



Fostering Gender-Transformative Change in Sustainable Forest Management

A CASE STUDY OF DGM SAWETO PERU

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The DGM Saweto Peru country project focuses on supporting Indigenous peoples in selected communities in the Peruvian Amazon to improve their sustainable forest management practices. The project started its implementation in November 2015 and closed in June 2021, it has had 133 subprojects which were all completed. This case study focuses on one of those subprojects to offer insight into whether and in what way it influenced women’s participation and leadership on the ground. It could also indicate the extent to which the subproject may be influencing broader social and gender norms in Peru. It also informs the wider line of inquiry of the DGM Gender Study, which seeks to analyze the contribution of the DGM project to women’s economic achievement, access to and control over productive assets, voice, and agency that supported positive changes in women’s leadership and meaningful participation.

Our conceptual framework for this study—both the broader DGM Gender Study and this more focused case study—follows a stepwise, yet flexible and dynamic, progression toward gender transformative change. The framework begins by assessing the inputs that the DGM project provided to beneficiaries,

such as assets, information, skills, and capacity building. This assessment looks at what type of inputs were provided, to whom, and how. We assess how those inputs influenced women’s income and assets, and building on that, how women are gaining voice and agency. We assess whether and how those changes in voice and agency are influencing gender norms, attitudes, and perceptions of women and men at multiple levels—from individual to household to community. Finally, we look at whether those shifts have the potential to be sustained beyond the lifetime of the project and could influence more formal practices, rules, policies, and laws that are unequal to women.

In this case study, which focuses on improving fish farming in the native Awajún community of Nazareth in Amazonas, female and male community members report some benefits and positive shifts for women at the individual level, but only limited benefits at the household and community level. The results suggest that the DGM Saweto Peru fish farming subproject brought some tangible positive changes for women, but leave in doubt the extent to which those changes have extended beyond the direct subproject participants.



Country context

One of the most biologically megadiverse countries in the world, Peru ranks second in South America and ninth in the world in terms of natural forests, which are threatened by deforestation. These forests are found primarily in Peru's Amazon region to the east of the Andes, an area that contains 94% of the country's forested land. Current trends show an increasing rate of deforestation, particularly in areas without legally assigned land rights. The main drivers of deforestation include migration and agricultural expansion, and infrastructure such as road construction and unregulated timber extraction. Areas with strong community rights and Indigenous lands consistently have the lowest deforestation rates.

Approximately 2,250 different Indigenous communities live in Peru's Amazon region, own or manage 20% of its forests, and depend on its natural resources. Land rights are typically held collectively. Forests provide

natural goods and services such as carbon storage, water filtration, timber and non-timber products, and medicines that communities rely on for their subsistence and wellbeing. Forests also support the cultural and spiritual traditions fundamental to their communities.

However, social indicators for Indigenous communities in the Amazon region are the lowest in the country. They face high rates of malnutrition, limited access to essential services like education and health care, disproportionate levels of maternal and infant mortality, and lower life expectancy.

These indicators are especially low for the region's Indigenous women. For example, the illiteracy rate is 15.9% among Indigenous peoples—five times higher than that among non-Indigenous Peruvians. The illiteracy rate is 5.5% for non-Indigenous women, and that rate climbs to 21.2% among Indigenous

females (United States Agency for International Development, 2019).

These inequalities impacting Indigenous women extend to natural resource management. In 2017, the Indigenous Communities Census indicated that 95.9% of Indigenous community leaders in Peru were men. Indigenous women made up only 4.1% of community leaders that year (USAID, 2019). Without access to leadership positions, board memberships, or the representative bodies of their communities, Indigenous women are effectively locked out of natural resource decision making.

Gender-based violence (GBV) in Peru is another factor disproportionately impacting women— particularly Indigenous women. Overall, 48% of women in Peru have experienced some form of domestic violence in their lifetime. Women who were raised speaking an Indigenous language and learned Spanish later are 9.4% more likely to experience violence than women who have spoken Spanish since childhood (Agüero, 2018). Reports indicate that these risks have only increased with the spread of COVID-19, spurring a shadow pandemic that has grown with lock-downs and closures that limit women's mobility and access to resources (Godoy, 2020).

Forest management initiatives in Peru are not immune to gender-based violence. Brigades that assist with the logistics of land titling, for instance, are usually all male, with females relegated to roles as cooks. They travel to remote areas and carry out demarcation work for months at a time. When women challenged the inequitable structure of the brigades, the risk for GBV notably increased given the potential of sexual violence in the field, especially in cases in which they were not joined by their spouse (as noted in interviews with the NEA). GBV is also very present in and

around illegal mining and logging operations in Peru, many of which are centered in the resource-rich Amazon region (Castañeda Camey et al., 2020).

The Peruvian legal framework provides protections for Indigenous peoples, gender equality, and equity and inclusion; but it lacks strong protections addressing gender within land tenure legislation. The country has adopted and ratified key international instruments, including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the International Labour Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO 169), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. At the national level, Peru's constitution guarantees equal protection for all. The National Gender Equality Policy was adopted in 2019, and the Forestry and Wild- life Law and the Organic Law of Regional Governments have equity and social inclusion principles. Several national laws recognize Indigenous ownership of property and support land titling procedures, but land tenure legislation does not include specific provisions regarding gender (Larsen et al., 2019). An analysis of legal frameworks regulating community forest tenure in Peru found that while most addressed community governance and dispute resolution, women's rights to vote in community leadership bodies and access dispute resolution mechanisms were not guaranteed. Peru's Law on Prior Consultation requires consultation with Indigenous peoples in good faith prior to the adoption of measures that could affect them. But the principles of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) will not be effective or properly applied if women are excluded from community-level governance bodies (Rights and Resources Initiative, 2017).

This context is the backdrop for the Nazareth fish farm project. As research shows, "inequalities are multifaceted, intersectional

and combine in a perverse circle comprising such dimensions as being female, Indigenous and poor” (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2021). To break that cycle, forestry initiatives in Peru must take

into account impacts on women, especially Indigenous women and girls, foster women’s leadership and participation in decision making, and aim to be gender transformative.

Case Study Methodology

The subproject selected for study is entitled: “Improvement of the capacities in the production of Amazonian fish breeding in the native Awajún community Nazareth of the District of Imaza - Bagua – Amazonas.” It was chosen as a case study for several reasons: 1) the Awajún Indigenous community of Nazareth faces environmental challenges that uniquely impact women’s ability to sustainably manage their resources; 2) the subproject was designed by community authorities, who were men, though it was ultimately implemented by women; and 3) the subproject was recommended by WWF, the DGM Saweto Peru’s National Executing Agency (NEA), as an example of a production project prioritized by Indigenous Peoples.

In early 2021, the study team conducted a desk review of the overall DGM project, as well as interviews with World Bank staff to establish context and understand DGM Saweto Peru’s design, objectives and gender considerations. Interviews with DGM Saweto Peru NEA staff in March 2021 provided further insight into DGM Peru project design, including subproject selection and gender-specific outcomes. With these insights, the study team determined that the DGM Saweto Peru fish farm subproject would be analyzed in a case study.

From May 17-28, 2021, a Peru-based consultant with gender expertise and familiarity with the DGM Saweto Peru

conducted 11 interviews (8 women/3 men) with beneficiaries of the fish farm subproject (Table 1) and those related to it. The interviews were conducted by telephone or virtually via Zoom, in Peru, and in Spanish, with one requiring interpretation between Spanish and Awajún. In the same month, study team members based outside of Peru interviewed four World Bank staff with DGM Saweto Peru and thematic expertise. These interviews were conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams, in the United States, and in English.

The case study methodology was limited by several factors:

Positive bias

From selecting which subproject to examine in the case study to collecting data from project beneficiaries, some degree of positive bias may have impacted the methodological approach. Limited by COVID-19, the study team relied heavily on the NEA to help identify a target subproject. This association may have skewed the subproject selection toward a positive portrayal of DGM Saweto Peru outcomes and gender impacts. During interviews to collect data, subproject beneficiaries focused on sharing positive project results with the expectation that the interview could help secure more financial support for their fish farms. This may have skewed the findings toward more positive gender impacts.

Technology

Telephone and virtual platforms facilitated the ability to conduct the research from afar. But without face-to-face engagement in the same physical space, the ability to establish a high degree of trust between interviewers and interviewees decreased. The use of technology may have constrained how freely interviewees shared experiences and opinions.

Language

Many interviewees spoke Spanish as a second language, but not as well as anticipated. This may have limited their ability to fully express themselves. Interpretation between Awajún and Spanish was provided for interviewees who did not speak any Spanish.

Design of the DGM Saweto Peru Project

The DGM-Saweto Peru is an initiative of the Indigenous organizations of the Amazon, with financing from the World Bank and support from a NEA. Approved by the World Bank in September 2015, it was implemented from November 2015-May 2021.

Project Governance

The National Steering Committee (NSC) serves as the governing body of the DGM Saweto Peru and is responsible for subproject selection and oversight. It was established by consensus between the country's two national Amazonian Indigenous organizations: the *Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana* (AIDSESP) and the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Amazónicas del Perú* (CONAP) (PAD). The NSC has 10 members—5 representatives from AIDSESP and 5 from CONAP. Two of the NSC members are women, as agreed by both organizations.

The NEA provides administrative and financial management of DGM Saweto Peru, oversees safeguard compliance, shares technical assistance during implementation, and serves as the NSC secretariat. The NSC selected WWF Peru for this role because of its past experience

in managing the fiduciary aspects of externally funded projects, established administrative structures and systems, and experience working with Multilateral Development Banks.

The Project Intermediaries (PIs) are responsible for implementing all subprojects. Only regional Indigenous federations or organizations with legal standing can act as PIs. Furthermore, they must only do so at the request of the community. Eighteen entities are eligible to be PIs in Peru.

Subproject Design and Granting Procedures

One of the first DGM countries to begin project implementation in 2015, the DGM Saweto Peru aims to support Indigenous peoples in the Peruvian Amazon to improve their sustainable forest management practices through a focus on three components: 1) native land titling and native community recognition, 2) Indigenous forest management, and 3) governance and sustainability. Gender is a transversal theme underlying the first two components. All subprojects were designed to be consistent

with this framework and follow guidance outlined in DGM Saweto Peru's Operating Manual and Environmental and Social Management Framework.

One of the four criteria by which the NSC was directed to evaluate subproject proposals was the proposed project's contribution to the DGM Saweto Peru's gender targets.

The DGM Saweto Peru stipulated in the original project results indicator that women be 50 percent of the targeted beneficiaries, designated US\$550,000 for support to women-led subprojects, and aimed to fund women-led subprojects. These requirements were established after the first call for proposals returned only one submission for a women-led project.

Overall Results of DGM Saweto Peru

As of the 11th Semiannual DGM Program Report approved in March 2021, the DGM Saweto Peru funding allocation of US\$5.5 million supported 98 subprojects with US\$40,258 per subproject on average (see Table 1). The project originally set a target for native land to receive title of 780,000 ha, but after a 2020 project restructuring this target was lowered to 256,000 ha. Similarly, the DGM Saweto Peru originally proposed the recognition and registration of 311 native communities, but this target was lowered to 250 (World Bank, 2020). These adjustments were attributed to delays in expected collaboration from regional government land titling and registration authorities and COVID-19.

TABLE 1. SUBPROJECTS (DGM PROGRAM 11TH SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT)*

	First Call	Second Call	Third Call	Total
Quantity	21	43	34	98
Total (USD)	773,812	1,432,819.20	1,738,637.92	3,945,268.12
Average (USD)	36,848.18	33,321.38	51,136.41	40,257.85
Maximum (USD)	161,530.06	205,614.01	225,860.71	225,860.71
Minimum (USD)	3,082.49	2,980.18	2,949.06	2,949.06

* Include both project Components 1 and 2

The DGM Saweto Peru nearly met or exceeded its gender-related targets. Of the total number of subprojects supported, 19 were women-led, which nearly met the target of 25 subprojects. The DGM Saweto Peru made an approximate investment of US\$480,000 in women-led initiatives, nearly hitting the US\$500,000 target. To make these achievements possible, DGM Peru proactively began implementing a

gender-inclusion strategy in 2016 that identified and assessed challenges (such as the limited number of women-led subproject proposals in the first call for proposals and gender-differentiated access to fundamental rights), supported training on gender, incorporated gender objectives, and enabled capacity building for women on territorial management (DGM, 2020).

Subproject Case Study

Context

Rivers play an essential role in the lives of Awajún Indigenous peoples from the community of Nazareth in Imaza District, Bagua Province in Peru's Amazon region.

Living at the confluence of the Chiriaco and Marañon Rivers in northern Peru, the native villagers traditionally rely on the local waterways for fish, drinking water, and bathing, among other needs.

The native community of Nazareth has title to its lands—a recognized step for protecting valuable forests. It and other nearby Awajún villages in the Amazon region form part of Peru's second largest Indigenous group.

In 2016, an oil spill directly impacted Nazareth and other communities in northern Peru. Peru's state-sponsored oil company—Petroperú—manages the 40-year-old Northern Peruvian Pipeline that runs nearby the village. A breach in the pipeline released approximately 3000 barrels of crude oil into the Chiriaco River, resulting in the biggest of three oil spills on the pipeline in that year alone. All told, experts estimate nearly 4000 people in approximately 22 communities including Nazareth were impacted. The oil slick covered the waterway and farm fields alike, severely impacting food security in Nazareth. Tests

indicated that fish, a mainstay of the local diet, contained high levels of heavy metals such as cadmium and mercury, though the source of contamination in fish was not definitively proven (Floerke & Wolfe, 2016).

The impacts of the oil spill on human health were almost immediate. Petroperú workers reportedly offered young children and others in Nazareth payment to assist with the oil spill cleanup without protective equipment (Davies, 2016). Eager for the money, multiple children and adults participated by immersing their bare hands, arms, and legs directly into the spilled oil while attempting to scoop it from the water surface. Headaches, stomach pain, diarrhea, and rashes resulted, and some still felt the impacts more than five years later. Another oil spill on the Macusari River in February 2018 impacted more homes and compounded matters.

Nazareth began registering COVID-19 cases in June 2020, adding to the health impacts caused by the oil spills. Years after the spills, residents still awaited blood tests for heavy metals as well as additional environmental cleanup. The local health post was ill-equipped to handle an influx of COVID-19 patients, and local residents resorted to using veterinary remedies despite strong warnings from health officials against such practices (Cárdenas *et al.*, 2020).

Overview of the Subproject

The Nazareth subproject supported by DGM Saweto Peru sought to improve fish breeding within the Awajún native community located in Imaza district. The subproject responded to the long history of oil spills in the region, their impact on health and food security, and the community's need for a clean food source. Total funding for the Nazareth fish farm project was US\$19,110, which was one of 12 similar projects throughout the Peruvian Amazon supported by DGM Saweto Peru. Its implementation period was from December 2017-December 2019.

Based on consultation, fish farms were a popular rural production option prioritized by DGM Saweto Peru. For various reasons (pollution, overfishing and others), there is less and less availability of fish for Indigenous populations in rivers, streams and oxbow lakes. Fish farming is an activity to which families are enthusiastically dedicated. The main native Amazonian species cultivated are *paco*, *gamitana* and *boquichico*. The typical subproject activities include establishing the ponds, raising the fry (receiving, seeding and feeding), growing and fattening the fish, maintaining the ponds, harvesting, and monitoring. Women are mostly involved in fry and fish feeding, monitoring, and maintaining the ponds, while men are responsible for pond establishment and fish harvesting (Mateo et al., 2015).

NSC evaluation of fish farm subproject proposals considered pre-defined quality criteria, including (MDE Saweto Perú, 2017):

- The project will contribute to improving the food security of the participating communities.
- The subproject will promote income generation for families.
- It proposes waste control practices
- It proposes the installation of fish farms in areas without forest cover.
- It proposes the construction of at least three ponds for the management of fry, juveniles and breeding adults, totaling no less than 200m².
- The ponds have a natural water supply channel and a drainage channel.
- At least 80% of the fish feed comes from local fruits and other natural products.
- It does not propose processed and balanced protein fish feed brought in from outside.
- It proposes measures to avoid eutrophication and water pollution.
- At least 50% of the fish production is used to improve the protein nutrition of children under 5 years of age.
- It proposes the management and control of mosquitoes in the pools to avoid dengue, malaria and other associated diseases.
- It proposes measures for the control of predatory birds and mammals on the fish farm.
- It proposes the production of its own fry in the medium term.
- It proposes the preponderant participation of women in the process of environmental management and production of the fish farm.
- It proposes alternatives for the use of replacement water for the fish farm.

Interviews suggest that not only were women community members not engaged in the design, but the subproject may have been developed without specific consideration for gender. The project was originally designed by community authorities, who were men, with the goal of being implemented by the entire community. An unpublished study of the DGM Saweto Peru indicated that some male NSC members may not have supported distinguishing women's issues from those of the community overall, contending that "to specifically talk about benefits to women is not consistent with [indigenous] cultural values" (World Bank). Further research is needed to understand how well (or not) the subproject considered gender and impacts on women at the design stage.

The subproject design and development were supported by the PI—the regional Indigenous organization *Organización Regional de Pueblos Indígenas de la Amazonía Norte del Perú* (ORPIAN), which is also a member organization of AIDSEP.

DGM Saweto Peru approved the subproject in 2015, but implementation was slow to get under way. Food security was not as big an issue prior to the oil spill, which may have contributed to early delays in project implementation. According to some interviewees, the men involved were reluctant to engage in the project because they did not consider it to be lucrative enough.

Sensing the men's lack of interest, the women of Nazareth saw an opportunity. They sought and secured technical support from ORPIAN and requested authority from the community to take over leadership of the subproject. The community granted them this authority and the women began developing the fish farm activities to address the increased food insecurity facing their families. However, the women interviewed indicated little knowledge

of how the subproject's objectives and activities were designed or why they were designed in a particular way.

Individual Level Impacts of the Subproject

Despite the possible lack of consideration for gender or women's perspectives during the design phase, the subproject under the women's leadership yielded several important impacts at the individual level.

1. Training: Enhanced capacity among women fish farmers has the potential to build women's leadership, increase their access to productive assets, and benefit their income over time. Through the subproject, 120 fish farmers (115 women and 5 men) were trained, according to DGM Peru Saweto reports. Of the eight women community interviewees, five confirmed that they had received training about fish farm management and other topics such as women's self-defense. They pointed to trainings conducted by the subproject PI, ORPIAN, which were presumably funded by the subproject. They also mentioned four other training entities, one of which was clearly not associated with the subproject. It is not clear if the other three had any connection to the subproject. Two of the community interviewees indicated that they did not receive any training, and one did not answer the question. One of the interviewees suggested that women in leadership positions within the subproject were targeted for training with the idea that they would cascade the information down to other women fish farmers. However, in practice, the cascade of information may not have occurred.

While the training supported some women and men, this gap in access indicates the need for additional and more widespread learning opportunities, including on the basics of fish farming. The community interviewees also cited this need.

2. Food security: Food security creates stability, and stability allows women to focus on new and different opportunities that can benefit them and their leadership in the community. After the oil spills, women struggled daily to feed their families. Those interviewed viewed the project positively because it increased the food supply. The fish farms generated valuable protein, allowing women to better feed their families despite the river pollution. This was especially true during the confinement spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, further examination of the farm-produced fish is needed to assess whether contaminants found in the region are also impacting the fishponds through ground water or soil contamination. While those interviewed perceive improved food security, only with this analysis can the impacts be fully understood.

3. Assets/Income: The women interviewed considered the subproject's provision of materials, such as the fishpond infrastructure and fish seeds, to be important assets for the development of the enterprise. Through the subproject, 118 aquaculture producers established ponds to produce *Prochilodus nigricans* (common name, boquichico), a well-known fish in the Peruvian Amazon. These inputs also have the potential to support production and income generation beyond the life of the project.

While women have decision-making authority over the fish ponds, it was noted that husbands and the community assisted with the fishpond construction. This indicates support from men and the broader community for women's leadership in this arena.

The women interviewees viewed the subproject positively because it helped them generate benefits for their families—more income in some cases or better food supply in others. The subproject's fish production led to economic income from the sale of fish, reaching a total of 123,000 Peruvian soles (about US\$30,000). It was estimated by project implementers that about 30% of female fish farmers increased their income by selling their harvest. Meanwhile the other 70% harvested their fish to directly improve their own food supply. In other words, for the majority of women, the subproject did not achieve intended result of increased income generation. The study team was not able to determine exactly why this occurred, but it seems likely that food security was the most pressing concern for the majority and that access to markets may have been a limitation. To yield more income benefits to more fish farmers, the women interviewed indicated their desire and the need to reach markets beyond their community.

Those women who earned extra income from fish sales used the funds to cover children's expenses, such as education or health needs. The study team was not able to determine whether the decision on how to use these resources rested with the women or their husbands, or whether it was a collective decision. In general, the women pointed to this extra income as an overall benefit to their families.

4. Agency: Although the fish farms are managed jointly, with the family aiding in their construction and ongoing maintenance, community members recognize that the women lead them and are responsible for related decision making. The women highly value this recognition of their work and capabilities, noting that it brings them personal satisfaction, joy, and greater self-worth, creating an important foundation for improving women’s agency at the individual level.

With support from the DGM Peru, the women created their own association called Asociación Acuícola de Mujeres Awajun de Nazareth (ASMAAAN) with 120 female fish farmers who aim to produce for local markets. The group also achieved legal recognition in public records, a step that supports the women’s agency over their productive activities and economic futures, even beyond the life of the project. Male community members expressed encouragement for the association, indicating their support for women’s leadership in this arena.

The women aim to consolidate the association and continue improving the fish farms to earn more income, although they recognize the need for more support and inputs to make this happen. These goals demonstrate their nascent collective agency in matters related to fish farming. However, it should also be noted that the community interviewees seemed unaware of the fact that the subproject implementation period had ended and additional support and inputs from it might not be available. This may be an impact of COVID-19 and the limited engagement that it caused.

The evidence suggests that the fish farm subproject provided the inputs needed for women to play a greater role in and benefit from fish farming, even though their participation and specific benefits for them were not expressly contemplated in the initiative’s design. At the individual level, the greatest benefits to women’s leadership and effective participation in decision-making arose from access to training, improved food security, increased assets and income, and greater (though still nascent) agency in the fish farming arena. But some ambiguity remains—these benefits are not resounding, in some cases they need further study, and in certain areas they are limited to sub-groups—those in leadership positions or those with greater access to markets—among the women fish farmers.



Subproject Impacts at the Household and Community Level

The study team identified no profound changes in gender norms at the household and community levels as a result of the subproject, though some nascent changes that occurred warrant further evaluation.

1. Increased responsibilities: At the household level, the women interviewees indicated that their workload had increased as a result of the fish farm subproject. They assumed new tasks related to the fish farm, while also still managing the childcare and domestic chores (cooking, cleaning, etc.). Husbands and other household members do not yet assist with domestic activities. In some cases, the women curtailed agricultural activities in favor of pursuing aquaculture, but their domestic duties remained the same. The women interviewees generally feel that they have more tasks, but they

did not assign a positive or negative value to that reality. This suggests that household gender norms related to domestic responsibilities and workload have not shifted to promote greater gender equality.

2. Leadership: On the whole, the women interviewed noted that machismo limits their leadership opportunities within the community. The opportunity for the 118 women beneficiaries of Nazareth to lead the fish farm subproject seemed to be more an exception than the general rule, and it was limited to this particular initiative. Female leadership of the subproject resulted from the confluence of several factors: a) the willingness of ORPIAN staff to promote work with the women, b) financial and technical assistance supported by the subproject, c) the emerging leadership of local women motivated by the urgent need to address food security, and d) the men's approval of women taking over the subproject. This last point is directly linked to machismo and the men's perception that the subproject was a minor and unprofitable activity. The men were not threatened by female leadership in this case because of their narrow view of the subproject. Over time, the women interviewed noted that male community members began actively supporting their leadership of this particular subproject by helping to construct the fish ponds and deferring to the women's decision-making authority in all matters related to fish farm management.

Despite the men's support for the women's leadership in this particular situation, it has not led to greater leadership opportunities in other community matters, with one exception. In the last election of the Nazareth

community board of directors, a woman was elected as vice *Apu* (vice leader) for the first time. Some interviewees from the community indicated that her election may be due to women's leadership of the fish farm subproject. If correct, the election result would suggest that women are beginning to occupy decision-making positions in the community. However, further evaluation is required to determine whether or not a woman occupying the vice *Apu* position actually implies influence in decision making, and whether these decisions promote greater equality. In neighboring communities, the interviewees recognized that women very rarely hold positions of authority.

3. Voice in decision making: Interviewees shared diverse opinions on the influence of women's voice in the community assembly, which is Nazareth's main decision-making body. Some claimed that men and women have equal opportunity to express themselves, while others mentioned that this does not necessarily occur.

Women who hold positions within ASMAAAN noted the time it had taken them to overcome their fear of public speaking. They also feared the possible criticism and *machismo* that such public engagement might elicit. An older interviewee mentioned that although women were given the opportunity to express their opinions, at the end of the day this was not done because of the women's fear of being reprimanded at home by their husbands. Thus, although an opening in the community to recognize and incorporate women's leadership and participation exists, this process is still incipient. Women's involvement in decision making is still primarily focused on childcare and home

care issues. Even the activities of the fish farm are framed within these issues (i.e. food security).

Both men and women recognize the important role ASMAAAN plays in building women's leadership, but further evaluation is needed to understand if it will impact community decision making.

Several female beneficiaries recognized the creation of the association as an achievement that will allow them to consolidate themselves. But they also noted that it is currently perceived more as a platform to improve their livelihoods than as a platform for collective action in the promotion of women's rights.

More than two years have passed since the Nazareth fish farm project began implementation, and it is too early to determine whether the changes identified in this case study, such as the support for women's leadership, will be sustained long term. Some of the interviewees indicated that the formalization of ASMAAAN could bring about systemic and sustained women's empowerment over time, and they called for additional support to make that possible. Others emphasized the need for more training to generate soft skills, improve knowledge of women's and children's rights, and scale up the intervention. At the end of the day, a systemic change depends on the success of the fish farms, continued recognition of women's leadership, and more achievements beyond the end of DGM Peru's investment.

Conclusion

A close examination of the subproject, its unique context, and its impacts shows that the DGM Saweto Peru fish farming subproject has advanced clear tangible positive changes for women, but it leaves in doubt the extent to which those changes have extended beyond the direct subproject participants.

There was clear evidence of progress building women's leadership and agency at the individual level through training, improved income and greater voice. There was even nascent progress in these areas at the broader community and household levels through the legally recognized women's association, ASMAAAN. Its creation and management by women indicates clear potential for women's leadership. But the case study suggests that a gender strategy may have been missing from the outset. Progress on women's leadership and gender seem to have been unintentional, and that may have limited the potential for transformative change. As an NSC member noted, all subprojects of the DGM Saweto Peru need to improve women's participation, not only in spaces they already occupy but "to be part of the decisions, in the decision making, in the processes, in the elaboration, in the designs and in the economic integration that they are carrying out." Participatory planning and consideration of gender impacts are two ways to help ensure a subproject addresses women's specific challenges and goals. In addition to possible gaps in planning and design, training challenges, food security ambiguities, and unequal distribution of benefits limited to some extent the positive impacts of the subject on women's leadership and overall gender norms.

To achieve greater success moving forward, several steps are recommended as part of a coherent gender strategy:

Raise awareness of gender: It is important to raise awareness of the gender-transformative approach among project implementers, steering councils, agencies, and participants to enable opportunities for greater female participation and shifts in gender norms.

Promote women: Promote project activities that were designed by, involve, and benefit women in line with their needs and desires. DGM Saweto Peru already improved its subproject granting procedures to this end. The importance of promoting women in all projects, not just those that are women-led, also merits attention.

Train women: Empowering women leaders at the local or community level builds leadership paths. More training opportunities that reach more women are needed. Training topics could cover soft skills, women's rights, *machismo*, GBV, and project management, to name a few.

Focus on sustainability: Strategize a plan that will ensure continuity of the enterprise and support for women beyond the life of the subproject.

The Nazareth fish farm subproject lit a spark of momentum at the right moment among women community members. The most immediate challenge on the horizon is to keep the fire lit with new financial investment that continues cultivation of native women's leadership and participation in decision making. Only then will gender-transformative change be possible.

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