Community Change

The Community Capitals Framework in the systematization of an experience of rural development in Zambrana Abajo, Cotuí, Dominican Republic

To promote the development of livelihood strategies in order to overcome poverty while natural resources are preserved in rural communities, it is important to use a planning methodology considering existing assets. An experience in Zambrana Abajo showed how people became engaged with the natural capital to face and overcome poverty.

**Objective**

To identify the factors determining livelihood strategies and the satisfaction of fundamental human needs towards community development in Zambrana Abajo, Cotuí, Dominican Republic.

**Methods**

The research was conducted in the municipal district of Zambrana Abajo, Sánchez Ramírez province, and Bayaguana, Monte Plata province. The Community Capitals Framework (CCF) was used as a methodological and conceptual approach. Data was collected using 79 semi-structured interviews (68 households and 11 key informants), two focus groups, participant observation and secondary information revision.

**Results**

**NATURAL CAPITAL:**
- Development of activities related to Acacia mangium and other forest species has helped to reduce soil degradation and contribute to maintaining water sources.
- Local organizations have had the opportunity to create links with other national and international organizations (through ENDA Tierra and CIRAD).

**HUMAN CAPITAL:**
- Development of activities related to Acacia mangium and other forest species has led people to have opportunities of training (agroforestry, cabinetmaking) and leadership development (Agroforestry and Health Promoters).

**CULTURAL CAPITAL:**
- Production of Acacia mangium has motivated people to change their agricultural practices (from monoculture to agroforestry systems: diversification).
- Acacia mangium has become an identity symbol in the municipal district of Zambrana Abajo.

**POLITICAL CAPITAL:**
- Timber yielding species (Acacia mangium) allowed the families of Zambrana Abajo to face the restrictive policies of forest sector in Dominican Republic.

**SYSTEM CAPITAL:**
- Development of activities related to Acacia mangium and other forest species has led to the creation of new livelihood strategies (timber yielding, cabinetmaking, timber transport and sawing) linked to this forest species, improving the satisfaction of human needs (subsistence, protection, understanding, participation, creation, identity, freedom).

**FINANCIAL CAPITAL:**
- Forest Micro-Enterprise of Zambrana Chacuey was transformed into the Cooperative of Agroforestry Production of Zambrana Chacuey.
- Trees open access to credit.

**PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS**

1. By strengthening human capital through training (Health and Agroforestry Promoters) and the incidence of APA on the forest policies, people was empowered to continue their community development process.
2. The use of *Acacia mangium* have determined new livelihoods (timber yielding, cabinetmaking, timber transport and sawing) linked to this forest species, improving the satisfaction of human needs (subsistence, protection, understanding, participation, creation, identity, freedom).
3. The level of understanding about the potential and possibilities that agroforestry systems represented in the livelihood strategies of participants had an influence on the decision - making process toward innovation with this type of systems.