Secretary of Social Policy, must take on this year the analysis and consideration of the essential contents in which it will outline indigenous policies. This implies the import task of establishing regional and national meetings of indigenous peoples to agree on common positions as well as petitions of exchange and accords with representatives of the national government. It will also create important stimulus for investigation and elaboration of judicial and legal proposals within the framework established by the national constitution, which will be supported by the IDC.

LESSONS LEARNED

I. Capacity-building as pre-investment

Eight indigenous consultants were in charge of assisting the NIIA team and the World Bank in the main aspects of the project preparation. They formed community meetings to discuss the options of sustainable development, relieve information, recommend courses of action, participate in the policy decision-making and act as a link between the indigenous communities and the NIIA-World Bank team.

The previous training in project design, made possible through the donation of the IDF, aimed at strengthening the capacities of indigenous organizations with respect to planning, administration and participation in the dialog with the government. It created a group of indigenous leaders trained in the projects' proceedings from the World Bank as well as the government. It promoted skilled participation in the project design and the permanent monitoring of each of its cycles.

II. Weak institutions generate big management problems

The institutions that deal with the indigenous thematic are in general very weak and they lack the political influence necessary to complete the high level negotiations without the intervention of other institutions. A very weak and optimized institutional analysis was performed during the project preparation that impeded for long time finding the solutions to the bottlenecks generated by the weak institutions.

III. The role of the provinces is key in a federal country

Despite of being a project which debt is completely assumed by the national government, a federal government regime implies the necessity to establish cooperation mechanisms with the provinces. This has not been accomplished in all cases and it has signified a loss of technical capacities at the local levels. Furthermore, tension between the provinces and the communities has been accentuated due to the direct intervention of the federal government. To all indigenous peoples, however, it is important that the country fulfills what it is established in the Argentine constitution.

IV. The role of Indigenous Areas Pilot (IAP) Project

The areas were selected under the basis of the existence of collective property ownership of the land. However, in 2 out of 3 IAP, there existed legal problems which complicated the initial execution of the project. The selection was carried out without an objective and systematic analysis of the priority areas, which are being revised with GoA the criteria of selection for the areas to be incorporated. It is necessary to be flexible since it foresees new areas for expansion and acceleration of the project execution. The institutional framework in which it was established was redesigned utilizing new tools that coordinate large national feeding, productive and infrastructure plans with the IDC project.

V. The scale of the project influences the commitment of the National Government

Facing a wide-range of programs, such as the Head of Household (US\$ 600 millions), the LIL of US\$ 6 millions is unattractive to the executors and seems weak. The ideal would be to formulate projects of wider range from the initial stage, perhaps with the Adjusted Programmatic Lending module.

VI. Lack of project ownership from the part of the State

The survival of the project until now has been guaranteed by the communities involved, the pertinent national and provincial indigenous organizations and the World Bank itself. The World Bank has supported the project with all its political and technical structure. However, a similar commitment has not been obtained from the intermediate levels of the decision-making of the State

This strongly questions the concept of who the client of the World Bank is and how to sensitize the government on the indigenous problem. The possibility to “reestablish” the project is the expectation of not only the World Bank team, but also of the new governmental body and communities.

VII. The Role of the communities’ authorities

Given the importance of backing the communities, various mechanisms of support to the authorities must be included since they are the guarantee to the continuance of the project and they serve as a key role in providing incentives for ample social participation.

ANNEX 1: THE ACTORS

Project Execution Unit (PEU)

It functions within the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs (NIIA). It is responsible for the execution of the project. It provided a director and subdirector between November 2002 and July 2003. From October to December 2003, an interim director and subdirector were appointed. It has a technical team of professionals in different thematic along the lines of the project and are recruited by the NIIA with low level of involvement in the project. The weakness of the PEU is the scarce knowledge on the procedures of the World Bank. Its strength lies on its knowledge of the theme and on having advanced with the community work despite facing institutional instability.

Unit of International Financial Administration and Coordination (UIFAC)

It functions within the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). It is responsible for the administrative financial activities. It counted with at least two coordinators. The UIFAC's low level of involvement in the beginning of the project may be due to the low amount of this project in relation to the other projects in the MSD. One of UIFAC's weakness is its lack of communication between UPE and DIFAC. A positive point is its decision to continue with the preparation of the CSs in the communities and the technical contribution made by the members of this unit.

Consultative Council (CC)

It could hold meetings in the UPE, DICAFA or in the Indigenous Areas Pilot. Up to date, it does not have internal by-laws to function. The internal elections of the local councils can modify the term length of the CC members. The CC's strength is the high degree of commitment of its members to the project.

Local Operations Unit (LOU)

To this day, the LOUs are comprised by coordinators, promoters, administrators and partially formed groups of technicians recruited by the Lending Agreement. A point of strength is the LOU's high degree of commitment of its members. A point of weakness is the LOU's scarce knowledge of the procedures required by the government and the World Bank.

