

From Women in Development to Gender and Development?

A case study of a women's organisation:
(AMA) *Asociación de Mujeres de Acosta*, San Ignacio de Acosta,
Costa Rica

by

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*Pura Vida! Mae!*¹
Doing research with *Ticos*² is *tuanis*³!

Student and supervisor immersed in research in the hot springs of Acosta, Costa Rica



Source: Alba Sánchez Corrales (April 1st 2009)

¹ Pure Life! Dude!

² People from Costa Rica

³ ‘Too nice’: great, fantastic

ABSTRACT

This dissertation documents research conducted with the '*Asociación de Mujeres de Acosta*' (AMA), in a mountainous rural region of Costa Rica, in Central America. AMA was originally set up to counter some negative effects of Costa Rican society, such as '*machismo*' and the rural depopulation of women to the capital San José. The association implemented a Women In Development (WID) approach, which enabled women to gather and generate an income.

The aim of my research is to examine the evolution of AMA since its inception, and to assess its current status in light of international shifts in development policy from WID to Gender And Development (GAD). It provides a rare opportunity to assess an organisation's evolution and its impact on women over a 30-year period. It also enables me to build on Kindon and Odell's earlier research with the organisation in 1990.

The research uses qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, a focus group, a questionnaire and field notes, from five months of fieldwork in the community with members of AMA.

The key findings show that AMA membership has decreased since its inception in 1980. Compared with results from previous research with AMA in 1990, my findings reveal that AMA has been slow to embrace international policy agendas and continues to adopt a WID approach. AMA does not yet reflect international and national development trends associated with gender and development, particularly in light of some similar organisations in Central and South America.

While benefits have accrued to some of AMA members, they do not yet earn a decent wage to satisfy their needs. There are major intergenerational and interscalar issues, which are similar to those identified in 1990. These concerns are associated with power imbalances inside and outside of the association, traditional attitudes towards women due to the culture of '*machismo*', and lack of appropriate information and funding sources. These issues appear to be stifling change and raise serious questions about the future sustainability of the association, as well as the relevance of international development policy changes for rural women in associations like AMA.

Women of AMA are now looking for new projects and beginning to think about including men in the association. These slow changes, if enacted, may enable the organisation to survive another 30 years.

KEY WORDS: Gender, women, development, empowerment, Costa Rica

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMA	<i>‘Asociación de Mujeres de Acosta’</i>
ASONAGAF	<i>‘Asociación Nacional de Grupos Asociativos Femeninos’</i> : National Association of Associated Women Groups
CECODERS	<i>‘Centro Coordinador de Evangelización y Realidad Social’</i> : Coordinating Centre of Evangelisation and Social Reality
IFAD	The International Fund for Agricultural Development
LAC	The Latin American and Caribbean Division of IFAD
GAD	Gender And Development
WID	Women In Development
WAD	Women And Development
UN	United Nations
INA	<i>‘Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje’</i> : National Institute of Apprenticeship
INAMU	<i>‘Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres’</i> : Women’s National Institute
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Women's associations are a way for women to find a means of challenging their disadvantaged position and lack of power (Scheyvens, 1998). Within international development policy and practice since the 1970s, there has been a shift away from improving women's role in development (Women In Development - WID - approaches) to an emphasis on the transformation of unequal gender relations (Gender And Development - GAD - approaches), which inhibit equality. At the local level, this shift has seen a move away from women-only projects emphasising income generation, to community-based projects addressing aspects of political and sexual rights.

“Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development, and peace” (Beijing Declaration from the UN Fourth World Conference of Women, 1995).

According to Oxfam, throughout the world women are challenging the attitudes that deny their rights, and are speaking out for equality and justice. Oxfam research has shown that of the 1.3 billion people living in extreme poverty worldwide, more than two-thirds of them are women and girls. Entrenched attitudes deny their rights, effectively keeping them poorer and more powerless than men. Women work longer and harder, and produce half of the world's food, yet earn only 10 percent of the world's income and own less than one percent of the world's property (Oxfam, 2008). All these statistics prove that there is a need to speak out against the discrimination women face. Women have therefore started to work together to weave a better future for themselves and their children.

1. 1. Why does gender matter?

In March 2008, the Danish government launched action on women's rights abuses by calling all governments to work towards achieving the third MDG (Millennium Development Goal). The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aim to halve poverty and improve the

health and lives of people around the world by 2015. The MDGs were signed in 2000 by 189 states at the Millennium Summit. All the MDGs involve women in some aspect. However, only two goals specifically relate to women: goals three and five. By 2008, the proposed time limit for achieving the MDG's was halfway towards its completion. An important issue was whether the MDGs had resulted in any improvement for the lives of women around the world (UN, 2008).

Goal 3 stands for promoting gender equality and empowering women. It looks to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education at all levels by 2015. Its indicators are: the ratio of boys to girls in education, the ratio of literate women aged 15-24, the percentage of women employed in the non agricultural sector and the percentage of parliamentary seats held by women. Goal 5 calls for the improvement of maternal health, by reducing the maternal mortality rate by three quarters. Its indicators are the maternal mortality rate and the percentage of births attended by a skilled health professional (UN, 2008).

Gender is a complex concept that is constantly evolving. For many, the term 'gender' becomes too often synonymous with 'women'. This belief reflects the reality that women are over-represented in analysis that shows disadvantage, simply because they are women. But gender is about more than just women: it also refers to men, women, transgender and intersex people (CID, 2008). However, in this study the focus will be on the relationships between masculinity and femininity. Gender issues impact on individuals and communities in their entirety. There is no sphere of human existence - social, political, economic, and cultural - that is not influenced by gender roles, relations, expectations and identities. At the heart of the matter are issues of power, and how power is differently attributed and wielded according to gender (CID, 2008). In development work, the term gender is often conflated with the needs and issues of women. This is not unreasonable as information that might meaningfully fall under the heading of Gender and Development does relate to women. However, there is a need to emphasise that power is the root of socially constructed ideas on gender, and to analyse power imbalances through the recognition of the universal aspects of diversity and human rights.

1. 2. A short introduction to the ‘*Asociación de Mujeres de Acosta*’ (AMA)

In San Ignacio de Acosta, Costa Rica, the Women’s Association, AMA, has been working with and for women since 1980. Their main goal was and is to propose an alternative means for women to receive an income so they do not need to migrate to the nearby capital for work or enter prostitution. For the last 30 years, AMA has become a small-scale enterprise and shown some success at enabling women to get together and work towards their empowerment. A full presentation and description of AMA is provided in Chapter II.

1. 3. Why carry out research with AMA? Research Aims

A great deal has been written regarding the short term success of women’s income generating programmes and how gender issues impact on women and girls, in particular their lower status when compared to men and boys. Yet, less attention has been paid to the impact of these women’s income generating organisations in the long run (after 30 years), and how gender roles and expectations may shift or transform for both women and men in their relationships.

Assumptions are often made that power comes automatically through economic strength (Batliwala, in Rowlands, 1994). However, power often depends on specific relations determined by gender, culture and class. Economic activities, such as those carried out by women’s associations like AMA, do not always improve women’s economic situation, and often add extra burdens. The purpose of my research is to see if the women of AMA have benefited from the WID paradigm and improved their economic situation over the last 30 years. The literature (in Chapter III) also shows there is a need to distinguish between personal and collective empowerment, and emphasises that empowerment is a process of redistribution of power, particularly within the household. Therefore, I aim to highlight changes in power relations between men and women at different levels.

In many countries in the developing world, women have worked together to find financial independence. Some examples in various regions have shown success. In Samoa, enterprising women are using tradition and trade to bring much-needed income to rural communities; women learn new skills and earn a decent income in areas where there are no jobs and few ways to earn money (Oxfam, 2008). Small businesses like this need to obtain funding at the

beginning, either through NGOs or through private fundraising. But, in the long term, these projects involve teaching women and young people the skills to produce a product, as well as the concepts of business planning, development and management.

The relationships between environmental protection and women's empowerment must be considered. Sahai (2004) mentions that women who are closely involved in the maintenance of biological resources (i.e. the primary production of fruits, etc) are also its users, in feeding and looking after their family. Biological resources are the mainstay of the livelihoods and local economies of communities in developing countries. Ensuring access to these resources is essential to their being able to engage in self-reliant growth. Ntseane (2004) cites one example of women in Botswana who engaged in small business, using local resources, non-competitive networks, and collective management strategies, and have shown that such techniques are pillars of sustainable business success.

Therefore, exploring the dynamics between gender, economics, and politics that emerge from the creation of income generating women organisations is necessary. AMA's programme has given me the opportunity to carry out research on the evolution of the relationship between women empowerment, income generating programme and the environment within the community of San Ignacio de Acosta. Indeed, my goal is to evaluate the long-term benefits for local women; and then, assess and conclude on the multi-complex gender issues associated with income generating women's organisations, which remains a work in progress.

AMA's projects have resulted in the creation of a small-scale productive activity exclusively for its members. However, it might not have strengthened their participation in the wider processes of development. Already in 1990, after ten years of AMA existence, Kindon and Odell found the organisation to be experiencing an uneven distribution of power: administrative problems; mismanagement of money; problematic human relationships; difficulties in communication and, finally, an over-emphasis on income generation rather than attention to the wider social context in which AMA was situated.

My research therefore is an investigation into a long-term women's organisation project and provides a longitudinal investigation of the impacts on its members. I examine AMA's progress over the years, highlighting its positive and negative dimensions, and attempt to answer the question has AMA moved from WID to GAD?

My objectives are the following:

1. Document the history and evolution of AMA since its inception in 1980 – paying particular attention to the period 1990-2008;
2. Describe members' experiences of being involved in AMA and their assessment of its impacts on their lives and the lives of their families;
3. Assess whether AMA has reflected international and national development trends and shifted from a WID approach to a GAD approach over the last 30 years;
4. Discuss the implications of any shift for AMA's future and its development effects on its members, particularly in light of some similar organisations in Central and South America.

1. 4. Outline of the thesis

This thesis is organised into seven chapters, including this introduction chapter.

CHAPTER II provides a site description of the context by giving essential background on Costa Rica and the region of San Ignacio de Acosta. It presents the situation of women in the country and describes the situation of AMA: the case study of the thesis. It also gives a review of AMA, with its history, evolution and its organisational framework.

CHAPTER III provides the development framework of the research and a review of the relevant literature pertaining to WID and GAD approaches. First, the chapter examines the notion of empowerment, and then it situates this research in an appropriate academic context and demonstrates its original contribution. Finally, it explores the reasons for using AMA as a case study in light of these findings.

CHAPTER IV provides a broad overview of the approaches and methodology used, with an emphasis on feminist research and cross-cultural research. It discusses the reflexivity and positionality of the researcher. In addition, this chapter describes and details the methods, tools and techniques used in this research. I also include my contribution to AMA, my participation in a community project in Acosta and in a course with the National University of

Costa Rica. Finally, it explains the processes of data collection and analysis with its limitations and benefits.

CHAPTER V exposes the research findings and analysis. First, it analyses women's relationships, interactions and spaces. Then, I discuss what and how it is to be a woman in rural Costa Rica, and describe AMA members, their families, and community. It also attempts to address the impacts of '*machismo*' on AMA members. I, then go on to discuss the achievements and strengths of AMA, along with the negative aspects, highlighting AMA's issues and remaining challenges. Next, this chapter provides an analysis at the organisational level, drawing on participatory work conducted with AMA. Finally, this chapter shares the views and opinions of men, and compares AMA with other gender and development projects in Central and South America.

CHAPTER VI offers a discussion which reconnects the findings with the aims and the wider literature. It also describes issues and remaining conflicts within the association. This chapter reflects on why AMA has or has not moved to a GAD approach, and also discusses the reasons for their current status.

CHAPTER VII summarises the aims of the thesis along with its contribution to development studies. While coming back to the research questions, I stress wider issues in development theories. In this chapter, I make my conclusions and also address the limitations of my study and identify areas of gaps for future research along with some recommendations for AMA. Finally, I draw my own reflections on my investigation as a researcher, with my insights and learning regarding this kind of work.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

As described in my introductory chapter, I have chosen San Ignacio de Acosta in Costa Rica as the setting of my research study, in order to follow the previous investigation of my supervisor, Sara Kindon with her colleague Carol Odell in 1990. The following section will outline the context of my research. First, it will introduce the country and draw out the situation of Costa Rican women. Finally, it will give a description of San Ignacio de Acosta and the association AMA.

2. 1. Situation

2. 1. 1. Introducing Costa Rica

The Physical Geography

Figure 2.1: Costa Rica in the world



Source: <http://www.graphicmaps.com/>

Costa Rica is a narrow isthmus of land in Central America that benefits from two open ocean coasts, the Pacific on the East and the Atlantic on the West. Costa Rica has a strategic location and diverse geographical features. It provides a pivotal link to the two parts of the American continent. This location enables the country to have excellent communication with the outside world. It covers a mere 51,120km (19,739 sq miles) and contains varied landscape, vegetation and wildlife. Indeed, the country is rich and benefits from a fertile soil, where the main cash crops are coffee plus a variety of other fruits and vegetables.

Figure 2.2: Costa Rica and its surroundings



Source: <http://www.worldatlas.com/>

Figure 2.3: Regions of Costa Rica



Source: www.geology.com/world/costa-rica-map.gif

The History

Approximately 500 years ago, as many as 400,000 people (tribes) lived in today's Costa Rica. However, as Spanish settlement expanded, the indigenous population plummeted. In 1502, Christopher Columbus dropped anchor on the Caribbean coast and in the 1560s, a Spanish colony was established at Cartago. Colonial life centred on agriculture (corn, beans, produced sugar, cacao and tobacco) and left a strong Catholic legacy in Costa Rica. In 1823, Costa Rica gained independence from Spain and in the 19th century, the introduction of the caffeinated red bean transformed the impoverished nation into the wealthiest in Central America (Rowland, 2006).

The first democratic elections were held in 1889, with the vote extending from the richest coffee baron to the poorest '*campesino*'. However, hostilities came in the country in 1948, when a defeated candidate in the presidential election refused to accept the result. A new constitution was eventually drafted, giving votes to women and blacks and abolishing the armed forces. This new constitution was the foundation of the modern Costa Rican state and lead to decades of peaceful government. In 1986, the previous president Oscar Arias Sánchez, formulated a peace plan to bring stability to the region. He was rewarded with a Nobel Peace Prize (Saenz, 2008). On February 7th 2010, Laura Chinchilla got elected president. She is Costa Rica's first female leader. Her policy is to fight against insecurity and drug problems, while promoting better education and creating employment for Costa Ricans (Vargas, newspaper *La Nación*, 2010).

Population

Costa Rica is a country of 4,467,626 inhabitants (The World Guide, 2007). Ethnically, Costa Rica is homogenous, with 96 percent of the population being of Spanish descent called '*mestizos*'. Around two percent are black and are mainly confined to the Limon province. They were brought to work on the Jungle Railway and many stayed as labourers in the banana plantations. In addition, a small number of indigenous people live on reservations, mainly in the south of the country in the Talamanca region: the '*Bribri*' and the '*Borucas*'. Finally, in recent years, a number of foreigners (or '*gringos*'), mainly from the United States, have settled in Costa Rica, which could engender a loss of the Costa Rican traditional culture (Saenz, 2008). High levels of tourism have also influenced ways of living within the country. However, Costa Ricans still try to keep their own identity by calling themselves '*Ticos*' or '*Ticas*' and enjoy living the '*Pura Vida*' lifestyle (a relaxed and easy going way of life).

There are many advantages for people in Costa Rica. They enjoy the highest standard of living in Central America. Firstly, primary education is free and compulsory for all school-aged children. Secondly, a nationwide system provides free health care although at some times, this system struggles to provide it effectively for everyone. People live well in this 'Central America Switzerland'. According to Seager (2009) in *The Guardian*, a study using the Happy Planet Index rates Costa Rica as the happiest country in the world. It is true that hunger is difficult to see, as anything could grow anywhere. In rural areas, families have easy access to food supplies.

However, there are some negative issues. Twenty-three percent of the population live below the poverty line, although beggars are few and abject poverty is rare except in San José. Personal security is not guaranteed in the capital. Walking on one's own at night is not recommended, and, during the day, it is common to see drug-addicted people lying on sidewalks. Drug-trafficking, prostitution and violence, including murder, are frequent topics in urban media and on national television news. Costa Rica is also considered to be the most expensive country in Central America and tourism itself creates high living costs. It seems that the so-called eco-tourism and the environmental friendly tourists do not exist. There are high levels of tourism in major attraction sites such as the Arenal Volcano, or parts of the 'Americanised' Guanacaste coastline, but as of yet no recycling policies have been set up (Saenz, 2008).

The main spoken language is Spanish, and a small number of indigenous languages have survived, although only one has an alphabet. English is spoken everywhere in the country due to the tourist industry. On the Caribbean coast, Spanish and English are both influenced by African and Creole dialects and cultures (Rowland, 2006).

The official religion is Roman Catholicism. Catholics represent 75 percent of the population and it is easy to feel the weight of religion on people's lives. Every sentence finishes with a "*Si Dios quiere*", which means "If it's God's will". Other religions are tolerated: 14 percent are Evangelical Christian; most of the Caribbean black people are Protestant; and in recent years North American Mormons have gained a foothold (Vorhers, 2006).

The following tables compare New Zealand as a reference to Costa. Many similarities between the two countries exist. However, the different cultures in each country mean that life is, ultimately, very different.

Table 2.1: Costa Rican Human Development Indicators compared with New Zealand
2007/2008

Country	Costa Rica	New Zealand
Population in 2006	Total 4 401 849 Men 2 238 327 Women 2 163 522	Total 4 179 000
Life expectancy in 2006	Men 76.6 Women 81.6	Men 78 Women 82
Population under 15 years olds, in 2006 (number and percentage)	1 272 503 19.6%	1 064 000 20.5%
Average population growth rate 2005-2010	1.5%	0.9%
Projected population 2050	6.5 million	5.2 million
Population without access to safe water (%) (2004)	3	0
Internet Users	254 (per 1000 people) (2005)	3 200 000 (2005)
Rank of the GPI ¹ (Global Peace Index)	29 (score: 1.578)	1 (score: 1.202)
Social expenses in 2006	Total 1 938 025 000	Total 19 475 000
In colones for Costa Rica	Education 577 247 000	Education 9 551 000
In NZ dollars for new Zealand	Health 560 479 000	Health 9 297 000
	Social assistance 593 213 000	Social assistance ...

Source: The State of the World Population 2007, UNFPA
World Development Indicators 2007, World Bank
Unicef, 2008, Informe del Estado de los derechos de la niñez y la adolescencia en Cost Rica
New Zealand Treasury: <http://www.treasury.govt.nz/budget/>

¹ The Global Peace Index ranking shows countries most at peace ranked first. A lower score indicates a more peaceful country. The Global Peace Index is a measure that governments can use to help increase the peacefulness of their nations. Nations hold the key to peace and can improve their nation's peacefulness by supporting initiatives at national and local levels and by using the Global Peace Index to measure the success of their initiatives (Vison of Hummanity, 2009).

The economy

The economy is based on agricultural produce, such as coffee and bananas, and trade is overwhelmingly with the United States, although there are increasing exports to Europe. The currency of the country is the '*colon*' (NZ\$1 = C\$298.8 or US\$1 = C\$ 554.87, May 2009). Since 1900, the main source of foreign income has been tourism. Costa Rica may be a model for other developing countries as its economy is diverse, inflation is under control, debt has been greatly reduced, and it disbanded its armed forces in 1949. The government ploughs spared money into education, health and the social services. However, Costa Rica's clean-living image has proven wildly alluring. The high number of tourists creates great stress on ecological habitats. With economic change has come social change. Homes are changing. Divorce rates have increased, and more women have entered the workforce. As the country becomes more diverse and cosmopolitan it faces inevitable tensions and growing pains (Rowland, 2004).

Table 2.2: Costa Rican economy indicators compared with New Zealand 2007/2008

Country	Costa Rica	New Zealand
Gross National Income (GNI) (USD) (2005)	20.3 billion	..
GNI per capita (USD) (2005)	4,700	28,780
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita growth (% annual) (2004-2005)	4.1	2.1
GNI per capita, PPP (USD) (2005)	9,680	21,350
Net foreign direct investments (% of GDP) (2005)	4.3	..
Official development assistance (% of GDP) (2005)	0.1	..
Export of goods and services (% of GDP) (2005)	51.5	29
Import of goods and services (% of GDP) (2005)	54.3	30
Public expenditure on health (% of GDP (2004)	5.1	6.5
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP) (2002-2005)	4.9	6.5
Military expenditure (% of GDP) (2005)	0.0	1.0
Total debt service (% of goods, exports and net income from abroad) (2005)	5.9	..

Source: World Development Indicators 2007,
World Bank, Human Development Report 2007/2008, UNDP.
.. Data not available

Current events

With a huge influx of expatriates, US retirees and foreign travellers, Costa Rica has become the tropical backyard for '*gringos*'. This has ignited a real-estate frenzy alongside a focus on expensive goods and services geared toward this new market. While foreigners bring much-needed investment, they also drive up property prices and displace cash-strapped locals. Locals, such as inhabitants of San Ignacio de Acosta and especially the women, see their lives changing. They need to work to bring more money home in order to cope with higher cost of living. Local youth migrate to urban areas desiring another way of life. President Oscar Arias Sánchez (re-elected in 2006 until 2010), advertises the economic benefits of the ratification of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) highlighting it will include increased access to US markets and thousand of new jobs. Critics argue Costa Rica's small farmers along with rural women and domestic industries will come out losers, unable to compete with the anticipated flood of cheap US products (Rowland, 2004 and Lonely Planet, 2007).

2. 1. 2. Why Women's issues are still important in Costa Rica?

Table 2.3: Costa Rican gender inequality in education indicators compared with New Zealand in 2005

	Costa Rica	New Zealand
Adult literacy rate, female (% aged 15 and older), 2005	95.1	..
Adult literacy rate (ratio of female rate to male rate), 2005	1.00	..
Gross primary enrolment ratio, female (%), 2005	109	102
Gross primary enrolment ratio, (ratio of female rate to male rate)	0.99	1.00
Gross secondary enrolment ratio, female (%), 2005	82	127
Gross secondary enrolment ratio, (ratio of female rate to male rate)	1.06	1.07
Gross tertiary enrolment ratio, female (%), 2005	28	99
Gross tertiary enrolment ratio, (ratio of female rate to male rate)	1.26	1.50

Source: UNDP Indicators, <http://hdrstats.undp.org>
.. data not available

Table 2.4 : Costa Rican HDI and GDI in 2007/2008 compared with New Zealand

	Costa Rica	New Zealand
HDI value	0.847	0.944
HDI ranking	50	20
<u>Gender-related development index</u>		
GDI ¹ rank (2005)	47	18
GDI value	0.642	0.935
Life expectancy at birth, female (years) (2005)	80.9 male 76.2	81.8 male 77.7
<u>Gender empowerment measure</u>		
GEM ² rank, 2005	24	11
GEM value, 2005	0.842	0.811
Seats in parliament (% held by women)	38.6	32.2
Legislators, senior officials and managers (% female), 1999-2005	25	36
Professional and technical workers (% female), 1994-2005	40	53
Ratio of estimated female earned income to male earned income	0.53	0.70

Source: UNDP, <http://hdrstats.undp.org>

¹ The Gender-related development index: GDI is a composite index using the same variables as the Human development index (HDI). The Human development can be viewed as the process of achieving an optimum level of health and well-being. It includes physical, biological, mental, emotional, social, educational, economic, and cultural components. Only some of these are expressed in the Human Development Index, a composite scale that has three dimensions: life expectancy at birth, adult literacy rate and mean years of schooling, and income as measured by real gross domestic product per capita. Like all one-dimensional scales that attempt to measure multiple complex variables, it is flawed by inherent inaccuracies, but it is nonetheless a useful comparative measure of the well-being of a population. The difference with the HDI is that the GDI adjusts the average achievement of each country in life expectancy, educational attainment and income to account for inequalities between men and women. The GDI measures achievement in the same basic capabilities as the HDI does, but takes note of inequality in achievement between women and men. The methodology used imposes a penalty for inequality, such that the GDI falls when the achievement levels of both women and men in a country go down or when the disparity between their achievements increases. The greater the gender disparity in basic capabilities, the lower a country's GDI compared with its HDI. The GDI is simply the HDI discounted, or adjusted downwards, for gender inequality (UNDP, 2008). Its range is from 0.000 (lowest) to 1.000 (highest). Costa Rica has a GDI rank of 47 (based on measurement of 2005). In comparison, New Zealand has a GDI rank of 18 (UNDP, 2008), (see UNDP indicators, table 3).

² The Gender Empowerment Measure evaluates progress in advancing women's standing in political and economic forums. It examines the extent to which women and men are able to actively participate in economic and political life and take part in decision-making. While the GDI focuses on expansion of capabilities, the GEM is concerned with the use of those capabilities to take advantage of the opportunities of life (UNDP, 2008).

Table 2.5: Gendered employment in Costa Rica in 2007/2008 compared with New Zealand

	Costa Rica	New Zealand
Economic activity rate, female (% aged 15 and older), 2005	44.9	60.4
Economic activity index (1990=100), female (% aged 15 and older), 2005	137	113
Economic activity rate, (female rate as % of male rate, aged 15 and older)	56	82
Employment in agriculture, female (% of total female employment), 1995-2000	55	5
Employment in agriculture, male (% of total male employment)	21	9
Employment in industry, female (% of total female employment)	13	11
Employment in industry, male (% of total male employment)	26	32
Employment in services, female (% of total female employment)	82	84
Employment in services, male (% of total male employment)	52	5

Source: UNDP, <http://hdrstats.undp.org>

There are several key gender issues facing women and men in the Costa Rican cultural and geographical context of Central America. Costa Rica is a conservative society where the Church still yields substantial influence. Costa Rican men and women seem to be at a crossroads between traditional roles and modern ones. Traditionally the country is ‘ruled’ by *‘machismo’*, a system in which the woman is considered the weaker gender and is limited to certain roles and behaviours. However, women have been able to vote since 1949 (The World Guide, 2007).

In Costa Rica, it appears that there are multiple paths that women may pursue to gain representation and empowerment. Since 1950, the life patterns of Costa Rican women have altered markedly. According to Villanueva (1999), demographic profiles have changed, particularly because the birth rate has fallen sharply. In the early 1990s, women had an average of three children, compared to an average of 6.7 in 1950. Marriage statistics have remained stable for more than two decades, while divorce has increased considerably in recent years. More than half of the women who are older than 14 are in some form of relationship with a man. Forty percent of children are born outside marriage. One out of five families is headed by a woman. In fact, in 2007, out of 119,8120 households in Costa Rica, 357,773 were female headed, 4,649 of them without any income, 16,261 living in extreme poverty and 51,607 in basic poverty (INEC, *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos*, UNICEF). Maternal mortality was up to 43 per 100,000 live births in 2000 (The World Guide, 2007).

The number of women in the labour market has grown strikingly in the last twenty years. Thirty percent of all women of working age, two-fifths of those are domestic workers. Although Costa Rican women have high levels of education, they continue to have fewer employment opportunities than do men, and they earn less. According to a survey from UNICEF, in 2001, 35 percent of the women in Costa Rica stated that they frequently experienced psychological, physical or/and sexual violence. Childcare and other services required by working women have not kept pace with the increase in the numbers of women in the workplace.

2. 1. 3. Challenges and issues around power relationships

Despite progress in the educational system, gender inequalities are still being conveyed through cultural concepts. Society's obstacles are deeply rooted in a patriarchal culture, where women are still regulated to the sphere of social reproduction, denigrating women's knowledge and undervaluing their work. Women in Costa Rica have made advances in the workplace, politics, and legally in the past few decades, but many women still suffer from discrimination, disenchantment, subservience, or worse. There are still predominant social justice issues (United Nations, 2008).

Socio-cultural gender patterns reproduce prejudice and sexist practices both inside and outside the household. Housework is widely considered to be a feminised task. Women assume reproductive tasks even as teenagers. Housework is not valued socially. There are still young women getting married and having babies. In 2007, a survey from UNICEF showed that in Acosta the birth rate was 1.3 percent for mothers aged between 10 and 14 years old, and 15.2 percent for mothers aged under 20 years old. These young mothers are not able to go to school, and the increasing number of single women with children is a major concern, because there is no legal requirement for a father to provide child support. In addition, there is a gender wage gap (women's average salaries continuously remain below those of the male counterparts, especially in urban areas). One-fifth of all families depend primarily on the earnings of women and consequently are the poorest (Tomlinson, 2004).

Most women still feel a significant connection to their 'traditional' roles and values. For example, even though women engage in pre-marital sex, they prefer to hide this matter for

fear of being labelled as a 'prostitute'. Also, most women and men remain in the household of their parents until they marry, a fact which illustrates the importance of family, even in private issues such as sex and marriage. On one hand, many women are independent because of their work and economic situation, but on the other hand most keep being dependent on their family and on the values accepted by society. Many women look after children at home while their husbands migrate for seasonal work. Away from home for a long time, the husbands form other informal unions with women, and their wives feel disempowered (Chant, 1997).

In Costa Rica, people live with the myth that it is a peaceful society, with no army. However, they ignore the fact that there is a widespread, institutionalised violence against women (Barry, 1990). Any kind of violence, including domestic, sexual and psychological violence (rape, sexual harassment) can result from or be justified by the '*machismo*' system (Paton, 1993). There is no English word which adequately translates this term of '*machismo*', however, it could be described as a cult of the male or male chauvinism: a mixture of paternalism, aggression, systematic subordination of women, fetishism of women's bodies, and idolisation of their reproductive and nurturing capacities, coupled with a rejection of homosexuality (Sternberg, 2000). '*Machismo*' is not just present in the behaviour of individual men: it is manifested in political and social institutions and deeply ingrained in the culture (Monzón, in Sternberg, 1988).

'*Machismo*' has been seen as a system of political organisation, in which the cult of the male is an important underpinning of the productive and reproductive economy. According to Stenberg, '*machismo*' gives rises to powerful images that legitimate women's subordination and establish a value system, which is concerned with regulating not so much relationships between men, where women are conceived of as a form of currency. Norms of masculinity are so artificial, and so inhuman, that they need to be policed to maintain them (Formaini, 1990, in Stenberg). Institutions, which do this policing, include the Church, the media, the government, the medical profession and most effectually the family (Schifter and Madrugal, 1996, in Stenberg). Together, these institutions put into place a system of discipline, which affects the social behaviour of individual men and women under male leadership or rule (Connell, 1995).

Costa Rican women still face many issues. Therefore NGOs and other organisations need to meet these issues and challenges while engaging in women for development. In particular, five key issues are common: achieving active citizenship of women, social and economic rights of women, concerns with sexuality of women, promoting projects of independent life for girls, adolescents and young people, and eliminating violence in general. For NGOs to engage in support for these women's issues they utilise a number of strategies. They have sponsored literacy classes, educational programmes, and occupational training, giving women the language and the skills necessary to understand the laws and politics that affect their lives (Leitinger, 1997). However, women's insecurity is still a major problem in Costa Rica and affects women of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds. Violence against women must be addressed comprehensively as a larger structural problem related to unequal relations between women and men (Sánchez, 2007).

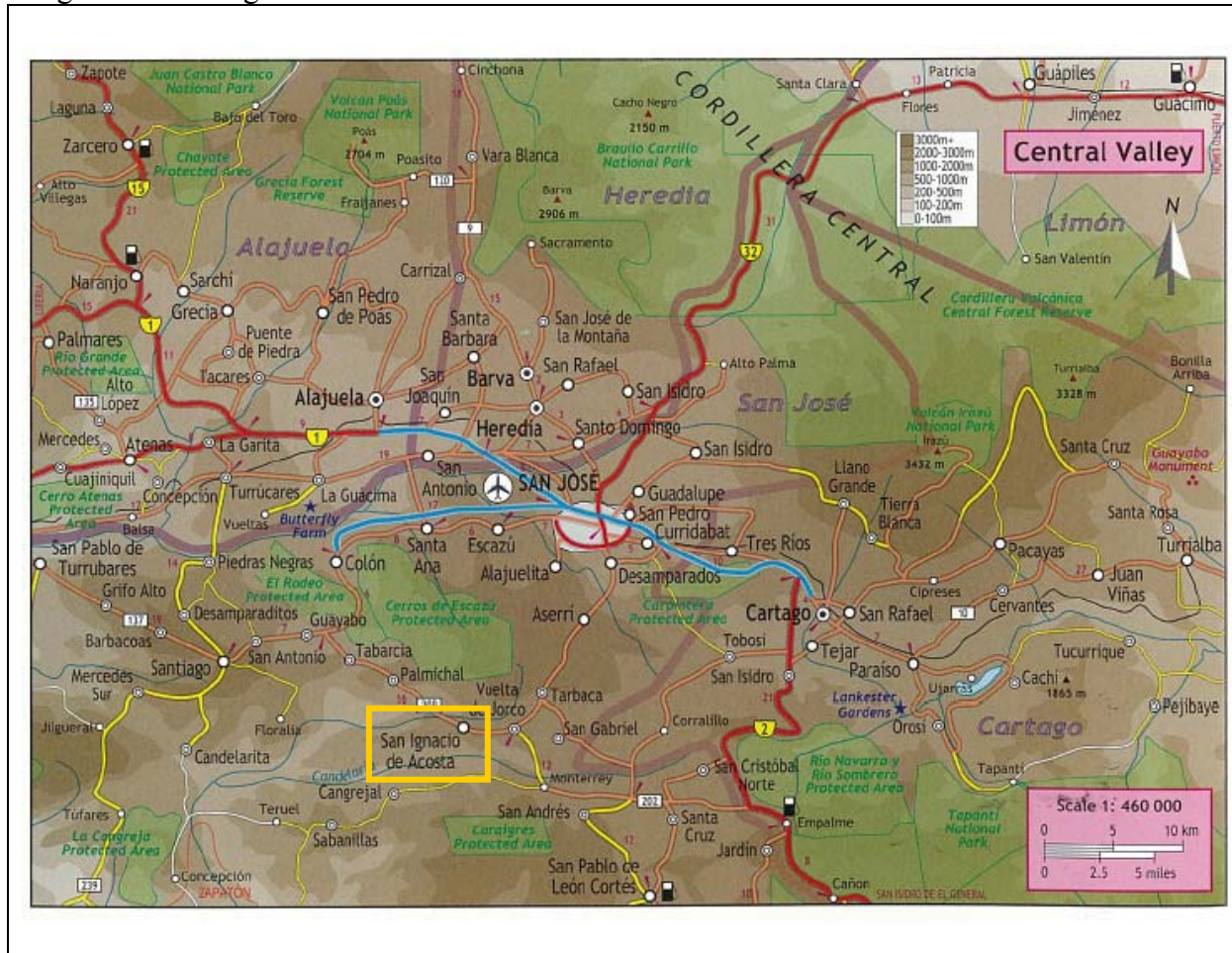
For example, the Plan for attention and prevention of family violence involved a series of measures: a law for the promotion of women's social equality, an office for the defense of women's rights (*'Defensoría de la mujer'*), a law against domestic violence, a law against sexual harassment in places of work and learning, and Municipal women's offices at the local level. It seems that the key challenge remains to improve the efficiency and 'human' quality of services with a greater focus on prevention (Morales, 2007).

Despite some advances in Costa Rica, *'machismo'* is not a thing of the past. Anti-discrimination laws are rarely enforced and women are segregated through the multiple burden of productive and reproductive work. This segregation is predominantly the consequence of traditionally gendered social attitudes and government policies, which have lead to discriminatory practices and working conditions that are male biased. However, for the time being, working women in Costa Rica will continue juggling the mother, lover, wife and professional roles that make up their current identity (Ramírez, 2007).

2. 1. 4. Site description: San Ignacio de Acosta

This section provides essential background information on the central region of Costa Rica, describes the case study site of San Ignacio de Acosta, and discusses the organisation and establishment of the AMA association.

Figure 2.4: San Ignacio within Costa Rica



Source: Rowland Mead, *Travel Atlas Costa Rica*, 2006.

Costa Rica is divided into seven provinces; each province is further divided into smaller political units called ‘cantons’ (*districts*). The community of San Ignacio de Acosta is located in the province of San José, in the ‘canton’ of Acosta. It is divided into districts: San Ignacio, Guaitil, Palmichal, Cangrejal and Sabanillas.

The Central Valley, an area of undulating plateau 1000-3000m above sea level and surrounded by volcanic mountains and known in Costa Rica as the ‘*Meseta Central*’, is the country’s most populous area (70 percent of Costa Rican plus many foreigners). The volcanic soil is extremely fertile and the climate has been described as ‘perpetual summer’, enabling agriculture to form the backbone of the economy.

Acosta has a pleasant climate with two distinct seasons. From November to April, the summer season characterised by its dryness. Then, from May to October, it is the winter season, with rain mainly in the afternoon. The development of coffee growing and exporting helped the

growth of a vibrant middle class, whose wealth funded public buildings in the cities and a string of fine churches (Rowland, 2006). This region is the location of the capital San José and three regional capitals: Heredia, Alajuela, and Cartago.




San Ignacio de Acosta is a small rural mountain community located 22km Southwest of the capital, San José (around 1H30 by bus). It is maybe the canton with the most mountainous topography. The population of the '*canton*' consists of approximately 19,799 inhabitants (UNICEF, 2008). San Ignacio is situated 1095m above sea level. The main activities are agricultural and consist of coffee plantations, citrus fruits such as oranges and lemons, corn, black beans, cows and chickens (Chinchilla Valenciano, 1987).

The village of San Ignacio is the main urban centre in the agricultural area of Acosta. The centre of San Ignacio has many services: a park, a church and few businesses (a local fresh market, banks, restaurants, bars, shops, video shop, internet café) a clinic, a post office, three schools, a college and a school of music. New local enterprises are now appearing, such as rural tourism. They contribute to decreasing rural migration to the capital, by offering new jobs and all the needed services to the inhabitants of Acosta.

The architecture of the village is plain. Houses are mainly made out of wood or concrete, depending of the wealth of the owners. Most of the houses in the village are surrounded by walls, gates and barbed wire to keep thieves away. However, the situation is not as bad as in the capital San José. The further from the centre of the village, the less people fear insecurity, and houses are still without any security system. Some inhabitants told me how happy they were to enjoy the safety of life in San Ignacio de Acosta compared to San José.

All children in the area go to school, as education is compulsory until the age of 12. Primary schools can even be found in the most remote places, where children have to walk long distances to attend classes. All the same, many school buses bring students from remote areas of this mountainous region to colleges, which pupils can attend to the age of 18. These colleges are only situated in major villages, such as San Gabriel or San Ignacio. However, many adolescents do not have the opportunity to continue their studies and therefore, start working in families' farms or migrate to San José. There are five public universities and many private ones in the capital for those who might continue.

A hand-drawn map of the study area. The map shows a network of roads and rivers. A yellow circle marks the location of San Ignacio. An orange square highlights the location of the AMA Factory, which is situated near San Luis. Other locations marked include Agua Blanca, Chirrepa, Turrajal, Los Pozos, La Vereda, and Potrerillos. Elevation contours are drawn at 1000 m and 1500 m. A north arrow is located in the top left corner, and a scale bar indicating 1 km is at the bottom left.

 Contour (m)
 Road
 Dirt road

The village of San Ignacio de Acosta is surrounded by mountains with tropical vegetation. Twenty years ago, the roads were asphalted and this made the communication with other villages and the capital much easier. Buses are frequent and allow the population to go and work in San José, the capital, (1h30 travelling time).

Figure 2.6: Photos of San Ignacio de Acosta (2009)

a. The village of San Ignacio de Acosta in its tropical mountainous setting (May 12th 2009)



b. Local men and women riding their horses for *San Isidro* parade (May 17th 2009)

All farmers and animals come to celebrate this religious event. The local priest aims to bring good luck for the entire year by blessing all participants and surroundings (farmers, animals, vegetables, coffee, but also cars and motorbikes...)



c. Music band playing on stage to celebrate *San Isidro* (May 17th 2009)



Source: The author

According to statistics for the area of Acosta, the HDI (Human Development Index) of Acosta has been 0.689 in 2003, 0.686 in 2004 and 0.678 in 2005 (Hermida et al, 2007). It has been decreasing since 2003, and is situated under the national HDI of 0.847, (0.944 for New Zealand).

On the other hand, like in the rest of the country, in San Ignacio de Acosta, the relations between men and women create major difficulties for women and their families. Women constitute a more vulnerable group in this rural area than in the capital; they suffer from doubts, risks, and experience major inequities in their opportunities to access work, credit and capital. For example, not many women in the area own property or land.

2. 2. AMA: Women Association of San Ignacio de Acosta

2. 2. 1. History and evolution

On May 28th 1980, AMA was established by a group of women (Alba Sánchez Corrales, Emérita Castro Mora, Daisy Fallas Mora, Flora Durán Borbón, María Cristina Volverde Corrales and Elsa Bermúdez) from the '*canton*' of Acosta, with the help of a local priest Alfonso, in order to increase family income and alleviate the women's living conditions. Later, they had financial help from CECODERS ('*Centro Coordinador de Evangelización y Realidad Social*'), ASONAGAF ('*Asociación Nacional de Grupos Asociativos Femeninos*') and USAID.

AMA's projects focused on anti-poverty, which intended to enhance poor women's productivity. In this situation, Moser (1993) affirms that women's poverty is seen as a problem of underdevelopment, not subordination. It recognises the productive role of women and seeks to meet practical gender needs to earn an income, particularly in small-scale, income-generating projects. The objectives were to train and teach skills to women of the region in order to implement small-scale business projects.

In the decade 1980-1990, the women explored ways to produce locally. Women of AMA had many different projects such as processing fruits into jam, sewing, manual works, and baking. After a participative vote they chose to focus on making jam and selling it locally and around the country. At the beginning they used to come together in the communal room of Acosta

(*'salon parroquial'*), in order to make guava, blackberry, orange and pineapple jam. The CITA (Centre of Innovation in Food Technology) from the University of Costa Rica and the National Institute of Apprenticeship (INA: *'Instituto Nacional del Aprendizaje'*) helped the women by giving them lessons in food processing. They learnt how to prepare food and make jam.

Figure 2.7: Logo of the National Institute of Apprenticeship (INA)



Source: www.ina.cr

In 1985, a small-scale jam production project began with 30 female members in a building given by the community. During its successful years, AMA counted as many as 80 members. Women also used to make other products such as chillies, tamarind, refreshments, corn *'tortillas'*, pork *'tamales'*. Little by little they started selling their products with the brand FRUVEL (a Costa Rican food distributor company). They used to sell the jam from door to door until they managed to negotiate the commercialisation of their products with a national enterprise: ENCOPIER and after that, MERCOP.

In the early 1990s, they were offered another building in San Luis de Acosta. The new project with bread-making started in 1987 had just collapsed in 1989. Before, the members divided themselves in two groups: one making bread and the other making jam. However, the bread project was not as successful as the jam project; it ended after two years. According to the women, it was very demanding on them as they had to start early and at the same time perform all their duties required at home. However, AMA members kept the building, where they made the bread, and rented it to a baker, until it was sold in 2008. Some of this money was then used to carry out repairs on the main building and the rest was distributed to members of AMA in 2008, creating a confrontational situation and jealousy between the women. Members with most seniority received more than the others.

2. 2. 2. Organisational framework and members

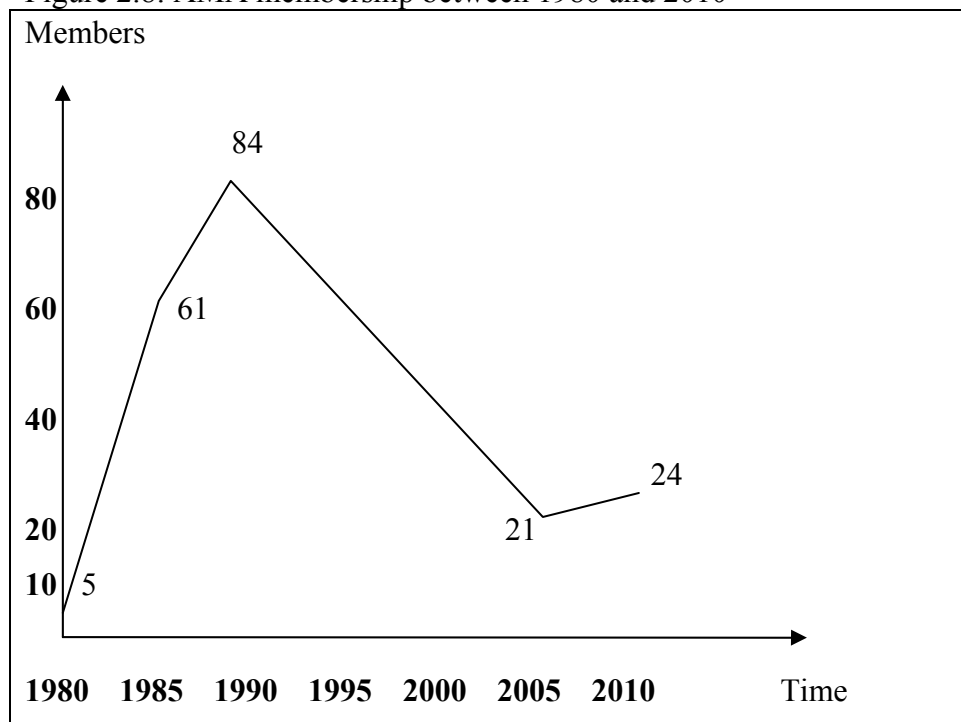
AMA is made up of a president, an executive committee of seven persons including the president, which is elected for a two years renewable period; and ordinary members. Since the beginning, four women have been president of AMA: Alba Sánchez Corrales (1980-1992: twelve years), Emérita Castro Mora (1992-1995: three years), Isabel Ramírez (1995-2000: five years), and finally Beatriz Calderón Mora (2000-2009: nine years).

In 2009, the executive committee was composed of:

- President: Beatriz Calderón Mora
- Vice president: Emérita Castro Mora
- Treasurer: Elsa Mora Bermúdez
- Secretary: María Cristina Volverde Corrales
- Accountant: Norma Mora Vargas
- Spokesperson: Daisy Fallas Mora
- Spokesperson: Flora Durán Borbón

The organisation also has the help if needed of a lawyer and an accountant in San Ignacio de Acosta. In terms of membership, AMA is now quite small (see Fig 2.8) and only a quarter of the size of its heyday in the late 1980s when it had more than 80 members.

Figure 2.8: AMA membership between 1980 and 2010



Source: The author

When I arrived (April 2009), I was received by some AMA members (see Fig. 2.9) for a reunion, where they told me AMA had 21 members. When I left (September 2009), three new members were joining the group, two were daughters of current AMA members, who had recently reached the legal age of 15. Therefore, AMA now has 24 female members. However, only a few are working with their nursery coffee plants (see Fig. 2.10). They will sell them to local farmers when the plants are ready to be planted. They also make pineapple and guava jam (see Fig. 2.11), and work for ‘*Afaorca*’: another family association in coffee production in Acosta. AMA members pack organic cacao powder and cashew nuts for ‘*Afaorca*’, which are exported to the United States. Obviously, the latter depends on the demand from overseas markets.

Figure 2.9: AMA members present at our first meeting (April 2009)



Regina, Elsa with her grand daughter Tatiana, Alba (who used to be AMA’s president), Matilda the researcher, Emérita, Beatriz the president of AMA, Leticia, Daisy, and Cristina in AMA building

Source: Sara Kindon

Fig 2.10: AMA members working in the coffee plantation in AMA's garden (April 2009)



Beatriz, Olga, Florita and Norma

Source: The author

Fig 2.11: AMA's products



Jam made by members of AMA



Cashew nuts packaged by members

Source: The author

2. 2. 3. Location

AMA is situated in San Luis de Acosta, a smaller neighbouring village of San Ignacio de Acosta, in the suburb called: Barrio María Auxiliadora, behind the bus terminal of Coope Caragres, San Ignacio de Acosta (see Fig. 2.12) It is situated in a residential part of the village, close to the bus station and a retirement centre. A clinic will be built in the same road in the next few months.

Figure 2.12: AMA's building



Façade of the old building before renovation (1999)

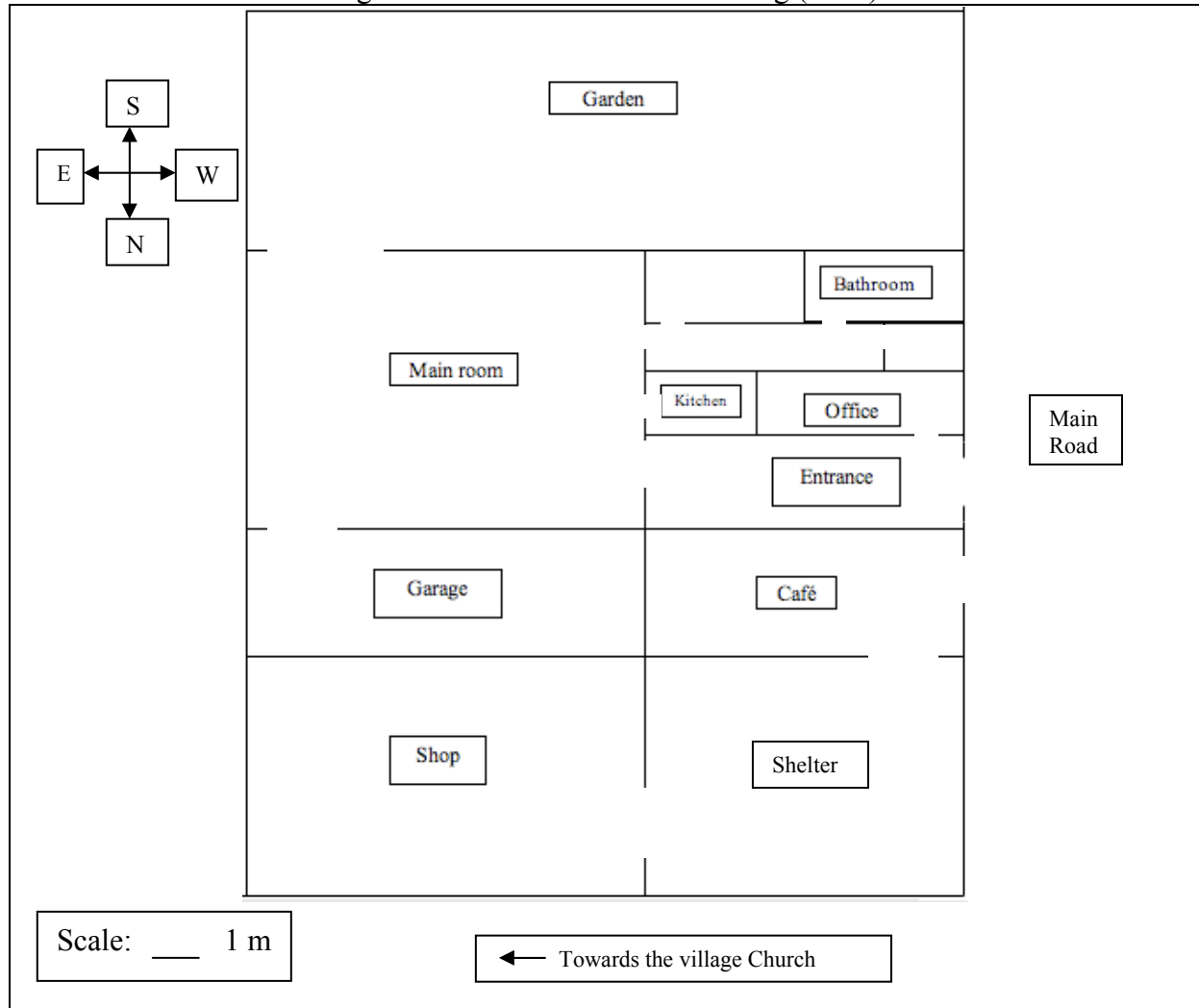


Building after renovation (2009)

Source: The author

The association's building covers about 375m² (see Fig. 2.13). It has been renovated recently and it is built entirely of concrete. The building is composed of a main room where women are working, the office, a shop (*'una pulpería'*) rented to another business, and surrounded by the garden with the coffee plants. On the side there is also a little café/restaurant (*'una soda'*) opened in April 2009, and rented to Beatriz Calderón Mora, the president. Her daughter-in-law Vanessa and Carol, a neighbour, are managing it for Beatriz.

Figure 2.13: Plan of AMA's building (2009)



Source: The author

This chapter has exposed the description and location of the research. The next chapter will provide the development framework of the research and a review of relevant literature pertaining to WID and GAD approaches. It will situate the research in an appropriate academic context to demonstrate its original contribution and address gaps within the literature.

CHAPTER III

DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents the findings of a literature review concerning my research topic. First, it discusses the notion of empowerment. Then, it looks at the international development and policy approaches from Women In Development (WID) to Gender And Development (GAD). These aspects are important to situate the context of my research, to promote a deeper understanding of gender relations in Central America, specifically in Costa Rica, with progress on gender equity, and finally to address the reasons for using AMA as a case study in light of these findings.

3. 1. Shifts in development approaches involving women

All men and women are affected by development – be it within their homes, families, workspaces, communities, cultural groups and countries. In the 1970s, the birth of ‘gender’ in development was very much influenced by the ‘New Wave’ of feminism in the West, which emerged in the wake of the civil rights and anti-colonial struggles of the 1960s. Feminist policies focused on allowing more flexibility for women to carry out their gendered activities and responsibilities for the health and the welfare of their families, including their reproductive activities to do with fertility and childbearing. According to Kindon (2008, p.23):

“Feminist perspectives offer much more than just a focus on women. They focus on issues of power and difference and pay attention to the differences between and within men and women. Feminist perspectives offer a particular way of engaging with relationships between place, power and identity”.

Feminist policies also sought to change gender relations between men and women and challenge traditional and contemporary structures and practices of subordination (such as violence and political discriminatory political structures). This change focused on the

empowerment of women as a way to alter power relations. Starting with a review of the notion of empowerment, this section provides a review of the literature on the debate and unresolved issues between Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) approaches.

3. 1. 1. The notion of empowerment

Empowerment is about people taking control over their own lives: gaining the ability to do things, to set their own agendas, to change events in a way previously lacking. This may include affecting the way other people act and, consciously or unconsciously forcing changes in their behaviour. However, for many feminists, empowerment is more than this. It involves the radical alteration of the processes and structures, which produce women's subordinate position as a gender.

Strategies of empowerment cannot be taken out of the historical context that created lack of power in the first place, nor can they be viewed in isolation from present processes. While accepting and even emphasising diversity, feminists maintain that women share a common experience of oppression and subordination, whatever the differences in forms that these take. Such a view of empowerment implies collective not individual empowerment (Young, 1992).

Status often depends on the power to control some form of knowledge, whether it is scientific, religious, entrepreneurial, political or psychological. To the extent that spatial arrangements buttress an unequal distribution of knowledge between men and women, they contribute to the maintenance of gender stratification (Longhurst, 1999).

Women's status relative to men's differs across cultures and over time, creating a continuum of power relationships rather than a dichotomy. It is necessary to explore this continuum in relation to spatial segregation by gender, in particular to the reciprocity between the social construction of space and the spatial construction of social relations.

Men are empowered in gender relations, in the particular context of their relationships. For instance, in a patriarchal gender order emphasising monogamous marriage, there are serious tensions about adultery; because women are seen as a kind of property. Men's power is not evenly spread across every sector of social life. In some circumstances, women have authority

(in the kitchen, the laundry, etc); in some others situations, the power of men is diffused, confused or contested. Women become empowered through collective reflection and decision-making. In GAD and empowerment approaches, the parameters of empowerment are: building a positive self-image and self-confidence; developing the ability to think critically; building up group cohesion and fostering decision-making and action (Connell, 1987).

In conclusion, empowerment includes both individual change and collective action. Just as women must organise together to gain a sense of self-worth and understanding of the wider context of their lives, so must men undergo a process of reflection and transformation in order to use their power in a more constructive way (Oxfam, 2008).

3. 1. 2. From Women In Development approaches

Perspectives on women, gender and development have changed throughout history. The Women In Development (WID) approach has its origins in the early 1970s after the publication of Ester Boserup's book *Women's Role in Economic Development* (2007). American liberal feminists articulated the term as WID, and linked it to the modernisation theory of the 1950s to 1970s. By the 1970s it was realised that benefits of modernisation had somehow not reached women, and in some sectors undermined their existing position. Therefore the WID focus was the need to integrate women in economic systems, through necessary legal and administrative changes (Dhar and Kapur, 1992). The productive role of women was emphasised and strategies were developed to minimise disadvantages of women in the productive sector.

The WID approach contributed to the fact that women's questions became visible in the arena of development theory and practice (Rathgeber, 1990). WID features were various. It was solidly grounded in traditional modernisation theory, which assumed wrongly that women were not integrated in the process of development. It also accepted existing social structures, and did not question the sources of women's subordination and oppression. It is not a confrontational approach, as it did not question why women had not benefited from development strategies. In reality, it treated women as an undifferentiated category overlooking the influence of class, race and culture. Finally, it focused exclusively on

productive aspects of women's work, ignoring or minimising the reproductive side of women's lives (Visvanathan, 1997).

Moser (1993) identified five distinct WID approaches that reflect development policy evolution:

- First, the 'welfare approach' tried to bring women into development as better mothers.
- Secondly, the 'equity approach' recognised women's triple role (productive, reproductive and community). It focused on gaining equity for women, by challenging women's subordinate position.
- Third, the 'anti-poverty' approach from the 1970s aimed to enhance poor women's productivity, such as AMA project.
- The 'efficiency approach' came after women reacted and responded to the debt crises through their participation in the newly restructured economies. This approach aimed to ensure that development was more efficient and effective through women's economic contribution. Razavi and Miller (1995) comment that WID identified women's lack of access to resources as the key to their subordination without raising questions about the role of gender relations in restricting women's access to resources.
- Finally, the 'empowerment approach' addressed women's strategic need to transform laws and structures that oppress them through a bottom-up process of organising around practical needs. It looked at empowering women through greater self-reliance.

The Women And Development (WAD) approach emerged from a critique of the modernisation theory and the WID approach in the second half of the 1970s. It draws from the dependency theory and focuses on women relationship between women and development processes. As such it claims that women have always been part of development processes, and therefore integrating women in development is the wrong approach. This approach accepts women as important economic actors in their societies, and women's work in the public and private domain is central to the maintenance of their structures of society. It looks at the nature of integration of women in development, which sustains existing international structures of inequality.

However, WAD fails to analyse patriarchy, which is now widely recognised as a societal structure that institutionalises male physical, social and economic power over women. Some feminists use patriarchy, as both an overarching concept and a localised social structure, to

explain the systematic subordination and oppression of women (Visvanathan, 1997). This approach discourages the strict analytical focus on the problems of women independent of those of men since both sexes are seen to be disadvantaged with oppressive global structure based on class and capital. WAD has a singular preoccupation with women's productive role at the expense of the reproductive side of women's work and lives. Furthermore, it does not question the relations between gender roles (Rathgeber, 1990), and does not analyse the relations of patriarchy, differing modes of production and women's subordination and oppression. Finally, WAD did not gain much traction in policy circles where WID approaches dominated.

3. 1. 3. To Gender And Development approaches

There are many criticisms and weaknesses of the WID approach in general. It avoided an historical analysis of the impact of class, race and culture (Visvanathan, 1997). Moreover, it was founded on western assumptions about the nature and the organisation of the household and the gendered division of labour, and also assumed women's time was elastic. It focused on women or gender as a unit and did not acknowledge difference amongst and between women.

Gender And Development (GAD) is an alternative to the WID focus. This approach was developed in the 1980s, and was influenced by socialist feminist thinking. GAD offers a holistic perspective of looking at all aspects of women's lives. This approach questions the basis of assigning specific gender roles to different sexes. It does not exclusively emphasise female solidarity but welcomes the contribution of sensitive men (Nisonoff and Wiegersma, 1997). GAD recognises women's contribution inside and outside the household including non-commodity production. GAD rejects the private/public dichotomy and gives special attention to the oppression of women in the family by entering the so-called 'private sphere'. It emphasises the state's duty to provide social services in promoting women's emancipation. Women are seen as agents of change rather than as passive recipients of development assistance. GAD's view also stresses the need for women to organise themselves for a more effective political voice, and recognises that patriarchy operates within and across classes to oppress women. Finally, GAD focuses on strengthening women's legal rights, including the reform of inheritance and land laws. It talks in terms of upsetting the existing power relations in society between men and women (Duggan, 1997).

Gender and Development has become the dominant approach in addressing gender inequality worldwide and it is primarily concerned with the dynamics of gender relations, which are seen as central to social processes and social organisation and therefore to development (Rowlands, 1997). Gender analysis takes account of the diversity of people's circumstances. According to Rowlands (1997, p.6) it moves beyond *"the simple dichotomies of public/private, formal/informal, urban/rural, production/reproduction to include women's physical situation relationships within the household, health, sexuality, education, means of livelihood and so on, since gender inequalities touch all aspects of women's lives"*. A Gender and Development approach illuminates the power relations between men and women, and the situation of subordination that most women face in most societies. Moreover, gender analysis provides a critique of supposedly neutral institutions and reveals the many manifestations of male bias in any international development process (Kabeer, 1994).

3. 2. Comparison of these approaches

3. 2. 1. Differences between WID and GAD

There are many distinctions between the WID and GAD approaches, even though in many areas there is considerable overlap between the two. Therefore, it is important to clarify the understanding of how GAD differs from WID.

According to Young (1992), the focus in GAD is not on women *per se* but on gender relations. Many of these gender relations are ascribed relations. Indeed, a person is involved on the basis of their position in a network of kinship and affinity. Besides, many gender relations are achieved relations that are established on the basis of a person's involvement in the economic, social, or political life of her country. Both ascribed and achieved relations, interlock with a matrix of other relations based on factors such as class, race, ethnicity, religion, etc.

The notion of intersectionality is a concept that seeks to acknowledge the impact of multiple identities and discrimination on women's and men's experiences (Riley, 2004). This concept is seen as the outgrowth of GAD. It attempts to understand the relationship between gender, race and other aspects of identity that are source of systematic discrimination. The United

Nations (2001, p.22) defines the term as '*an intersectional approach to analysing the disempowerment of marginalised women attempts to capture the consequences of the interaction between the two or more forms of subordination*'. It looks at how racism, patriarchy, class oppression and other discriminatory systems brings inequality that structure the relative positions of women, races, ethnicities, etc. Finally, intersectionality offers a framework for contextual analysis that may improve development outcomes for women in policy and practice. It was necessary for me to be aware of this concept while engaging with the women of AMA.

Furthermore, the GAD approach, views women as active agents and not passive recipients of development – though it does not assume that women have perfect knowledge or understanding of their social situation. It assumes that while women as individuals may well be aware of their subordinate position, this does not necessarily lead to an understanding of the structural roots of discrimination and subordination. Likewise, this approach also does not assume that men in their turn are aware of the social bases of male dominance, or that all men are active supporters of male dominance. It assumes that male privilege makes most men unlikely to ally themselves to the cause of women's advancement without powerful persuasion (Young, 1992).

According to Razavi and Miller (1995), the GAD approach starts from a holistic perspective, and therefore looks at the totality of social organisation, economic and political life in order to understand the shaping of particular aspects of society. It focuses on the 'fit' between family, household or domestic life and the organisation of both political and economic spheres. In addition, development is viewed as a complex process involving the social, economic, political and cultural betterment of individuals and society itself. Betterment in this sense means the ability of the society and its members to meet the physical, emotional and creative needs of the population at a historically acceptable level.

In examining the impact of economic development on any particular society, proponents of the GAD approach ask the questions: who benefits, who loses, what trade-offs have been made, what is the resultant balance of rights and obligations, power and privilege between men and women and between given social groups. Leonard (1989) mentioned that most female workers still received a fraction of the compensation paid to their male counterparts.

According to Leonard (1989), again, most development programmes continued to overlook women's involvement in the economy. When they did focus on women's work, it was generally to provide some training for some type of home-based handicrafts activity, which rarely are economically viable and are often seen as a welfare measure than a means for women to gain self-sufficiency. The United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985) looked more carefully at these issues concerning income-generating programmes for women. It had to provide them cash income, involve them in decision making as well as earning, and are based on sound economic criteria. Even if many programmes have had successes, the demand still remains for information about creating and sustaining such programmes.

Finally, WID strategies concentrate on increasing women's access to cash income, either as individuals or members of some form of collectivism. GAD is much less optimistic about the role of the market as distributor of benefit, and the power that stems from having 'cash in hand'. WID puts emphasis on the need of women to get organised into collective groupings (cooperative) particularly for productive purpose so as to increase their bargaining power in the economic system. GAD also promotes and encourages women's self-organisation so as to increase their political power within the economic and political system. GAD requires that strategies go beyond concerns with economic self-sufficiency to the need for political self-reliance. GAD places an emphasis on the role of the state in promoting women's emancipation and looks to the role of local communities to provide support for women. Finally, GAD uses gender relations rather than women as a category of analysis and views men as potential supporters and partners of women underdevelopment (Reeves, 2000).

3. 2. 2. Challenges from WID to GAD

In order to place gender concerns in the mainstream, it is necessary to involve men in development. However, the theory of gender-related policy differs from practice. Even if some development agencies encourage an organisational culture to promote equitable participation and distribution of power between men and women in the organisation, the idea has shown to be problematic. There is a fear that men's greater involvement and a focus on men and masculinity could result in the division of funds and attention away from women-specific programmes (Cleaver, 2003).

Gender should not be seen as the major axis of social differentiation. Rather, we should understand people's experience of gender differentiation as linked to their experience of other forms of social difference, such as those of age, class or race. This understanding of people's identities as complex and nuanced, permits a closer understanding of power relations in general, and the contradictions and injustices inherent in those relations (El-Bushra, 2000).

Challenges between WID and GAD persevere. Many workers in development agencies still express considerable confusion when discussing GAD in the context of their work. There is still confusion about the discourse (what gender is about; who defines it; who is and who is not, privileged to speak authoritatively about it). It is a word used in several different disciplines in many different senses: to analyse social relations, to describe aspects of people's lives, or in judgements about the value of social change (Sweetman, 2000).

In addition, there is confusion about the assumption that gender transformation equals women's economic empowerment. In spite of the policy shift from WID to GAD in the late 1980s, El-Bushra (2000) states that in practice 'gender work' is still seen first and foremost, as concerning women. Many development agencies adopt women's economic empowerment as their main strategy for achieving gender equity, assuming that it will lead automatically to gender equality. Yet women throughout the world describe discrimination in many other areas of life including their political roles, which define their power to control resources within relationships and reproductive right within interpersonal relationships. Finally, there is confusion generated by the tendency towards translating complex issues into oversimplifications and 'sloganeering' (Marchand, 2000).

In many cases, there are limitations of development projects and their ability to promote empowerment. According to Osmani, Goetz, Sen Gupta et al, (in Cleaver, 2003), research on micro-credit projects for women offers contradictory evidence. While some cite the empowering effect of credit for some women, the potential of gendered partnerships achieved through household negotiation (men and women agreeing on the use of credit to the benefit of the household), others find disempowering effects (men threatened by such changes resort to domestic violence), severe limitations of such interventions (money gained is small in quantity and does little to change lives).

Again according to Rambly Odame (2002), and her examination of the role of men in women's groups, she suggests that men have a different presence from that of women, their influence is partly as leaders, but also as non-executive members. She identifies four specific roles:

- Men as state/NGO 'go between', they act as liaisons to other external organisations this implies administrative tasks but also political interaction.
- Men as co-workers, having access to resources valued, providing land, and helping with the transport.
- Men as opportunists, they can gain the labour and the knowledge of the group.
- Men as agitators, sometimes, men's roles are more destructive than constructive because of interference and mishandling of group funds.

The study of GAD, along with related subject areas like gender and conflict or gender and human rights, retains an overwhelming preoccupation with women (Jones, 2006). In theory, GAD frameworks should provide greater space for the study of the 'other side' of the gender coin: that of men and masculinities. In her introduction in *Forced Migration Review*, El-Bushra explored the shift from WID framework to GAD and stressed the blind spots of the latter. She stated that there was a need:

"to articulate, more firmly and actively than in the past, the position of men within gender-analytical frameworks. This is a reaction to GAD's almost exclusive preoccupation over the last ten years or more with women's needs, interests, and rights. If 'gender' (now) implies a web of relationships between women and men, old and young, powerful and powerless, should men not figure, integrally and equally, in the analysis of these relationships?... there may be negative consequences for both women and men if they are not. Giving preference to women in assistance programmes may contribute to eroding men's role (as protectors, providers and decision makers, for example) and hence their social position and self-esteem but still not challenge the dominant gender ideology in which men's and women's roles are both viewed as 'natural'... Where do men fit within a gender approach to development?"
(2000, p.5)

According to Jones (2006), the tendency has been either to ignore men as gendered subjects, through a straightforward equation of gender with women/femininities; or to consign men to stereotypical gender roles, nearly always negative ones. Men's relationships with women, in particular, are generally depicted as exploitative and aggressive.

It is hard to address what has been achieved in the aim of eradicating women's poverty and marginalisation after over 30 years of WID and GAD work in international and national development. The work of redressing gender inequality has only just begun according to Sweetman (2000). It is important to understand how individuals react and respond to global policies according to their identity and location, but the iterative relationship between people's chances (which are shaped by their economic, political and social surroundings, including gender relations) and their choices (in terms of the way they exercise their agency to conform, resist or transform their surroundings). Throughout history, women and men have overcome and circumvented obstacles to move forward, and this will continue in the future. Gender relations necessitate fundamental changes if women and men want to transform human life for the better.

Finally, Chant and Gutmann (in Ruxton, 2004) suggest that patriarchal culture is common in many development organisations, with men dominating the higher management levels, has tended to obstruct progress. This culture may have sustained WID programmes, which focus specifically on women and women's empowerment, can be perceived of as less threatening to male power. Besides, it is essential to develop work for gender equality as a positive project for men, engaging their enthusiasm and energy, and encouraging them to see themselves as active participants.

3. 2. 3. Gender mainstreaming

Along with intersectionality and gender analysis in project management, gender mainstreaming is one of the main strategies and tools achieving success in the GAD approach to forwarding gender equality.

According to Riley (2004), gender mainstreaming was adopted by the United Nations in 1995, as a key methodology for achieving gender equality. Oxfam (2005, p.3) defines gender mainstreaming as the integration of *“gender concerns into every aspect of an organisation's priorities and procedures, making gender concerns the responsibility of all in an organisation, and insuring there are integrated into all structures and all work”*.

The objectives of mainstreaming gender issues in rural development projects are:

- To reduce gender inequities that may exist in a given project area.

- To encourage both women and men to participate in project activities (ensuring that their specific needs are satisfied, that they benefit from the project and that the project impacts positively on their lives).
- To create the conditions for the equitable access of men and women to projects, resources and benefits.
- To create the conditions for the equitable participation in the project implementation and decision-making processes (IFAD, 2000).

In order to achieve these objectives regarding gender, a project should ensure that a strategy for mainstreaming gender exists, and that staff has an awareness of gender sensitive issues. Also, the project must incorporate methods, which will facilitate the participation of both men and women. The monitoring and evaluation system should incorporate gender-disaggregated data and provide gender impact indicators (March, 1999).

Finally, transforming the balance of power between men and women increases gender equality. Supporting women to earn more income allows them to meet both their practical need for more resources, and their strategic requirement for greater power within the household (Standing, 2004). Gender mainstreaming is a political process that alters the balance of power. Power is challenged not only because mainstreaming promotes women as decision makers, but also because it supports women's collective action in redefining development agendas (Riley, 2004).

3. 2. 4. Is the GAD approach more appropriate? Is there a need to engender development?

For many community work projects, GAD approaches are more appropriate because they include men. However, there are contradictory thoughts on this matter in the literature.

Some agree GAD is the solution in development projects:

- Disparities between men and women in basic rights, access to resources, and power to determine their own lives continue to exist in virtually all countries in the world. "Engendering Development" focuses on how understanding and accounting for the

links between gender, policy, and development outcomes can improve policy formulation and development effectiveness (World Bank, 2000).

- Households in many countries have shifted structurally from breadwinner/homemaker model to dual income earning arrangements (Bastia, 2009). This has resulted in marital power being a contested issue among scholars, along with the division of household labour. This is evident in Costa Rica, where neo-liberal economic restructuring has led to an increase in women's informal work and a decrease in men's income-earning power (Mannon, 2006). Some scholars such as Benería and Duggan (1999) argue that increasing women's economic activity and their financial resources may not be a reliable method of increasing their household authority. In these arguments, it is contested that pointing out a singular focus on women and a failure to confront particular socioeconomic situations of men can exacerbate gender relations (Pineda, 2000). Thus, many scholars argue that we should consider not only women's economic empowerment but also assistance in helping men redefine their family roles and reconsider their contribution to domestic housework (Chant, 2002, Pearson 2000, Pineda, 2000).
- Why is it important to include men in gender equality? Kaufman (2004) argues that development interventions have usually failed in involving men and boys. As a result, male power remains dominant in gender relations, and women's struggles are marginalised. Although practical programmes to empower women are one part of changing gender power relations. Indeed, to modify power relations at their roots to change the lives of men and boys, these programmes must also include systematic and systemic efforts (Kaufman, 2004).
- According to Rambly Odame (2002), other studies of gender relations within organisations inform us that the number (the quantity) of men in women's groups may be less influential than the role (quality) of specific men. Men in a group are good if their interests are for the group and not for themselves. The author also recognises that some men become members of women's groups, but are recruited only for skills such as leadership experience or to carry out certain tasks 'traditionally done by men'. Indeed, women's groups appear 'more serious' to local authorities and to husbands when they have men as members.

- Empowerment, social justice and progressive gender change can best be achieved through strategic partnerships, including gender alliances. If men are excluded, they can become obstacles to development. Indeed, through solidarity and cooperation, more can be achieved both for men and women (Cleaver, 2002). In addition, according to Sweetman (in Cleaver, 2002), men are needed as partners: first, to overcome the excessive labour burden of women, second, in responsibility for the family and the raising of the children, and finally, in political movements and in development projects and organisations.
- Development as freedom promotes the need for a political and social participation and leadership of women along with men. Therefore, development should not remain blinded to women's needs. Gender policies aim to achieve quality and dignity in women's domestic lives, thus achieving safety and respect on the streets and in the community. Equity and empowerment for women is improving but has not yet reached an equal status, and it is crucial to include the role of men as well as of women both in any analysis or proposed solutions (Porter, Smyth, and Sweetman, 1999).

Some others still want to emphasise development on women:

- As Kofi Annan (former Secretary General of the United Nations) mentioned to the Commission on the status of Women in Beijing (2005): *"There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women"*. Development policies towards women have had positive consequences such as reducing fertility rates, promoting child survival and positive environmental priorities (Benería and Sen, 1997). Women's literacy and education tend to reduce the mortality of children and give priority to childcare.
- According to Funnel's research in Malawi (2008), when women are empowered by earning money, their children will be more inclined to get an education and be healthier. Whereas men will often spend money they earn, on additional items like alcohol, and still see the household as the woman's domain. She concludes women are

more caring and tend to spend their money on family needs more than for themselves. Are men a barrier to development? Engendering development can be a difficult task.

- According to Mannon (2006), there are important variations across different regions in Costa Rica concerning the relationships between women's income and their bargaining of power in the household. Each context is specific. Meanwhile, *"engendering development is still complex and inequities of decades can not be undone in few years. The neglect of women's needs has been glaringly obvious, as have the kind of discrimination they have been subject to in social, economic and political spheres. It is therefore natural, and just to discriminate in their favour"* (Dellimore, in IFAD, 2000, p.46).

This section has provided a comparison between WID and GAD, looking specifically at the advantages and disadvantages of the GAD approach. The following section links the theory of WID and GAD to the more specific situation of women and gender development in Latin America, and attempts to put theory into a specific area context.

3. 3. What has happen regarding women and gender development in Latin America?

3. 3. 1. Theory and practice of development projects within the region

The Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC, 2000) division of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) uses gender analysis to identify where and what kind of inequities may exist between men and women, with regards to human rights, opportunities for personal development, access to productive resources, political participation, and so on. In Central America, women are often at a disadvantage, due to the '*machismo*' culture and patriarchal structures.

LAC projects have evolved towards gender mainstreaming. Most of LAC's projects that were designed with a WID approach for example have either shifted towards a GAD approach or are in the process of doing so. The LAC division created a support: '*The program for the Strengthening of Gender Issues in IFAD Projects*' (PROSGIP) so as to facilitate the shift from WID to GAD as well as to promote exchanges of project experience (IFAD, 2000).

In practice many projects have been elaborated throughout Latin America. In El Salvador, some agricultural development projects have been shifting from WID to GAD. In Venezuela, according to IFAD (2000), small producers have developed in a project team a gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation system. Similarly, in Ecuador, the development of participatory methods facilitated equal participation of men and women in rural development, and the adoption of affirmative action policies encouraged women's participation in project activities by the Agricultural Development Project for Peasant Communities and Smallholders of the Fourth World (IFAD, 2000).

However, some barriers to the successful incorporation of gender issues were noted by LAC (2000) in the project implementation phase. First, project staff had limited skills and experience in participatory methods and tools for identifying gender issues at the community level. Secondly, consultants needed continued gender training in order to better assist project implementation. Finally, the mainstreaming of gender throughout the project components, monitoring and evaluation systems was weak although some projects had identified gender-sensitive indicators.

The indicators mainly referred to men and women's access and participation in project components such as credit, local organisation, soil-conservation activities, and so on. None of the projects actually identified indicators and/or means of verification in order to measure changes in gender gaps, self-esteem, opportunities for personal development and other qualitative changes in the living conditions of men and women. Furthermore, projects lacked adequate indicators to measure possible negative impacts on men and women.

Already 20 years ago, Berger, (in Leonard, 1989), noted that very few projects for women, and for that matter, very few projects designed to reach the poor in Central America and Latin America, had been able to sustain themselves. Self-sufficiency seemed hard to achieve for these programmes. Projects that are successful in approaching self-sufficiency have generally started out simply and worked with a single focus. Diversification has come, if at all, when the first activity has proven a success. Therefore, according to March (1999), the lesson here may be that, groups should not attempt to do too much in order to do well. As the famous title of Schumacher's book (1973) states: '*Small is beautiful*'.

3. 3. 2. The limits of development achievements in the region

Despite the advance on all fronts made by women in the past decades, the adage persists in most Latin American countries that a woman must be first and foremost a mother. This belief has hindered women's rights in such areas as sex education, contraceptives and safe abortions. There is an unwritten law that says that women 'must' become mothers, and therefore they do not need to think about restricting the number of children. They have not much control on the decision to have them, or interrupting an unwanted pregnancy under safe conditions. *"Women have advanced enormously in the workplace, in politics and in the economic sphere; but they remain caught in a rigid model that assumes that they must be mothers. And that often results in a real health trap,"* notes Bianco in Valente's book: *Fertility, Health and Poverty in Latin America* (1998, p.5).

In Latin America, the proportion of households headed by women has recently fluctuated between 17 and 26 percent, while it is nearly 40 percent in the Caribbean. Several regional studies show that this type of single-parent family makes up 70 percent of the poorest of the poor families. Gutierrez (1998) added the Latin American societies have imperceptibly absorbed the fact that poor women now have a triple work burden. According to ECLAC (2007), assuming the role of head of household is a valid option for women with higher educational levels and economic resources, but in poor regions, being the head of the household continues to be a heavy burden for women.

In addition, Gustavo Gonzalez (1998) highlighted that women, who generally had low educational levels, run more than 30 percent of all micro-enterprises (units with a maximum of five workers), in Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and Jamaica.

Overcrowded living conditions, unstable jobs and strict standards of family discipline are all factors attributing to domestic violence towards women, which cuts across social strata. Studies in the region show that one out of every four Latin American and Caribbean women have been the victims of physical abuse at home. Larrain, (in Gatti, 1998), warned that the 'high level of physical and psychological violence' seen in domestic partnerships in Latin America and the Caribbean means 'children are being taught violence'.

Sixty percent of women who report violence stay with their partners, preferring that they change, that they take responsibility for their violence, rather than separating from them (Larrain, 1998). Domestic violence, especially against women and girls, still constitutes the most frequent human rights violation (Ramos, 2000).

Guatemala has witnessed spiralling rates of violence against women and huge increases in the number of women murdered over the past couple of years - so much so that the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission pressed for a U.S. Senate Resolution to pressure Guatemalan authorities to do a better job of investigating and prosecuting these crimes (Araujo, 2007). Guatemala has the highest overall murder rate of any country in the Americas. Also, in nearby El Salvador murders of women have increased with 118 registered cases only in 2007 (Araujo, 2007).

According to a report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Latin America shows only limited progress toward compliance with goals set for improving the fate of women. Therefore, UNIFEM has focussed on the economic dimensions of gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of globalisation. It has elaborated three indicators:

- The level of women's participation in paid employment - both in quantity and quality of the jobs held
- The level of gender equality in secondary school enrolment
- Women's participation in the legislative branch.

The following table shows the current situation of women in the legislative power.

As a memo, New Zealand shows 29.2 percent of women in parliament in 2002 (Human Rights Commission of New Zealand).

Table 3.1: Percentage of women in parliament, in 2001, in Latin American countries, from the highest to the lowest percentage

Countries	Number of women in parliament in %
Cuba	27.6
Argentina	23
Barbados	20.4
Guyana	20
Bahamas	19.6
Trinidad and Tobago	19.4
Costa Rica	19.3
Mexico	17.9
Ecuador	17.4
El Salvador	16.7
Jamaica	16
Suriname	15.7
Dominican Republic	14.5
Belize	13.5
Colombia	12.2
Uruguay	11.5
Venezuela	11.4
Peru	10.8
Bolivia	10.2
Nicaragua and Panama	9.7
Honduras	9.4
Chile	8.9
Paraguay	8.0
Guatemala	7.1
Brazil	5.9
Haiti	3.6

Source: UNIFEM, United Nations Development Funds for Women, 2001

These studies demonstrate still a great need for development in Latin America, especially towards women. It is, therefore, essential to continue fighting poverty, and more so the ‘feminisation’ of poverty, in order to reach the UN goal of cutting poverty rates 50 percent worldwide by 2015 (Heyzer, in Gonzalez, 2001, p.14).

3.3.2. Advances and progress in gender equity: the case of Costa Rica

In 1984, Costa Rica ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and instigated the first initiatives aimed to eliminate sexist stereotypes and practices that legitimise gender inequalities in the education system. Besides, the Social Equality of Women Act in 1990 guaranteed the equal opportunities of quality

educational access for men and women. The creation of the Gender Equity Office in the Ministry of Public Education in 2000, aimed to speed up gender equality within the system. Therefore, the educational status of women has improved markedly in the past twenty years (Guzmán and Letendre, 2004), and promoted substantive changes in family health, nutrition and development. Indeed, a country with better-educated women has a potential resource to generate development, and have a greater impact on the female occupational structure.

The Constitution of Costa Rica (1949) provides the same rights, freedom and opportunities for all individuals and prohibits any form of discrimination. The situation of women improved during the 1990s, but social discrimination remains evident, particularly with regard to access to land and credit. Domestic violence is still a major (OECD Development Centre, 2008). In Costa Rica, 20 percent of 1 388 urban women and 2 118 rural women interviewed in a study on gender, reported that they had been the target of physical abuse; 33 percent reported psychological abuse; and 10 percent said they had been subjected to sexual violence by their partners (Lama, 2000).

The minimum legal age for marriage is 18 years for both men and women. However, with parental consent, both men and women can marry at the age of 15. Thus, early marriage is quite common. A 2004 United Nations report estimated that 20 per cent of girls between 15 and 19 years of age were married, divorced or widowed (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2001).

According to The World Guide (2007), Costa Rican women professionals in management positions and technicians have increased over the last 20 years. By 2004, the labour force was 34 percent female. They also participate in the commercial and industrial sector, especially in rural areas associated with the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. Women migrate into urban areas for better education, health care and social services. The employment distribution shows 82 percent of women in the service sector, 13 percent in the industry sector and just five percent of women in the agriculture sector. In addition, the increased presence of Costa Rican women at decision-making levels and in the three powers (executive, legislative and judicial), in public and private sectors, as well as in a wide range of social organisations, is partially due to their enhanced status (Tomlinson, 2004).

The country has a highly advanced Family Code, which stipulates that a husband and a wife have equal rights and equal duties. The Code also provides equal resources to divorce for men and women. Abortion is available but with restrictions, only to save the life or preserve the health of future mothers or if the foetus is impaired. In 1996, Costa Rica passed a landmark law against domestic violence; one of the most progressive in Latin America. Women can draw up contracts, assume loans and inherit property (Vorhers and Firestone, 2006).

However, the cultural context with the '*machismo*' system and the strong impact of religion (i.e. Catholicism), might be factors influencing the impact of WID and GAD policies, especially any shifts from WID to GAD. The cultural context is very influential and can promote or limit progress for women in Costa Rica.

3. 3. 3. From WID to GAD: why is AMA a relevant case study for research initiatives to support women in Costa Rica?

Despite a growing body of research about gender issues related to women's empowerment, deficiencies are apparent. The literature shows a gap in the study of WID projects. One absence in particular is the long-term analysis of projects concerning women and gender development. I have also felt a shortage of studies exploring how international shifts on policy translate into localised changes or action. Just as Sylvia Chant's case study with women-headed-households in the Guanacaste region of Costa Rica (1997), I was inspired to conduct research with the women of AMA, in San Ignacio de Acosta.

Through my work I hope to recognise the profound effects that the AMA programme has had on the lives of women, as mothers, wives, village members and as Costa Rican citizens. I believe my research with AMA, in San Ignacio de Acosta, in Costa Rica will be a relevant case study of the long-term impacts and evolution of a Women In Development project that started in the 1980s.

My research have also been influenced by readings concerning longitudinal studies in women's projects needs with the study of Linda Peake with women in Guyana in 2009. She has worked with the Guyanese women's organisation Red Thread for nearly three decades, on a variety of topics including the impact of structural adjustment on women and households, domestic violence, women's reproductive health, sex work, trafficking and more recently

young adults and sexualities. She has analysed how the reproduction of racialised identities relies on gendered practices and representations that are constituted and challenged across a number of sites, entwining the local and the global (Peake, 2009).

As outlined in Chapter I, my research will attempt to assess if the AMA project has shifted from a WID to a GAD approach after 30 years of existence, like many of the IFAD projects in the 1990s mentioned earlier in this chapter.

This chapter provided a review of the written works related to my thesis topic. It has also highlighted a gap in the literature that explains my reasons for carrying out this research with AMA. The next chapter will give a broad overview of the approaches and methodology used in my research.

CHAPTER IV

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter explores feminist and cross-cultural research. It also discusses the methodology used and approaches undertaken in this research, particularly the processes of data collection and data analysis of my investigation. Finally, the chapter stresses both the successes and the limitations of the methods used in my fieldwork.

4. 1. Defining feminist research

4. 1. 1. Feminism

There have been three different waves of feminism; the first-wave which spans from the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, the second-wave which spans from the early 1960's through the late 1980's, and the third-wave which started in the early 1990's, and is continuing through present time (Gramstad, 2000). The main focus of the first-wave of feminism movement was on de jure inequalities, or officially mandated inequalities. This implied reforms in education, in the workplace and professions, and in healthcare.

Unlike the first-wave, the second-wave focus was on the de facto inequalities, or unofficial inequalities, and also felt that de jure and de facto inequalities were inextricably linked issues that needed to be addressed together if there was ever going to be any hope of change. This wave encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives and deeply politicised, and reflective of a sexist structure of power. The key word of this wave was education, of women and of men. Though there were many successes during this wave, there was an undeniable idea that the second wave had failed. Since there was this feeling of failure left throughout, the third-wave rose as a response to this feeling, and in full force. It is also believed that this wave was in response to the backlash against initiatives and movements that were unexpectedly created by the second-wave (Gramstad, 2000).

For Pollock (1996), it is clear that feminism is both a political movement and a theoretical field of analysis. It stands for a political commitment to women and for changes that women desire for themselves and for the world. There are several schools of feminism and all study the factors that oppress women. According to Gramstad (2000, p.1), feminism has a tripartite definition:

- “1.The belief that women and men are, and have been, treated differently by our society, and that women have frequently and systematically been unable to participate fully in all social arenas and institutions.*
- 2. A desire to change that situation.*
- 3.That this gives a new point-of-view on society, when eliminating old assumptions about why things are the way they are, and looking at it from the perspective that women are not inferior and men are not the norm.”*

Feminism can also be described as a movement or a revolution that includes women and men who wish the world to be equal and without boundaries. These boundaries or blockades are better known as discrimination and biases against gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status and economic status. Everyone views the world with his or her own sense of what gender and equality means.

Feminism takes women as its starting point, seeking to explore and uncover patriarchal social dynamics and relationships from the perspective of women. It is also a commitment to social change, arising from the actions of women to refuse the patriarchal social structure as it stands in favour of a more egalitarian society. Finally, feminism also addresses the power imbalances between women and men and between women as active agents in the world.

4. 1. 2. Feminist research/scholarship

Feminist research represents a quest for emancipation and change. According to Brayton (1997), methodologically, feminist research differs from traditional research for three reasons. Firstly, it actively seeks to remove the power imbalance between research and subject; secondly, it is politically motivated and has a major role in changing social inequality; and finally, it begins with the standpoints and experiences of women.

According to Sarankaros (2004), feminist research assumes that the powerful dominate social life and ideology and that research is owned by the powerful (men), at the expense of women. Men and women differ in their perceptions of life due to their social status. Sarankaros also mentions that feminist research employs engaging and value-laden methods and procedures that bring the researcher close to the subject ; and also subjective principles of research, encouraging taking sides and personal commitment to the feminist cause and a political stance to research topics and procedures.

Finally, it aims to expose the structures and conditions that contribute to the present situation and enlighten the community to the factors that generate this phenomenon and propose ways that can help alleviate the problem. Feminist research empowers women and gives them a voice to speak about social life from their perspective and, ultimately, contributes towards social change and reconstruction.

What is it to be a woman? How do cultural understandings of the category ‘woman’ vary through space and time? And how do those understandings relate to the position of women in different societies? Feminist scholarship includes an analysis of these questions and believes that it requires greater understanding of the concept of gender and gender relations. McDowell (1999) suggested that gender relations are the different ways in which women and men, and the accepted attributes of femininity and masculinity, are defined across space and time. In contemporary social practices, there is a strong belief in binary gender divisions. As Massey (1994) argues, women and their associated characteristics of femininity are defined as irrational, emotional, dependent and private, closer to nature than to culture. In contrast, men are portrayed as rational, scientific, independent, public and cultured. McDowell notes that *“women are often at the mercy of their bodies and their emotions, whereas men represent the transcendence of these baser features, mind to women’s body”* (1999, p.11).

The two aspects of gender suggested by Moore (1988) cannot be separated: gender as a set of material social relations and as a symbolic meaning. In addition, we all act in relation to our intentions and beliefs, which are always culturally shaped, and historically and spatially positioned. Therefore, what people believe to be appropriate behaviour and action for men and women reflect and affect what they imagine a man or a woman to be and how they expect men and women to behave. These expectations and beliefs change over time and between spaces (McDowell, 1999).

Finally, feminists view the world as being unequal. They wish to see the gender gap, and the idea that men are superior to women, decreased or even abolished. According to Brayton (1997), feminist research utilises feminist concerns and beliefs to ground the research process. Feminist research seeks to include feminism within the process, to focus on the meaning women give to their world while recognising that research as a process is contained within the same patriarchal relations.

4. 1. 3. Positionality in qualitative feminist cross-cultural research theory

In recent years, feminist geographers have engaged in debates on reflexivity, positionality, difference and representation in research (Nast, 1994 and McDowell, 1999). Many difficulties surrounding differences in ethnicity, class, gender, or religion may occur during my research. The status of the researcher, whether an insider or not, relates to accessibility, establishing rapport, and asking meaningful questions to generate information (Kee, 2000).

In *The Splintering Selves: A Reflective Journey*, Khadeegha Alzbouebi (2007, p.1) describes a kind of ‘*mode d’emploi*’ for researchers to be successful in their work.

“As researchers we need to maintain an informed reflexive consciousness to contextualise our own subjectivity in data interpretation and representation of experiences in the research process. Self-reflexivity promotes the reconciliation of personal motivations for conducting research and the extent of accountability owed to the population studied.

Since no research, using any mode of inquiry has no point of view and since research is not a value-free exercise, the challenge is not to eliminate but to document the effects of personas that influence our behaviour and positionality.”

There is a critical disjuncture between aspects of my everyday behaviour as a student of Wellington’s Victoria University and as a researcher in a foreign country of the ‘Global South’. Therefore, over the course of this research, it was necessary to consider how my positionality affects my ability to carry out my work.

According to Chacko (2004), it is important to reflect on one’s personal experiences of research in a setting that is simultaneously familiar and foreign when doing an investigation. The use of frames of positionality is needed to understand the impact of explicit and implied

power structures on the research process, the relationships between the researcher and those researched, and the transfer of knowledge. The multiple subject positions and identities of both researcher and informants, as presented in the field, vary with setting, and affect access to participants, the outcomes of encounters, and knowledge production. While self-reflexivity is endorsed as a strategy for critically informed research, active measures are proposed as strategies for equalising the power balance between the researcher and the participant. These strategies can be the openness about the agenda and activities undertaken, self-disclosure, making conscious accommodations for the research subject's work schedule and time constraints, and mutual sharing of information (Chacko, 2004).

In order to carry out feminist research in a developing country, I had to pay attention to issues of reflexivity, positionality and power relations in the field. As a researcher I was committed to showing my place in the setting being investigated. I carefully monitored my position in the research process, and the relationship with the informants, which is critical to maintaining a focus on the research agenda. Finally, conducting international fieldwork in GAD also involved being attentive to histories of colonialism, development, globalisation and local realities, to avoid perpetuating relations of domination and control (Sultana, 2007).

The issue of representation for myself as a young European woman with fair skin arose during my research in Costa Rica. Indeed, I was the only blonde woman with freckles amongst darker skinned '*latinos*'. Because of my appearance as an outsider, Costa Rican people called me '*mancha*' or '*gringa*'. Central and Latin American people use the terms '*gringo*' or '*gringa*' referring to any person who is known, or assumed to be from the United States regardless of race, or it can denote a strong association or assimilation into American society and culture.

In San Ignacio de Acosta, I faced issues of positionality and power relations on multiple scales. Firstly, with women who are working with AMA, but also with the older women who used to work in the programme; secondly, with their husbands and others in the wider community; and finally, with the children of the women.

I anticipated some challenges, asking myself, for example:

- Why would they speak to a young woman outsider?
- How much should I know about their intimate and private life?

- How could I promote a relationship of trust?

I believed that the only way to answer these questions was to live in the community long enough (five months) to build relationships of faith and confidence.

4. 1. 4. Ethics

Aiming to guide or enforce good ethical practice is always a contextual, relational, embodied and politicised task. As a researcher I always needed to be mindful of negotiating ethics in the field, as GAD research is produced through negotiated spaces and practices of reflexivity. Each research experience represents a different combination of insider/outsider status vis-à-vis the culture of study (Sharan et al, 2000).

As my research involved cross-cultural relationships with Costa Rican men and women, I informed participants before any work was carried out, about what I was going to ask in my questionnaire and interviews, and how I would conduct data collection. As an outside researcher, I needed to protect respondents' privacy. Confidentiality was fundamental and showed the respect I had for them. Furthermore, I had to adhere to the Victoria University ethical guidelines throughout this research (Willis and Chapman, 2008). Therefore I got Human Ethic Committee approval and letters from AMA (see appendix 1 and 2) for my research as well as an information sheet and a consent form for participants (see appendices 3 and 4). It was also necessary to ensure confidentiality of information.

Concerning the photographs I took and published in this thesis, each member was asked for their consent. They all agreed for me to use the pictures in which they appeared. As Valentine mentions (in Flowerdew and Martin, 1997), the researcher needs to respect the wishes of interviewees who want their identity to be kept anonymous by giving them pseudonyms. I kept comments and informants' personal stories in transcripts for myself and made sure not to repeat any information to other interviewees. I also guaranteed them the confidentiality of their feelings and the information they provided me with. Participants were offered anonymity, however all the interviewees agreed to have their names mentioned in quotes. Before any interview, I would explain in more detail the way I would use the information and ensure them the viability of the privacy. I kept the interviews recorded and my notes in my computer or diary.

4. 2. Putting theory into practice with AMA

4. 2. 1. Qualitative research

According to Howitt and Stevens (2005), working across the differences that constitute 'culture' involves careful attention to methods and research. The cross-cultural research I have undertaken in Costa Rica embraces issues of ethnicity, ethics, origin (nationality), gender, sexuality, age, 'class' and 'race' and therefore deals with cultural aspects in many different areas. Consequently, I chose an appropriate approach and allied methods for my research context. I decided to do qualitative research.

Despite the diversity in feminist theory and methodology, feminist researchers share many general and specific standards and principles, reflected in their research theory and practice. Some of these are: that women have been marginalised, that male superiority is perpetuated despite policies, assurances and political promises, that males and females are considered physically and emotionally different, with men being considered superior, that there is still a long way to go to establish gender equality, and finally that the relationship between researcher and researched requires serious reconsideration (Sarankaros, 2004).

In qualitative research, the reliability and the value of the results are related to the richness of the information gathered, not the sample size (Hay 2000, Patton, 1990). The most important concern is assuring the representativeness of possible viewpoints, to understand the range of variation of experience and perspectives (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002). In qualitative research not only the content, but also the context is important (Miller and Glasner 1997, in Stenberg 2000).

According to Cameron (2005), *"the power of qualitative data lies in its revelation of a respondent's understanding and interpretations of the social world and these data, in turn, are interpreted by the researcher to reveal the understandings of structures and processes that shape respondents' thought and action"* (p.160). Qualitative research assumes that variables and multiple understandings coexist in a given social context. It is important to be mindful of engaging in critical reflexivity, especially when my own frames of reference and personal positions shape the ways in which I proceed with analysis.

Qualitative research requires cognisance of the position and powers of the researcher and the politics of doing research. My aim was to get a feel of and become accustomed to the context, its culture and the relationships between people, so as to build a trusting relationship between the participants and myself. Therefore, I went to Costa Rica for six months and spent five months in San Ignacio de Acosta, with the people I was going to interview. This period allowed me to build connections with the participants and fortunately they built their confidence in sharing their life experiences with me. The success of my findings research depended on having a good knowledge of the gender relationships within the community.

In addition, qualitative methods are ideally suited to answering questions about meanings, interpretations and explanations people associate with particular phenomena (Seale, 1999). In this fieldwork, I chose a qualitative approach because it was more relevant to the situation: I like communicating with people in Spanish and I prefer people to numbers. According to Sullivan and Brockington (in Scheyvens and Storey, 2003, p.59 and p.72), “*qualitative research provides powerful insights into the world. ... It is essential if we are to understand what makes our world meaningful for people*”. Indeed, qualitative methodology can ensure credibility, authenticity, reliability and confirmability of research findings (Kendon, 2008).

To achieve profound and positive interviews with women from Acosta I interviewed them face-to-face and in private. I also helped women in their own environments, such as their homes, for example, while doing their housework (cooking, cleaning, looking after their children). Therefore I did not affect their routine and did not impose on their time in their busy lives.

4. 2. 2. Grounded theory

My research also adopts a constructivist grounded theory approach, which involves viewing data analysis as constructing an interpretation of the data rather than revealing the inherent meaning of the data (Charmaz, 2000). Grounded theory is more an inductive methodology (The Grounded Theory Institute, 2008). Its analysis begins with the coding of data. It is assumed that data are the result of a particular interaction between me as the researcher and research participants; it is the task of the researcher to interpret these constructions of reality.

The grounded theory was a suitable alternative approach for my research as grounded theory methods, pioneered by Glaser and Strauss in their publication *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967), offer systematic inductive guidelines for collecting and analysing data to build middle-range theoretical frameworks that explain the collected data (Charmaz, 2000, p.509).

The main elements of a grounded theory approach include: collection of qualitative data primarily through interviews, document collection, and participant observation; conceptual coding data; theoretical sampling, writing theoretical memos; concurrent data collection and analysis; and constant comparison (Charmaz, 2000; Strauss, 1967). In comparison to many other research methodologies, data analysis does not follow the end of data collection but begins as soon as the first data are obtained. As gaps become apparent in the emergent theory, data are collected specifically to fill these gaps: this is theoretical sampling. The process of constant evaluation refers to the comparison of:

- 1) Different individuals;
- 2) Different pieces of data from the same individual;
- 3) Different incidents;
- 4) Data to the categories in which they are coded;
- 5) Different categories (Charmaz, 2000).

In the field, I had to use some aspects of the grounded theory approach, because each interview opened new areas of study (new topics I had not planned to talk about). As I felt it was significant for my research, I therefore, was conscious of being flexible and adaptable. I asked further questions to participants to get more relevant findings related to these new themes, matters or issues.

4. 2. 3. Choice of participants

Interviews were conducted with 35 people. These interviews included:

- 21 members of AMA including the President of AMA
- Three women that used to work in AMA
- Five local residents (husbands and children of AMA members)
- Three students/workers in NGOs (Benjamín Odio Echeverría, Laura Braula and Gabriela Chinchilla)

- Three other members of other cooperatives

(See appendix 5 for more information on interviewees related to AMA).

My research also included the women who had previously worked in AMA in order to make comparisons between AMA in its beginning and nowadays, looking at its evolution.

3. 3. Data collection

As a researcher and given that I was an outsider, I needed to have a mediator/facilitator who had a background similar to the study sample and who also understood me as a researcher. I stayed with Alba Sánchez Corrales, with whom I had been in contact via *Skype* since August 2008. My supervisor and I first sent a letter (June 2008) to a few of AMA members in order to get a contact. Alba sent us an email back and luckily we were able to communicate after that.

As Alba does not work in AMA anymore, she helped me organise meetings and understand the culture of the region, because according to Merriam (2000), it is important to study the backgrounds and identify the similarities and differences of these women. Being part of locals' lives enabled me to become more involved and active with the view-from-below, like a bottom-up approach. Moreover, it made the sharing of information much easier as the women came to trust and respect my effort to further their personal goals. This interaction gave me the possibility of participating fully in the life of the community and to relate more easily to the women's feelings. I socialised with several members (or their family) of the group, developing close friendships. Therefore, I was able to have informal discussions related to my work interests. I conducted a major part of the written work at home (living with particular families) with my laptop and also at the AMA building.

I remained flexible in my approach to data collection. The research results were shared with all participants who contributed. My research involved four major ways of collecting data:

- Participant observation
- Semi-structured informal interviews
- Focus group (six to eight women per group), participatory activities
- Questionnaire survey

4. 3. 1. Participant observation

I engaged in participant observation from April to August 2009. According to Kearns, participant observation is an approach *“that has been adopted and adapted by geographers seeking to understand more fully the meanings of place and the contexts of everyday life. The goal of participant observation is developing understanding through being part of the spontaneity of everyday interactions”* (2005, p.195). The success of this approach depended upon my ability as the researcher to reflect on my relationship to what I was researching. I had to place myself in the daily life activities of participants, as it was a conscious and systematic sharing.

Participant observation activities included living with different families (eating and sharing daily life) in the community, helping out AMA members, going on tourist excursions, and attending meetings or social gatherings of local residents, AMA members, among others. Participant observation played a supporting role. It facilitated relationships with the residents and members of AMA, which were essential to build trust and eliciting permission to conduct interviews. Participant observation and interviews are not separate activities, but mutual methods. Participant observation confirmed or questioned the information gained through interviews.

I also used a fieldwork diary to record my observations of my lived experiences, usually at the end of each day. I attended local social events (birthdays, leisure activities such as dances and sport games), and socialised with both local people and tourists. Casual conversations were used to learn more about the community and people’s lives. Interactions were in Spanish with local expressions.

I continued to get information from students and teachers from the University of Costa Rica and the National University. I also went to Guatemala on a University course entitled *‘Rural and intercultural education’*, and visited indigenous women’s groups in Costa Rica to get better knowledge and insights of other women’s organisations, to compare their successes, achievements, problems, and challenges with AMA (see Chapter V). Alongside the research techniques mentioned in this chapter, I also kept a collection of photographs, videos, and a diary.

Table 4.1: Summary of participant observation opportunities in my fieldwork

Features of Participant Observation	Activities of Researcher
Living in the context for extended period of time	Spent five months in San Luis de Acosta in Costa Rica and a total of seven months in Central and Latin America
Learning and using local language and dialect	Spoke Spanish and learned local expressions and relevant vocabulary
Actively participating in a wide range of daily, routine and extraordinary activities with people who are full participants in that context	Lived and ate with local families, attended local social events such as dances, parties, music classes, religious events (i.e. the Holy Week) and community meetings.
Using everyday conversation as an interview technique	Casual conversations were used to learn more about the community and people's lives, although in-depth discussion of research topics was usually reserved for informal interviews
Informally observing during leisure activities	Attended local activities, played with children at schools, taught English in rural schools and socialised with local peasants local families, university students from San José and tourists.
Recoding observations in field notes, usually chronologically	Recorded observations and notes in a journal, usually at the end of each day

Source: The author

4. 3. 2. Interviews

The interviewing phase of qualitative research was dynamic and ever changing. According to O'Connell, Davidson and Layder (in Flowerdew and Martin, 1997) the interview is a social encounter. The respondent's answers will depend upon what respondent and interviewer think and feel about each other. It is important to try and anticipate potentially difficult issues and situations that arose in my interviews. For example, talking to people about power relationships and family stories prompted some interviewees to recall distressing experiences of violence or discrimination.

According to Cotterill (1992), although there are power issues that a researcher must remain aware of, such as balance of dialogue, research agenda, and societal hierarchies, each interview is a special unit of work on its own. Therefore, I respected and learned from the participants but also considered changing myself, like wearing appropriate clothing and being as neutral as possible not to influence their testimonies in any way.

In addition, as Punch (1998) states data collection can be influenced by human behaviours. Hence, I tried to put aside my sensitivity to their 'warm' hospitality so as not to be blinded by gifts or friendly behaviours. On the other hand, I carefully ensured appropriate responses to participants if discussions or people stories were harsh or difficult to hear (violence, harassment, death, health problem, etc).

Primary data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured life history interviews. According to Dunn (2005), semi-structured interviews employ an interview guide, and are organised around ordered but flexible questioning. I redirected the conversation towards the research topics if needed. On the other hand, according to the same author, life history interviews are a form of semi-structured interview. They focus on personal perceptions and personal stories, and are informant focused. Informants determine personal accounts of significant events and perceptions, in their own words. Therefore, each semi-structured interview is unique. The questions I asked were almost entirely determined by the informants' responses. The interviews seemed like normal conversational interaction and allowed the informant to direct the interview. Moreover, a good rapport with my informants was fundamental. According to Dunn (2005), it is a matter of understanding my informants' model of the world and communicating my understanding symmetrically. In fact, interviews in which everyone feels at ease usually generate more insightful and more reliable information.

I used audio recording and note taking as the two main techniques for recording my interviews. However, I also included video recording when I felt it was necessary and useful for my research. Audio recording enabled a natural conversational interview style as I could focus on the listening and also the observation. I used to note their attitudes and whatever I felt interesting in the informant behaviour. Audio recording can not record visible attributes therefore I used to note any useful informant reactions on my diary.

These in-depth, semi-structured interviews were appropriate to use because they offer participants the opportunity to describe their own experiences and the meanings they attached to those experiences (Patton, 1990). A list of key questions or issues, but not an inflexible, standardised set of questions was established beforehand. This interview format enabled me to ensure that all participants addressed certain topics, which was essential for comparison. All the interviews were conducted in Spanish and tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed, in order to ensure complete data collection, and to avoid the disturbance of note taking (Patton, 1990). As Johnson (2002) notes tape-recording in depth interviews is essential if interviewees' words and perceptions are to be captured. Interview locations were chosen for the convenience and comfort they offered interviewees (Warren, 2002).

In addition, the need for privacy was important (husbands or any other members of the community had no access to these dialogues that were recorded with a tape-recorder). I wanted the women to feel at ease to give accurate information about their personal lives (Howitt and Stevens, 2005). I listened to what these women wanted to share, by asking them questions such as *'how do you want to be interviewed, when would be the best time, how long do you want me to stay'*. I also welcomed their own way of expressing themselves. For example, Yamileth Arias Castro (32) preferred to sing her personal life conditions in the songs she wrote while I was interviewing her in her home. She expressed her feeling better in her talent of singer and writer. It was a unique experience for me.

The semi-structured interviews had a guideline with different themes to be discussed:

- At a personal level: positive/negative impacts on AMA members? Empowerment of its members?
- At the community level: how do members' relatives and the community perceive AMA?
- At the national level: how is AMA represented within the country?
- At the international level: how does AMA reflect international development trends?

Answers to the following interview questions (see Fig. 4.1), allowed me to have an understanding of the impact of AMA at different levels.

Figure 4.1: Questions asked to AMA participants during interviews

- What processes has been done through AMA's history?
 - Where are the profits going? To whom? How much are the profits?
 - How does AMA get funded? Who pays?
 - What are the views of men concerning AMA?
 - Are men included in AMA?
 - How can AMA include men? Has it already been done in Costa Rica?
- Examples of other countries and examples where men have been included in development projects.

Source: The author

I usually arranged times for interviews with participants. I went to their house, helping them in their domestic tasks (cooking for example). I normally stayed the whole afternoon with them, visiting their neighbours and relatives. I also tried to get some information from their children and husband while visiting them, and used the same ethics procedures as those I used with the women. Some were included in my interviews while others were sharing data just in casual conversation while visiting the farm and picking fruits.

Upon average each interview lasted from one to two hours. I visited the women at regular intervals during the five months of my fieldwork, either at their home, or in AMA. Moreover I used to see them in the village, at school or at the market, and usually spent time with them talking. Presently, I still keep in touch with some AMA members and local inhabitants of San Ignacio de Acosta by email and mail post.

I learned how to engage with each woman in private by carefully integrating myself into her space and 'fitting in' into her life, avoiding being intrusive. Therefore women were able to earn their trust and have them share their specific problems/concerns with me. Alone, a woman could easily talk about the dilemmas she had with AMA, with her husband, other women of AMA and her family. They were able to confide to me.

Finally, I transcribed all the interviews listening several times to the records and taping the words spoken, as well as the descriptions of gestures and tones. Interview notes were converted into a typed format either on the same day or the day after the interview. The sooner the better so I would not misinterpret the spoken words. The transcription was a very

time-consuming process, as it took me three to four hours to transcribe an hour interview and double when it lasted two hours. Then, I translated into English the parts of transcriptions that were useful for quoting informants in my thesis. Interviewees were able to read over their transcripts but no one asked to do it.

4. 3. 3. Focus group

I conducted a participatory activity with AMA members, on May the 13th of 2009 in order to collect more information, particularly collective qualitative data. Every year AMA members organise a general assembly where everyone can meet and discuss new projects, define their objectives of the year, welcome new members, get together and have a party to celebrate AMA's anniversary. This year we decided with the executive committee to take the opportunity to do a participatory activity in a focus group work on the same day so as to make sure most members could participate (see Fig. 4.2).

The focus group lasted four hours. We used a room in AMA's building (in San Luis), where food and drinks were provided. All women from AMA (21) were invited to participate in this group. However, this participatory workshop/focus group only attracted 17 women; four members could not come due to other commitments (Socoro, Lorena, and Mariana Fallas Mora from the same family and Nieves Arias).

This focus group method involved small groups of AMA members (around six women in each group) discussing topics or issues that I defined as the researcher. It demanded careful preparation on my part. It aimed to provide information that could be used in my data analysis and to complement the interviews. As the researcher, I had the role of the facilitator or moderator, guiding the participants, as well as taking notes, pictures, and recording most important parts of the focus group. I asked the women to make three groups and talk to each other about what they wanted, how they would imagine AMA in ten years, what kind of courses they would like to receive in order to implement new projects in AMA.

Figure 4.2: Participatory workshop and focus group participants (May 13th 2009)



Flora and Florita



María Crístina, Patricia, Olga Angela, Leticia and Flora working in groups



Flora sticking post-its on the wall



Participants with the researcher

Source: The author

These women were able to experience the process of group reflection in relation to their work in AMA. They were able to evaluate AMA's situation together, while at the same time being aware of the changes they had made in their personal lives, by exploring if they have benefited from the WID approach. Subjects such as challenges and key achievements for these women were raised. Then each group wrote their conclusions on post-its and shared them with everyone on the wall, so everyone could discuss about the results of this participatory work. At the end, all together we decided what needed to be changed, the objectives and goals of AMA.

In a focus group, interaction between members is the key characteristic of the research method, with dynamism and energy as people respond to the contribution of others (Cameron, 2005). This interactive aspect of the focus group provided an opportunity for the women of AMA to explore different points of view, formulate and reconsider their own ideas and understandings. This interaction enabled me to understand the multiple meanings that AMA members attribute to places, relationships, processes and events, thereby providing useful insights into the practice of knowledge production.

During the workshop, participants also discussed issues related to accounting, new projects, relationships, and organisational framework. Then, participants engaged in completing a participatory activity, which included questions about their values. They spent much time trying to identify their needs and wishes, including a discussion about how they wish their male partners to be. Focus-group participants were asked about the qualities of an ideal male partner, about the changes they would like to see in AMA, and their future. In the discussions of the focus group, it became evident many different problems had to be solved: organisational and relationships issues.

There were several key achievements of this focus group. It was an exciting and invaluable research tool to use. Moreover, I felt that participants enjoyed interacting with each other and doing something completely new. I noticed that the discussions generated insights and understandings that were new both to the women and to me as the researcher. I tried to make the focus group meeting interactive and lively. I aimed to make it a pleasant time for them where they could enjoy communicating and sharing their thoughts together. To make this encounter easier and more memorable, I also integrated the use of post-it note activities.

Indeed, participants enjoyed using this technique, as it was more tactile and engaging. I attempted to ensure that no one was left out, or no woman dominated others. It was also important for me to stay neutral in the interaction and always remember my role as a researcher. Finally, I realised that the interactive element made this focus group ideally suited to explore the aims of the thesis. It helped them to describe their experience of being involved in AMA and their assessment of its impacts on their lives and their families, and to discuss the implications of any shift from WID to GAD for AMA's future and its development effects on its members.

4. 3. 4. Questionnaire survey

I designed a questionnaire (see appendix 6), to seek out more information from participants. The questionnaire was given to each of AMA's 21 members, as well as three previous members. I gave the women the questionnaire on the day of the interview and did not limit the amount of time participants had to complete the survey. However, most interviewees returned it within a day.

The questionnaire included as many open questions as possible in an effort to enable women to express their own views freely. I collected and analysed the responses and I noted relevant and/or poignant quotations and well-formulated opinions. The questionnaire focussed on their past, present and future lives along with their life history with AMA. The questionnaire, written in Spanish, ensured a uniform presentation of questions, while the structure and the wording were of primary importance if the women were to understand the questions (most women only had primary school education).

The questionnaire used a mixture of simple questions such as: age, educational background, married/single status, hours at work. It was useful to pose questions that required more personal thinking. According to Willis and Chapman (2008), personal thinking is important so the participants feel active participants of their own situation. Such questions were: *how long do you see yourself working there, how do you see the future of AMA for yourself, the women, Acosta, and the whole country?* I was interested in knowing what these women thought about the impact of AMA both at different spatial scales: the personal, the local, the national and the international level, as well as temporal scales. These temporal scales implied looking at the

impact of AMA throughout time (because the project has been going for 30 years), in order to see whether these women felt empowered or not.

4. 4. My contribution and participation

4. 4. 1. Painting the logo of AMA

During my fieldwork, I proposed to the association that I could paint a new AMA logo on the wall of their building (see Fig. 4.3 and Fig. 4.4). Indeed, after the renovation of the building, no sign was showing their location or the identity of their building anymore. The executive committee (*'Junta Directiva'*) and I discussed together the need for a sign, and finally, the executive committee decided to modernise the old design, and paint a new one for the opening of their café/restaurant (*'soda'*) next door. They wanted me to paint the logo of AMA because no one had the skills to paint it and members had not benefited from art training. Members of AMA liked the results and, many told me that having AMA logo back again on their building contributed to the momentum that the organisation was gaining, as Beatriz Calderón Mora noted: *"it gives a soul to AMA, it is as if the association has become alive again"*

Figure 4.3: Painting AMA logo on the façade of their building (May 2009)



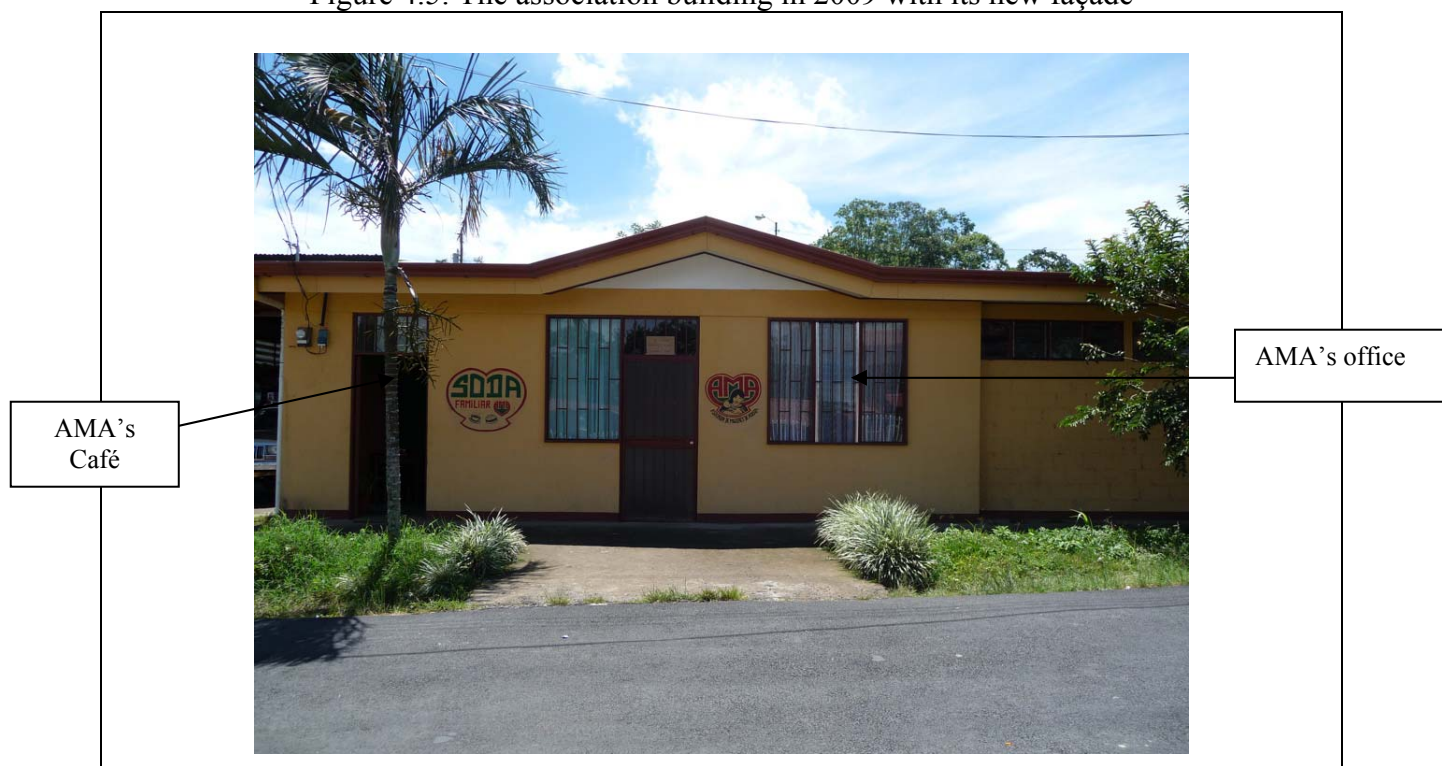
Source: The author

Figure 4.4: Painting AMA logo on the façade of AMA's café (May 2009)



Source: Beatriz Calderón Mora

Figure 4.5: The association building in 2009 with its new façade



Source: The author

4. 4. 2. Team member for a local human development project in Acosta

During my stay in San Ignacio de Acosta, I met Veronica Durán, a young graduate woman who worked for a project strengthening local capacities for the planning of local human development in Costa Rica. She came to San Ignacio de Acosta in May 2009 to carry out a survey about what was needed for the development of the region. For this project, Veronica Durán required a group of local people to define the needs of projects of development plans in the region. Along with nine local volunteers, we formed a group and met every week to discuss these issues.

I participated in this teamwork project (local management team) with the local municipality. The goal was to strengthen local abilities for planning a local human development in the region of Acosta. This project *FOMUDE* (*Fortalecimiento Municipal y Decentralización*) works in collaboration with the development programme of the United Nations and the human settlement programme of the United Nations. It aims to improve individual, organisational and institutional capacities for the planning and participative evaluations of the local human development and decentralisation, with gender equity.

The teamwork consulted each settlement of Acosta, talking to its inhabitants so as to find out their needs, and got together once a week in the municipality of San Ignacio de Acosta to discuss about the findings. The methodology promoted the generation of knowledge of the locals. In these workshops men and women identified their specific problems, needs and expectations together. It enabled me to get some insights into the type of gender inequities that exist in the community and in the area of the project, along with possible factors limiting women's participation in project activities and women's benefits.

Participating in this project helped me understand in a wider context the situation of AMA members. The team participated in many awareness and identification workshops along with prioritisation of projects for locals. Then, we stressed a work guide with orientations to organise concrete activities. The following themes are the one we encompassed during the workshops:

- Social development (migration, health, fight against poverty, gender equity)
- Education (education offer, quality, help and support to children and adolescents living in poverty, school infrastructure)

- Sustainable economic development (tourism, commerce, services, agricultural activity, handicraft, ...)
- Environmental management (national parks, management of forests, the sustainable use of natural resources, ...)
- Public services (water, electricity, transport, technical assistance, ...)
- Infrastructure (roads, communication: internet, phone, bridges, ...)
- Human security (citizens and environmental)

According to the San Ignacio de Acosta district, the population concluded during a participative consultation to the following projects that should be implemented, both by men and women, so as to support the development of their community:

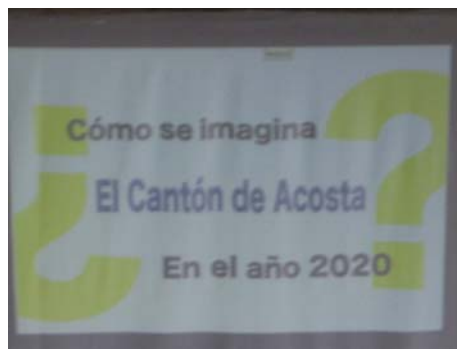
- A centre of rehabilitation of alcoholic people
- A cultural and entertainment centre
- A women's centre
- A recycling plant
- Promote rural ecotourism
- An organic and handicraft market
- A clinic
- An university

Then, in order to establish the development of projects and their timeframes, the people participating had to think and stress:

- 1) The changes expected,
- 2) The beneficiaries,
- 3) The persons in charge of the realisation of each project,
- 4) Collaborators, and
- 5) The necessary resources related to any kind project desired.

In the next few years, the outcomes of this planning concerning local human development will be taken into account and put into practice hopefully as soon as possible. Hopefully governments and institutions will give money to municipalities to build these projects that local communities have chosen.

Figure 4.6: Presentation of the local management project in San Ignacio de Acosta
(April 18th 2009)



Translation: How do you imagine the district of Acosta in 2020?



Veronica Durán presenting to the community what development is about:

“Participation + Teamwork + Equity + Life quality = Human Development”

Teamwork participants also noted: *“Communal strength is fundamental”* Marco Quesada
“Locals need to collaborate together, know the people and understand their needs” Nelson
Castro

Source: The author

4. 4. 3. Course attendance with Masters students in Rural Education from the National University of Costa Rica

Through Alba Sánchez Corrales, I had the opportunity to participate in a course entitled ‘Cross-cultural and Rural Education’ with a group of Masters students in Rural Education from the National University of Costa Rica (see Fig. 4.6). This course was held in Guatemala for two weeks. As we visited many different organisations (women’s only and mixed groups), I had the chance to draw some comparisons with AMA finding commonalities and differences, and most importantly, putting AMA back into context.

Students' focus was to understand how local people could attend informal education, learn what could be useful for them in rural areas, and consequently become more independent in the realisation of their projects. At the beginning, locals benefited from technical, financial and professional help. Sustainability in their projects was the main focus and explains their desire to be independent. All their projects had an aspect of social development, as these latter were shared with the whole family and integrated the community.

At the end of the course, teachers and students got together to discuss objectives and missions of informal education: its limits and successes. For example, the importance to be aware of the environment, religion and the Mayan mythology in Guatemala in any education programme. It is obvious that Guatemalans have to fight against dependence and paternalism in their projects, by being self-sufficient and controlling their own management.

These informal education projects were designed for locals, who were excluded from formal education programmes, such as uneducated elderly or young persons. These projects would also decrease the rural migration. It is important that national government recognises informal education and sees it as an integral local development for communities. Finally, we (the students of the course) all agreed that the interest of a 'bottom-up' approach where communal participation was encouraged.

Figure 4.7: Masters students in Rural Education from the National University of Costa Rica in Guatemala (May 2009)



Source: The author

4. 5. Data analysis

When all the transcriptions were done, I tried to assess the impacts of AMA on the women's lives and their social and economic empowerment. I looked at the data and specific questions (see appendix 7) helped me to identify key themes in my research.

I read over the transcripts from interviews and focus group several times to get familiar with the discussion. Then, I identified key themes and key quotes along with relevant points made by participants. I allocated colours to each theme and compared interviews, finding connections, similarities and divergences. I used a simple coding process. Coding qualitative material helps data reduction, organisation and the creation of searching aids, and analysis. Therefore, I used descriptive and analytic codes. Cope (2005) states that descriptive codes reflect themes or patterns that are obvious on the surface, while analytic codes reflect themes the researcher is interested in. She also mentions that coding is a reflexive process in fact new themes might appear along the way. Finally, as social beings, we are all the time seeing and unconsciously analysing the world around us. Therefore, we are constantly interpreting and 'coding' what is out there.

During the writing process I found it necessary to return to the original transcripts to refine and reformulate my ideas. Sometimes I used direct quotes from participants to illustrate the different ways that the responses were expressed. I also began to understand the way arguments were constructed in their culture and, thus, became able to recognise the signs of conflict. Participant observation was also fundamental in the analysis because it enabled me to discover discrepancies between what participants say and often believe or what should happen and what actually does happen. Participants' suggestions were an important input for the formulation of gender-specific strategies and actions proposed in the new projects design mentioned by the members such as recycling or handicraft making.

Finally, according to Leach and Sitaram, (2002), there is evidence that it is difficult to surmount social and cultural conventions regarding gender roles and expectations. Therefore, while rereading participants' interviews transcribed, I tried to capture informant's views of life, using their own words to describe their own experiences and perceptions.

4. 6. Successes and limitations

Overall, I found using this approach and methodology successful for my research. Informants enjoyed participating and as a researcher I got the information needed to undertake research and make conclusions on AMA's status. I had adequate preparation, diverse input and verification of interpretation. For the transcription and the translation processes, I typed every interview on my laptop. I had the chance to live with a Spanish-speaking family, who helped me translate words I did not understand. However, this research encountered several limitations, both during and after the fieldwork. These limitations include:

In-field limitations

Living with the local people could have influenced my interpretations and hence filtered reality. This implied me having two roles for this short period of my life; keeping what was important for my research in my role of researcher, while maintaining on the other side, the friendly relations in my role of friend and visitor.

The use of a tape-recorder might have also influenced the research and affected interviewees' responses. The use of unfamiliar technology was maybe intimidating for respondents and perhaps made them reluctant to share information, particularly on sensitive subjects. In addition, differences of age, race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, physical traits, educational background, social and economic status might have influenced the participants' answers or might have made conversation and data collection a difficult process. Indeed, being a white European fair young female participant observer might have influenced attitudes and behaviours of people. As a researcher, I unavoidably incorporated my gendered self into the arena of observation. For example, in some cases, participants were either shy, afraid, concerned about revealing their situation, or even felt anger towards me; but, on the other hand, some became too close, and saw me like a friend or their confidante.

In addition, I always took into account that Spanish is my third language (French is my mother tongue, and English my second language); therefore, it involved an effort in the communication process to get the 'right' message and answers, while interviewing people in the community. My Spanish language skills became much better after immersing myself completely in the Costa Rican life.

Finally, aware of the difference of language and culture, translating Spanish interviews into English required time and skill. This added a challenge but a good exercise for my languages abilities. The fact that is was not my first language might have lead to a loss of accuracy, especially when the participants used familiar slang words or expressions.

Post-field limitations

In the writing process, I had a few difficulties transcribing due to background noises during interviews, obscuring the words of respondents, such as children playing, work construction, animal noises, etc. This might have led to a loss of data in the audio record while transcribing the interviews.

I wrote throughout the project so as to do as much work as possible in Costa Rica. However, I had to finish in New Zealand, keeping in mind the experience of being a researcher in San Ignacio de Acosta and working with a brain in three languages (French, English and Spanish). I might have lost some information with time, trying to bring back all my memories.

This chapter has exposed the approaches and methodology of my research carried out with AMA. In the following chapter, I will discuss about my findings and analysis.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The following findings derive from my analysis of the transcriptions and translations of the interviews I conducted with informants and from the focus group, along with notes from my participant observation, the questionnaire survey and held diaries. Women's voices are at the centre of my findings. This chapter first presents an analysis of the women's relationships, interactions and spaces. It exposes what it is to be a woman in a rural area of Costa Rica, and discusses AMA members, their families, and community. Then, it follows with an analysis at the organisational level drawn from my participatory work with AMA. I discuss the achievements and strengths of AMA, along with some limitations and challenges. To do the latter I engage the views and opinions of men, and compare AMA with other gender and development projects in the region. In the penultimate section I consider the impacts of '*machismo*' on AMA. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of why AMA has not moved to GAD approaches yet and also stresses the reasons and problems that are ongoing within the association.

5. 1. AMA members in context

In Costa Rican society, women are still subordinated. Even though women here have more rights than other countries in Central America, they still face discrimination. In many cases, successful cooperatives are a source of income for women, but they do not seem to help them in resolving their more major structural issues. The problem is that women participate in projects but that these do not allow them to improve their living standards or compete in the market.

More positively women in Costa Rica have received an education, which has enabled them to question their inequalities compared to men. They have begun to explore the possibility of change in their every day lives, their beliefs and their conditions. As a result, there have been changes, especially in the gender division of work inside the family at home. While the patriarchal system is still strong, some women affirm that they have been able to succeed

because their husbands are now helping in the household, and looking after the children when they work.

5. 1. 1. What is it/how is it to be a woman in rural Costa Rica?

According to Fernandez (2007), Costa Rican women have many different roles. But the idea that women's work is only to help and support men's work, is widely understood in rural society, such as San Ignacio de Acosta and often between women themselves. According to the Women's National Institute, (INAMU, '*Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres*'), (in Fernandez, 2006), this situation has affected women historically and encouraged them in their development as entrepreneurs, such as in AMA.

Women often have a very important reproductive work function (domestic tasks and looking after the children) within the rural sector. They have the role of workers, as wives, mothers and house workers. Without them it would be impossible to reproduce the workforce in rural areas. However, alongside the reproductive activities, the women also work as farm workers during the entire year. Furthermore, there is a direct relation between women's knowledge about the total revenue of the household and the recognition of women's work and their tasks (INAMU, 2008).

In Costa Rica, the indelible imprint of Catholicism is evident in its historical presence, political power, and cultural traditions. The Catholic religion has much power over women and infuses their lives. Catholicism influences women's thinking and their way of apprehending life. The Catholic heritage remains important in their daily conversations and inherent to their language, such as the expressions:

- '*Dios Mio*': My God
- '*Que Dios te bendiga*': God Bless You
- '*Gracias a Dios*': Thank God
- '*Si Dios quiere*': God Willing
- '*Vaya con Dios*': Go with God

In addition, they frequently say blessings, go to Church on Sundays, and celebrate 'The Holy week' ('*La Semana Santa*') in Easter, which is a traditional public holiday for everyone. In

AMA, each meeting started with a prayer such as: *"Thank you God for being with us and for helping us move forward and continue with AMA, because we all love the association"*.

Legacies of the Spanish Catholic sense of "proper" gender roles are twined like tangled threads through the national fabric. Male and female roles are clearly defined and discrimination is ingrained (King and Beattie, 2004). The greater percentage of lower-class women remain chained to the kitchen sink and the rearing of children, and gender relationships, particularly in rural villages such as San Ignacio de Acosta remain dominated to a greater or lesser degree by '*machismo*' and '*marianismo*', its female equivalent. Women are supposed to be bastions of moral and spiritual integrity (to call a wife and mother '*abnegado*' - self-sacrificing - is the ultimate compliment), to be accepting of men's infidelities, and to accept bitter pride in their suffering.

Emérita Castro Mora mentioned how, for her, the inequality between men and women has its origins in the Catholic Church. Indeed, she often questioned why women can not become priests, and suggested that aspects of the Catholic Church reflect '*machismo*' - the image of men's superiority - and the population is influenced by it. Emérita stated, for example, *"Before, we always talked about the Man and he was everything: man, woman and child. 'Machismo' comes from the Bible, from the Church. When a woman married a man, she became ignored, obedient and respectful to her husband. The woman was seen as an object of the man. Nowadays, the Church, talks about women and children too. However, the Church does not give the power to women to become priests yet"*.

This idea can be connected to other research on gender and religion, and the influence of the *Madonna*, particularly on the gendered expectations of women and men. According to Calef and Simkins (2009), gender patterns are deeply embedded in cultural discourses and social institutions, including religious worlds, making them difficult to recognise and separate them from other elements. In addition, according to King and Beattie (2004), it is crucial to recognise the complex role that religion plays in identity formations and social relations, as it is in matters of gender, probably more than anywhere else, that the profound ambiguity and ambivalence of all religions becomes evident. Religions have profound myths and symbols of origin and creation. In and through all of these, religions have created and legitimated gender, enforced, oppressed and warped it, but also subverted, transgressed, transformed and liberated it.

Where once inequalities within the Costa Rican household were largely gender-related, recent political and economic shifts have created intra-gender, inter-generational tensions - a generational conflict inside of gender performance. Grown, middle-class daughters often stay in their parents' homes and attend university or work, fostering a situation in which multiple adult women perform domestic labor. The kitchen is a key space where Costa Rican mothers and daughters negotiate changing generational roles, where local social hierarchies are contested, and where new meanings of class evolve (Preston-Werner, 2008).

In addition, the national press offers a stereotypical image of the Costa Rican mother: the housewife. This image does not correspond to the reality of rural, indigenous, black adolescents and marginalised urban mothers, who can not only stay at home and look after children, so as AMA's women who are mothers. As an anecdote, I remember visiting the family of one of my pupils from a remote school in the mountainous area I was volunteering; the mother already had nine children one after the other and was not able to keep them all. Therefore, some went with the grandmother, the aunt and the uncle.

Women have recognised the opportunity from their own resources and processes, of being part of the solution where changes begin. Therefore, an increasing number of rural women are fighting against the structures imposed by Costa Rican culture, which keep them in traditional roles such as mothers and housewives. By doing so, many women have discovered new abilities and characteristics within themselves. Along with this recognition, women have created a space where they can actively encourage the construction of a better future for their family and their community. Organised women have recognised their role within the family and have gained much more respect.

Gender inequity still affects women's lives in rural areas of Costa Rica. Constraints affecting the participation of women in rural development activities in Costa Rica can, therefore, be summarised as:

- Having less access to land and credit facilities
- The patriarchal society and '*macho*' culture, which prevent women from participating on equal terms with men and results in a lack of self-esteem amongst women
- The heavy workload of women
- Limited access to information opportunities, and human rights, for example (IFAD, 2000).

5. 1. 2. Members of AMA and their families

My interviews and my experience of living in the community close to the women confirmed that the majority of AMA members reflected the image of women as mothers.

Out of the 21 AMA members, 18 are mothers; only three women do not have children (María Cristina Volverde Corrales (65), Daisy Fallas Mora (54) and Emérita Castro Mora (63)). On average, women started to have children in their early twenties, just after getting married. Nine women are single, two of them are divorced. Five women are alone with their children. Many of the older women have the responsibility to look after their parents and other members of their family. Old people in rural areas have no pension and consequently depend on their families financially. They do not have much recreational activity. They watch TV (when they can afford one) and look after grandchildren.

Costa Rican people are close to their families. As many participants mentioned, women have an important role within the family. *“The essential is a good family, and if women are well educated, there will be good citizens”* according to Leticia Zeledón Fallas (53). María Cristina Volverde Corrales (65) also thought, *“the woman is the base of the home in a family”*, and Patricia Ureña Mora (35) said: *“I think the woman is the head and the heart of the majority of families whereas the man is the authority of the house”*.

Most of the time, husbands work all day, mainly in farms or in San José and can not spend much time in the house with their families. *“A man in a house does nothing”* according to Rosita Mora Naranjo (40). Most of the women have long days of work too, waking up very early. For example, Beatriz Calderón Mora, a mother of nine children wakes up at 3.30 in the morning. Women look after their children and, when they are young, the mothers do not have opportunities to work outside the home due to the absence of day care. Sometimes, grandmothers help to look after the children. All reproductive tasks contribute to women's labour burden and make life stressful when they have to work outside the house to help the family financially.

Many examples from interviewees show this situation: Patricia Ureña Mora (35), with three children and a husband, who had three heart attacks, is hoping that her children will continue to study. She does not want them to experience her life: no possibility to go to school, as she had to help her mother at home when she was young. Besides, Yamileth Arias Castro (32), in

a relationship with two children, is dreaming of taking music courses, but can not due to lack of time and money. Her daily life is with the children and domestic chores. For Olga Padilla Mora (30), with three young children, it is hard to work away from the house. The only way is to leave her children at her mother's. Finally, Ivañia who works all day in a tourist restaurant is obliged to leave early in a bus and come home late. Her three children are independent and stay home on their own after school hours.

Other women told me they lack independence; Florita (42) for example, is living at her parents' house with Ericka her daughter of six. Florita's father, Antonio, does not accept the fact that she had a child with a married man. Therefore, Ericka does not see her father. The grandfather, Antonio, has still a lot of power over Florita's life and decides everything for his grand daughter as if she was his own daughter.

However, a few members have realised that women's situations in Costa Rica have changed from the past. For Ana Lucasta (57): *"Women are not slaves anymore, they are more liberal. Nothing is like before, where men had all the power. Women have been marching for equality and for their rights"*.

Finally, some of the participants mentioned how men's behaviour could be selfish and have a negative impact on the family. As Florita said: *"I am better off alone than in company of a 'pollo desplumado'"*, (a Costa Rican slang expression, which means 'plucked chicken' and refers to an immature man). Men do not save, and do not spend money for the purpose of family expenses, and sometimes, even sell the land for their personal expenses (according to Beatriz Calderón Mora, whose husband sold the land that his father-in-law offered him). Women, in contrast have shown more capacity to save money and a will towards self-determination and self-sufficiency. It has been long enough that women are seen like key agents of development. In many cases, women have become the heads of their households and become responsible for the family (Fauné, in Ramos, 1995).

5. 1. 3. Men's views towards AMA and the 'machismo' impacts on AMA members

During my research, I was also interested to hear men's opinions about AMA. As much as I could, I tried to talk with AMA members' relatives such as husbands, brothers and sons of

AMA members in order to gain their perspectives on AMA.

While my research investigated whether '*machismo*' had positive impacts on AMA as a stimulus for action and women solidarity, on the other hand, it also looked if '*machismo*' had more negative consequences as a constraint on women. The findings show both sides. AMA was born to react against the male superiority and therefore became a place where women could participate outside the house.

In total, I spoke to eleven men: Ulysse and Oscar Mario (13), the husband and the son of AMA's president Beatriz Calderón Mora; Elvidio, the husband of Emérita Castro Mora; Rafael, the husband of Elsa Mora Bermúdez; Julio Zeledón and Julio César López Zeledón (33), the husband and the son of Leticia Zeledón Fallas; Francisco Sánchez Corrales, the brother of Alba Sánchez Corrales; Javel (58), the husband of Carmen Castro Mora, Antonio the husband of Flora Durán Borbón; Manuel Porras, a worker from the association '*Afaorca*'; and Carlos Castro, an education advisor for the municipality of San Ignacio de Acosta.

All men were pleased to share their views towards AMA with me. For my research it was beneficial to have men's opinions because they provided me with more context with which to understand the lives of AMA members.

Most of the men affirmed that, initially, they were reluctant of their wives or sisters becoming members of AMA when they were invited by the association. However, when they realised AMA members could bring money back home, men started to accept the fact that women could also leave the home and earn money. For example, Elvidio, Emérita Castro Mora's husband, is also a member of the association for elderly people of San Ignacio de Acosta: '*El lugar de los ancianos*'. Therefore, the involvement of his wife Emérita, was seen as no inconvenience to him and he understands if his wife has meetings every two weeks with the executive committee. While some men still expressed insecurities about AMA and preferred that their wives did not work for it (thinking women are just wasting their time chatting and gossiping), many of AMA members' relatives (especially the sons and younger male relatives) now see the positive impact of AMA and also think it would be a good idea to integrate men in AMA.

For example, along with the enthusiasm of the young Oscar Mario (13) to one day become one of AMA's first male members, Julio César López Zeledón (33), Leticia Zeledón Fallas'

son, came to an executive committee meeting on the 23rd July 2009. He was aware of AMA's weak situation and proposed his help as he cared for AMA since the moment his mother became a member in 1980. He remembered coming to AMA when he was young and thought it was a really good project for the district of Acosta. He had new ideas for AMA, like organising a catering service. He wanted to participate as an adviser for AMA, and get some financial help from the government and find new markets. He seemed to be really enthusiastic and motivated to work for its community.

In addition, Manuel Porras (a worker from the association 'Afaorca') came to AMA to explain to the members the process of packing cashew nuts and cacao. He introduced a new machine to the women and explained to them the efficiency of working in a production line. He was very professional and mentioned how women were too talkative compared to men, and, thus, work took more time to be accomplished.

Despite the support of some male relatives, the '*machismo*' or chauvinist male system remains embedded within the rural families of Acosta and continues to have a negative impact on the members of AMA and the organisation itself.

Indeed, some men do not take AMA seriously because it lacks a male presence. For Carlos Castro: *"Associations are great for women as they enable them to stay within Acosta, instead of them going to work in San José. However they would be better off mixed, with men and women working together, because women lack entrepreneurial skills. Most of women did not go to school to learn how to be entrepreneur, and these things are necessary to run a enterprise"*.

In addition, according to Javel Angel Prado, Carmen Castro Mora's husband: *"In a women's group someone is missing, someone who can bring 'heat'. A man has more ability to do things"*. Besides, Ulysse, Beatriz's husband, also mentioned: *"AMA needs men, there are many things that women can not do, for example cutting the grass of the garden is a man's task"*. In addition, Rafael, Elsa Mora Bermúdez's husband, noted: *"It is better to conquer women than to compete with them"*. These quotes show how men's thinking is still '*machista*', as for them, women can not do similar tasks than men. Local men, plagued by '*machista*' attitudes, continue to conceive of women as inferior.

According to Freidus and Romero-Daza (2009, p.684), the term '*machismo*' is a "*prevalent cultural script in Latin America in general and Costa Rica in particular. It constructs a fairly rigid gender dichotomy that wraps together notions of masculinity that include dominance, power and strength, and contrasts them to an inferior femininity associated with domesticity, passivity and obedience*". Male dominance in Latin America includes characteristics such as promiscuity, virility and sexual prowess for men. Therefore, the same authors use the concept of 'heteropatriarchy' in order to define this structuring principle that denotes "*the dominance of both patriarchy that privileges men over women and heterosexuality that privileges and normalises male dominant sexual relationships*" (p.684).

During my stay, I noticed similar stereotypes about being a man or a woman in Costa Rican society. These were stronger in rural areas, where there are still strong traditional values, such as:

- Women cannot work outside the home
- Men need to earn more than their wives, and be the economic earner within their family
- Women should carry the bulk of the housework
- Men are the authority in their families

Furthermore, Freidus and Romero-Daza (2009, p.683) report the voice of a Costa Rican woman: "*A 'machista' attitude stimulates sexual adventure. Imagine this, a man that 'conquers' a woman is considered as 'macho' but a woman who does the same thing is considered a 'whore'*". As a phenomenon, '*machismo*' undoubtedly exists all over the world. However, the exact shape that it takes depends on the context and the culture in which it exists.

In the village, my neighbour Caroline Chaverri (27) provided an example of how male domination can still occur. In 2009, she was in her late twenties, married for the second time, and obliged to stay at home by her husband even though she wanted to join AMA. He could not accept a situation where she could spend time out of the house on her own. She felt bad about it and wished she could have more freedom.

Alcoholism is another problem. Men living in rural areas make their own 'guaro' (strong alcohol from sugar cane molasses) at home. A few women mentioned how hard it is to live with a drunken husband or father. Some women still face some issues, as Beatriz Calderón Mora (54) mentioned:

"I had a lot of problems with my husband, I was not allowed to leave the house, and I have fought against it. Before, my husband had a problem with alcohol, but he has changed. He used to smoke and drink a lot. This was a reason why I started to leave the house and go working in AMA, I was looking for alternatives'. At one stage I wanted to leave, but where? It was my house. I told him to go and that I would look after the children on my own. Then he started to ask me for some money. I was scared he would assault me or maltreat me. I said to him: "I will give you some money but no more, no more, do not ask me for money anymore, I know you are spending it on guaro!" He also asked my son Jorge, and he used to help him too".

Also, Patricia Ureña Mora (35) told me that her mother Angela Mora Bermúdez (54) used to work in AMA to bring money back home in order to eat because her father would spend the money he earned to buy alcohol.

According to Emérita Castro Mora (63): *"'Machismo' is power, the man wants all the power, it is a culture. 'Machismo' will never stop to exist, it will always be present".* Eulalia Sánchez (61) also confirmed the same idea: *"The 'machismo' will always exist. A man 'machista' is jealous and possessive, like if the woman cannot be superior to the man".*

Some others have expressed the reasons and causes of male chauvinism. According to Javel Angel Prado (58), Carmen's husband: *"'Machismo' comes from the parents. My parents were really strict and discipline was rule number one at home. I am thankful to my parents for the education they gave me, because nowadays, parents are not rough or strict enough with their children, therefore children are behaving badly. Parents are not doing their roles anymore and there is not much dialogue between fathers and sons. There is no education within families and therefore, the problem is that young people get married quickly and have kids too soon, then couples separate: there are more divorces than there used to be ".* Most of the women of AMA also think that parents are responsible for the image they give to their children; *"Male chauvinism comes from one's education. Men learn 'machismo' at home from their father"* Rosita Mora Naranjo (40).

According to Cecilia Mora Badilla: *“The ‘machismo’ is everywhere, even in songs, and this shows a lack of respect towards women. Here in Costa Rica it is not as strong as in Mexico, we are lucky”*. Rosita Mora Naranjo (40) also mentioned: *“I am against men in AMA, due to ‘machismo’. There will be constant rivalry between men and women working together. Involving men will bring more problems later, they are ‘pendejos’”*, (a Spanish slang word which means lazy).

However, being ‘machista’ is also part of women’s attitudes. Alba Sánchez Corrales, a former president of AMA, for example, believes that women have the power and stir up troubles with men. She stated: *“Women are guilty; they are the cause of ‘machismo’. Women strengthen it, because they are scared of men. I am a woman ‘machista’, I like ordering and telling people what to do! My mother was really ‘machista’. I think women promote and provoke ‘machismo’ and therefore violence. For example, if a man comes back late at home, the wife starts to incite her husband and therefore the situation turns bad. If a man was cheating on me I would do the same, and this is provocation”*. Alba’s attitude might explain why in AMA’s early days when she was the president, the association was successful. According to Kindon and Odell (1990), Alba had almost complete control over the association’s money.

‘Machismo’ often presents bad connotations. However, ‘machismo’ should not be seen as a negative characteristic of men at all times. ‘Machismo’ can also be perceived as a good behaviour. Indeed, ‘machismo’ also consists of men being ‘caballeros’: it has a gentlemanly aspect. Men can have a gallant attitude: opening doors to women, or inviting women on dates, and so forth.

Finally, Beatriz Calderón Mora (54) said: *“in order to work towards equity, it must begin at home”*. Though, it remains a challenge as change can take lots of time to occur. In a highly male chauvinistic society, there is a need for children’s education without sex distinctions. Then, Beatriz added: *“Thanks to AMA, I learnt to tell my children: “Clean the house!” They would answer: “Why mama? I am a man”. And I would answer: the house is for everyone so everyone needs to clean it. Everyone eats so everyone has to wash the dishes”*.

5. 1. 4. Members of AMA and their community

Most of the women mentioned a change of mentality in this generation compared to during the lifetime of their mothers. During the interviews, members said that before, women could not leave the house (they had no rights), and that the '*machismo*' system was stronger than today, except for a few women, such as Caroline Chaverri, who I mentioned before ('*machismo*' may have lessened but it is still happening).

Since its formation, AMA's aim has been to help women of the community as María Cristina Volverde Corrales (65) shared her thoughts with me: "*AMA has improved the perception of women in the community. The village can see that women can work, and that there is an association that helps the women who stay in the region, who do not go to San José to work*". Leticia Zeledón (53) explained AMA's achievements: "*I felt good belonging to AMA due to the fact that we were helping many women to get independent and leave aside their doubts and fears. In addition, I liked the objectives of AMA: create work for women, especially women from female-headed households, and therefore fight against the migration of these women to San José where they were abused and exploited. What I liked about AMA is the enthusiasm and the perseverance of the women to move forward*".

One objective of AMA was to raise women's status in the community of San Ignacio de Acosta as well as improve their economic outlook. Just like the experience of a market women's cooperative in Nicaragua sponsored by FUNDE (*Fundación Nicaraguense de Desarrollo*) (Bruce, in Leonard, 1989), women of AMA describe their new roles, opportunities and responsibilities, as providing them with:

- More control over their lives
- Greater influence over decisions in the household
- A stronger sense of their rights to access the services from the community
- The resources to invest in their children's education
- Increasing pride in their occupation, and desire to encourage their daughters to become market women
- Ways to improve their community and help it become a good place for their children to grow up.

In San Ignacio de Acosta, in the last 30 years, as National institutions, the municipality of Acosta and the local Church helped to open up access to credit and investment to local women; it gave them a voice in the community. Indeed, market women's cooperatives, like AMA, express the women's point of view within the community. Local women can in theory work to insure that their priority needs are met.

Finally, the process of establishing a cooperative is in essence a process of building social contacts among members and developing the confidence of individuals. However, the cooperative must produce rapid and tangible results in order to be successful.

5. 2. Current situation of the AMA organisation and its impacts on members

5. 2. 1. Status of the AMA organisation in 2009 compared to 1990

In 1990, AMA was better off in many ways than today. The organisation counted just over 70 women members, of which 12 worked part-time in jam production (30 hours a week from 7a.m. to 7p.m. Monday to Friday, and 7a.m. to 12p.m. on Saturdays). In addition, AMA had strong links with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Women, the Centre for Women and Families, which supported the association. CECODERS and ASONAGAF also helped AMA financially (Kindon and Odell, 1990).

Currently, in 2009, AMA is no longer supported by any kind of external institution. Only a small group of five women (out of 21 members) are working in jam production or production of cashew nut packaging (see Fig. 5.1). The president is the only one who comes to AMA every day. Workers come when work is needed (sometimes three to four days a week, for five hours).

More positively, in May 2009, Beatriz Calderón Mora opened a café/restaurant, with some financial help from her family. By the time I felt, it had become a success for AMA. Beatriz, along with Julie, Carol and Vanessa (three relatives of Beatriz) are employed in this small business. Open from 6.15 a.m. to 7 p.m., many local clients are now coming for drinks, breakfast and lunch. Traditional local food is offered on the menu. AMA is now waiting the new clinic to open opposite their building and hope that it will bring more clients into the café.

Figure 5.1: AMA members working in the factory (2009)



Beatriz labelling guava jam containers



Olga and Florita labelling cashew nut cans



Leticia weighing cashew nut containers



Olga, Patricia and Florita putting cans into boxes



Beatriz and Norma cutting pineapples

Source: The author

Most of AMA members are sad to see AMA's current situation. They love their association and hope one day it can become as successful as it has been in the past. For example, Alba Sánchez Corrales, the previous president, mentioned how sorry she felt when she came back to AMA and saw the state of the association: *"Last time I visited AMA, I felt really bad, the association was completely disorganised as if it was abandoned"*.

The following table provides an understanding of the current situation of AMA's jam production. It gives AMA members a summary of the strengths, issues and solutions for their jam production.

Table 5.1: Current situation of AMA's jam production (2009)

	Strengths	Problems/weaknesses	Solutions
Product	Own brand. Own recipes. Own buildings so there are not much production expenses.	Every woman should know the recipe of the product, and not just a small group. Lack of quality control in the production process.	More motivation. Each member should share the same mission and vision of the association. Integrate persons who have degrees and the knowledge to be in the assembly of the association. Some members should look at the quality control of the product and at its presentation.
Price	A diminution of cost in the distribution process.	Prices Increase. Bad conception of production expenses.	Buy new equipment. Maintain the equipment. Increase accounting knowledge
Promotion		They do not have any knowledge in promoting AMA (publicity). They do not participate in markets anymore like they used to.	Create publicity (radio, television, advertisements, etc). Make visits, participate in markets and expositions.

Source: The author

In addition, appendix 8 provides results from a business cost benefit analysis of AMA's jam production made by students of the National University of Costa Rica in 2004. These students were doing research with AMA to complete their degree in agriculture science. They studied the process of transformation of tropical fruits in the production of jam for AMA's association. It gives a better understanding of AMA current status with the jam production.

Finally, in August of each year, AMA participates in the *'feria'* (village festival of San Ignacio de Acosta). On August 9th 2009, five members of AMA went to sell their jam in a stall, in a market specially organised for the event. Members were happy to promote their products and share some time with the community of San Ignacio de Acosta.

In addition, the women want to organise raffles to get enough money for AMA members to go on an excursion for the 30th anniversary of the association in May 2010.

5. 2. 2. AMA's achievements and strengths

Many of the women mentioned how they loved AMA for enabling them to change their lives or empowering them in many different areas. Flora Duran Borbón (65) for example, talked about how AMA helped her to find new opportunities in her life: *"Belonging to AMA gave me a chance to learn and improve myself. I was able to earn a little money and therefore help financially in the house. I also like the friendship in AMA"*. Norma Mora Vargas (52) also explained why AMA gave her the chance to get an education: *"I learnt how to feel more confident about myself after attending all these courses from AMA"*. And Rosita Mora (40) commented on her incentive for being part of AMA: *"My motivation in AMA was to find a possibility to work. And I also learnt how to share with others"*.

Together these women became conscious that they had value as a person, and that they shared similar problems and insecurities. In fact, Patricia Ureña Mora (35) asserted that: *"What most motivated me to join AMA was the participation in a women's group full of enthusiasm with a strong will to better ourselves"*. Along with Florita Abarca Durán (42) who communicated that: *"I was motivated to work with AMA because it is a mutual effort where everyday individually and collectively I felt more powerful. What I like the most about AMA is the fact that we are all united together, therefore we can feel like a big family"*.

All members wanted to get together for a good cause. Emérita Castro Mora (63) declared: *“In the first years of AMA, I felt really good, as I could help women in AMA and get lots of knowledge for myself”*. Angela Mora Bermúdez (54) also affirmed her enthusiasm for being a member of AMA because she could broaden her experiences: *“I became a member of AMA so as to have the power to leave home and the routine of the house”*. Carmen María Castro Mora (73) explained why she cares for AMA so much: *“From AMA I received much friendship, motivation and self-improvement, I could learn a lot from discussions and therefore feel good with a higher self-esteem. It makes us aware that we count a lot as women, mothers and wives. To me, AMA is like a second home”*. Clearly, many women feel very strongly about the organisation.

AMA also provided benefits to its members like Elsa Mora Bermúdez (56): *“What I like about AMA is that women can work without having to travel far from home and therefore can still care and give good attention to their families. In addition, this association allowed me to grow and overall feel more sure and confident about myself”*. While Daisy Fallas Mora (54) confirmed how in the past AMA had brought benefits to herself but also the women of the community in general: *“At one time I felt proud and happy to belong to this group. We could bring to the development and wellbeing of the women in the community”*. Nowadays, Daisy and many members wish to see the association they love like it used to be.

For some women, the opportunity to earn an income has been important as a means of economic and social autonomy. Carmen María Castro Mora (73) stated how good she felt about feeling useful: *“As I earn some money, I felt more powerful and proud of myself”*. Emérita Castro Mora (63), her sister also strongly affirmed this by saying: *“The pros of AMA were the experience and the satisfaction of having done something, and getting the knowledge of women’s rights that I did not know before. I also learnt how to educate men”*.

Finally, Beatriz Calderón Mora (54), (the president of the association, 2009) expressed her feelings about AMA and how the organisation has helped in her life: *“I have had so many benefits for my personal development from AMA that today, I have functions I would have never dreamed of before. It is an apprenticeship every day and what I have liked the most about AMA is the solidarity. AMA was a hobby, a distraction, a place where I could learn and participate and share with others. I learned many things, like women’s rights. I learn a lot about myself. I have started to feel useful”*. Besides these points, when I asked her how her

life would have been, if she had stayed at home and if AMA had not existed. She told me: *“I imagine I would have been like an old and fat woman, like my ancestors, or like my sister Rosa, who subjugated herself to her family; cleaning and ironing. And her husband has been worse than mine. She married him at 15 years old. I told her to not marry him. I was 17 when I married my husband; I was a bit more mature. And 10 years ago, Rosa told me: “why did I marry so young? I wished I would have gone working with you, I would have been luckier””*.

5. 2. 3. Issues remaining within AMA

While clearly there have been positive impacts, AMA shows weaknesses and members have to face many challenges. Nowadays, some women have realised AMA is not working as well as before and as Lorena Mora Vargas (42), they miss AMA’s early successful days: *“I remember that during the general assemblies, it was like a big party where all of us shared a nice moment together”*. In fact, AMA is not what it was a few years ago. AMA used to offer more job opportunities for women of Acosta (Kindon and Odell, 1990).

The history of AMA’s employment and membership (see Table 2.8, p.25) shows that the number of AMA members has been dropping since the early 1990s. AMA offered much more opportunities for employment when Kindon and Odell went to Acosta in 1990. They also had the possibility to benefit from training courses (i.e. food processing).

Some members clearly mentioned the negative aspects of belonging to the association. Lorena Mora Vargas (42) revealed the problems of working in AMA: *“Sometimes, we’ve needed to leave AMA for a while, not because we do not like it, but because we are obliged to find more secure work”*. While María Cristina Volverde Corrales (65) mentioned: *“AMA is a family, but the women of AMA lack motivation”*. Beatriz Calderón Mora also noted: *“It is necessary for women to be more enthusiastic, money is motivating, but everything costs. As AMA does not have money, members get unmotivated, and it is tiring”*.

The following four points represent the main issues I encountered within AMA:

1. Uneven distribution of Power

Out of 21 members, the power is effectively held by the six women of the executive committee. However, during their meetings (every two weeks), Beatriz Calderón Mora (54),

Emérita Castro Mora (63) and Norma Mora Vargas (52) were the only ones making decisions for AMA. Daisy Fallas Mora (54) did not say a word, María Cristina Volverde Corrales (65) would only play her role of secretary, and Flora Durán Borbón (65) did not come to the meetings in the end due to health problems. Beatriz the president had to do everything on her own (managing AMA, cleaning the building and encouraging women to come working). The team did not work together; and therefore things were harder for the president. Many times she mentioned this: *“If next year, the executive committee does not change, I will not be president of AMA anymore. We need a change in mentality: maybe younger women, more motivated who would help me with AMA”*.

2. Administration problems and financial affairs

During my stay, the women started a new project: packing cashew nuts for ‘Afaorca’, another association. However, there was no contract signed with the manager of ‘Afaorca’, and consequently, the women had to wait to get paid. Workers were resentful and worrying about it. In the end, when the executive committee of AMA received the money from ‘Afaorca’, they decided on a salary of 500 *colones* per hour, which is under the average wage of the area (‘normal’ salary will be of 800 to 900 *colones* per hour; NZ\$1 = C\$298.8 in May 2009). They kept some of the money for AMA and internal costs. In addition, during the general assembly, when the president informed members of AMA’s expenses, the women did not understand where the money was going. Therefore it created a confrontational debate. The executive committee did not help the president to explain to the members how AMA was spending its money, which put Beatriz in a vulnerable position.

3. Communication

There were several misunderstandings in communication issues. Indeed, many women admitted and confided to me, during private interviews, that they did not want to communicate what they felt during AMA’s meetings, because they felt judged, and scared of giving their opinion. Besides which, some of the women were not aware of AMA’s agenda, for example its current projects or work opportunities. Very few members were aware of administrative details. Even though formal invitations for the general assembly were sent to each member, the president had to personally phone each member inviting them to come emphasising the importance of getting everyone together. She also needed to remind the current workers with phone calls to make sure they would come to work.

In addition, AMA still lacks access to the Internet, as they do not have a computer. They were planning on buying one when I left, however, many members in the executive committee did not see the purpose of having a computer. Very few knew about the advantages of this ‘new’ technology and most of them did not want to spend money on such expenses.

4. Human relationships within the association

Women did not know how to work as a united group. Within projects, there were problems due to the lack of responsibility taken by members. For example, instead of helping others by explaining how to do a task properly, a strong sense of pride kept members from explaining to other members how things could be done more efficiently.

Elderly women sometimes tried to victimise younger members due to their lack of experience in AMA and lacked respect towards them. Some members criticised others and there was a lot of gossip. No one wanted to take responsibility and blamed others. There was a lot of pride and selfishness.

According to Kindon and Odell (1990), these issues were also common in 1990, which is why Margarita Castro Campes, a national facilitator from ASONAGAF, came to AMA and did a scene of workshops on ‘working together’ with AMA members for six weeks.

Finally, concerning the details of AMA logo I painted on the façade, there were issues about whether or not to keep the baby in the arms of the woman. Some members said it was too old fashioned, conservative and ‘*machista*’ to keep an image of a woman as a mother with a baby. These members proposed two different symbols for AMA, a woman working with a man, or a group of women working. However, the executive committee did not accept these changes. Most of the reasons were due to the fact that four of the women making decisions held strongly traditional attitudes which differed from the new generation of younger members, and said: “*we shouldn’t change AMA logo, since the beginning it has been like this*”. It was a confrontational decision to take. However, at the end they loved the result: their building had regained its identity.

5. 2. 4. Members' views during participative workshop

During the general assembly (see Fig 5.2), women had the opportunity to express their views in a participatory workshop, about AMA's situation and future.

Figure 5.2: AMA members during the general assembly on May 13th 2009



General assembly with AMA members



Focus Group: Olga, Angela, Patricia, Leticia, Flora, Nieves, Ana, Daisy, Regina, Emérita. Mothers and Children

Source: The author

Participants' answers to the question 'how would you imagine AMA in 2020?' were:

"Like an enterprise with men and women, young and older people, making Acosta an example for the rest of the world", or "I would like AMA to be successful for women who fight against their condition".

During this participatory activity, members also had to think about 'what are the courses they would like to ask for from the National Institute of Apprenticeship (INA)'. Many ideas of new training arose:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| - <i>"Family education courses</i> | - <i>Sawing</i> |
| - <i>Beauty</i> | - <i>Computer courses</i> |
| - <i>English</i> | - <i>Handicraft</i> |
| - <i>Cooking</i> | - <i>Interior decoration</i> |
| - <i>Baking</i> | - <i>Painting/ drawing</i> |
| - <i>Woodcraft</i> | - <i>Jewellery making"</i> |
| - <i>Clothes painting</i> | |

Finally, when members were asked if they would like to include men in AMA, some expressed that such a change would be positive, one example would be Carmen Castro Mora: *"A man has a better mind to be a leader and a manager"*. A few mentioned their disagreement and commented: *'To include men in AMA we need to change the statute'*. Angela Mora Bermúdez disagreed but said: *"We might have to take the risk to include men in AMA for the association to progress and evolve. If we never take risk, AMA will never go anywhere"*. Others agreed: *"God made us men and women so we could love each other, and collaborate together with different thinking, but with a similar ideal, that everyone is a good person"*.

This following table shows the transcriptions and translations of the answers of AMA members focusing on AMA's new projects. Participants wrote their own answers directly on post-its and stuck them on the wall.

Table 5.2: Results from the participative workshop (May 2009)

Questions Answers	What do to?	Who benefits?	Who is responsible for making it happen?	Who are the contributors?	What resources are necessary?
Participants' ideas written on post-its:	<i>Find new projects</i>	<i>Economic gain for the family</i>	<i>Members of AMA</i>	<i>Members of AMA</i>	<i>An organised enterprise</i>
Participants' ideas and examples written on post-it	<i>- Create an aerobics centre</i>	<i>- Not being afraid, just having the will to get better and better oneself.</i> <i>- Believe in ourselves, and see how we can progress in Acosta.</i> <i>- Learn a new job and participate in the economy of the house.</i>	<i>- Having enough self-esteem to start new projects</i>	<i>- Invite powerful persons who have enough knowledge in making projects.</i> <i>- People who want a better future for AMA, who believe in mixing women and men, and see the progress of Acosta.</i>	<i>- Take advantage of the benefits given by the first women, their effort and the building, for example.</i>

Source: The author

5. 2. 5. Discussion

While the previous sections focussed on the issues enduring in AMA, this section will discuss the remaining issues for women in rural areas of Costa Rica, which impact on the functioning of the association and women's participation within it. The next following points examine concerns about women as housewives, elderly women, women's work, and the opportunities for education.

- **The dilemma of housewives as working women**

Most of the women of AMA who have children, such as Olga Padilla Mora (30), Patricia Ureña Mora (35), or Lorena Mora Vargas (42), find it difficult to achieve all the roles they

need to accomplish. For them, the priority is their families. There is not much of an option to spend time for AMA. The mother of Olga, Elsa Mora Bermúdez (56) can sometimes help her daughter, because paying a nanny would be more expensive than the money she would earn in AMA. Therefore Olga prefers staying home and relies on her husband's money.

More widely, women continue to suffer from many limitations as a result of both economic domination (less pay for the same work men perform), and social domination within the family in an essentially chauvinist society. Together these aspects limit women's fields of activity to household work and family care. As mothers, women have the responsibility for their children's education and claim to be the parent who cares for the upbringing of the children. In most families, fathers are the ones who work all day and come home late. Women do not have the same choices as men do when to decide whether to work or not. Women rarely put themselves first.

The main problem women are facing to participate in the cooperative movement is the simple fact that they are women, as said Benigna Mendiola (2005, p.14): *"We realise that the problem was the 'machismo'... not only of the husbands, who want to keep their wives at home...who do not valorise their work... but also of the bosses and companions ... who do not give them work and who do not think that women should organise themselves"*.

Rural women are part of a work force, often unpaid and invisible, but of vital importance. Some members, such as Daisy Fallas Mora (54), Emérita Castro Mora (63) and Regina Castro Mora (56), for example, have the responsibility to look after their parents and this makes them unable to work as they would like to.

Finally, young women are also somewhat disconnected from life outside the home. In fact, many young women become young mothers, perhaps due to a lack of sexual education. Marianna Fallas Mora (18), member of AMA, Julia Rojas (18), the president's daughter-in-law and Roxana (17), the daughter of the AMA member Angela Mora Bermúdez, already have babies even though they are still studying at high school. These three women told me that being mothers so young would make it harder for them to study at University, without the help of their mothers. They do not socialise like other young women; they stay at home and do housework and childcare. Many older members of AMA were concerned that they would have ended up this way without AMA.

- **Education**

Most of AMA members have not attended high school, and many of them wish they had had the opportunity to study longer. The majority stopped studying at the age of 12, and then had no opportunity to continue their studies as they started working and later on had more responsibilities as young wives and mothers. Therefore they encourage their daughters to follow their studies, even though it means spending a lot of time and money travelling to the capital. Just a few members have completed courses and received certificates given by the National Institute of Apprenticeship (INA) in food processing, and feel proud of it. They would appreciate the opportunity to have other training or craft workshops.

Patricia Ureña Mora (35) mentioned why she could not go to college: *“I had to help my mother at home with domestic duties, as I was the only girl”*. Patricia is now putting pressure on her children, especially on her daughter, to continue her study at university and learn another language. She told me that even if her eldest son is a teenager revolting against his parents’ authority and arguing a lot, she believes that one day he will thank her for her having told him to persevere at school. One thing she said she was proud of, was of being a mother, and therefore wanted to accomplish this role as well as she could.

Florita Abarca Durán (42) also expressed she would never change this phase of her life when she went to high school. She loved it. She is the only member of AMA who finished high school at 18. She is proud of it. However she told me: *“My brothers were encouraged to go to university, whereas me, my parents did not want me to go. So I learnt sewing instead”*.

According to educational United Nations statistics (2008), Costa Rican women still tend to enter ‘traditionally feminine careers’. However significant change has been occurring in the percentage of women who study at universities and then enter into traditionally masculine careers. In addition, when I went to the UCR (University of Costa Rica) and the UNA (National University of Costa Rica), I did not feel any discrimination on campus between men and women. However, women from San Ignacio de Acosta mentioned it was easier for urban woman to go to university, although the UNED (Distance University) offers many courses. They need some financial assistance to be able to study at university.

- **AMA's evolution: comparing Kindon and Odell's findings (1990) with the results of my research (2009)**

Even if on the surface, AMA seemed to be working well and gave this impression to development agencies and sponsors in 1990, below the surface, Kindon and Odell (1990) uncovered some issues within AMA:

- An uneven distribution of power with a hierarchical base of power. At that time the executive committee was generally closed to any ideas that challenged their notions of power and status within AMA: they kept the existing power base intact.

- Administrations problems with the president Alba Sánchez Corrales responsible for most of the tasks: the general management of the jam production, the quality control, marketing and sales, secretarial duties and public relations.

- A mismanagement of money where Alba had complete control over the association's money, and a great deal of money was wasted in administration costs. The wages were calculated by Alba too so no one knew how much she or other members were being paid.

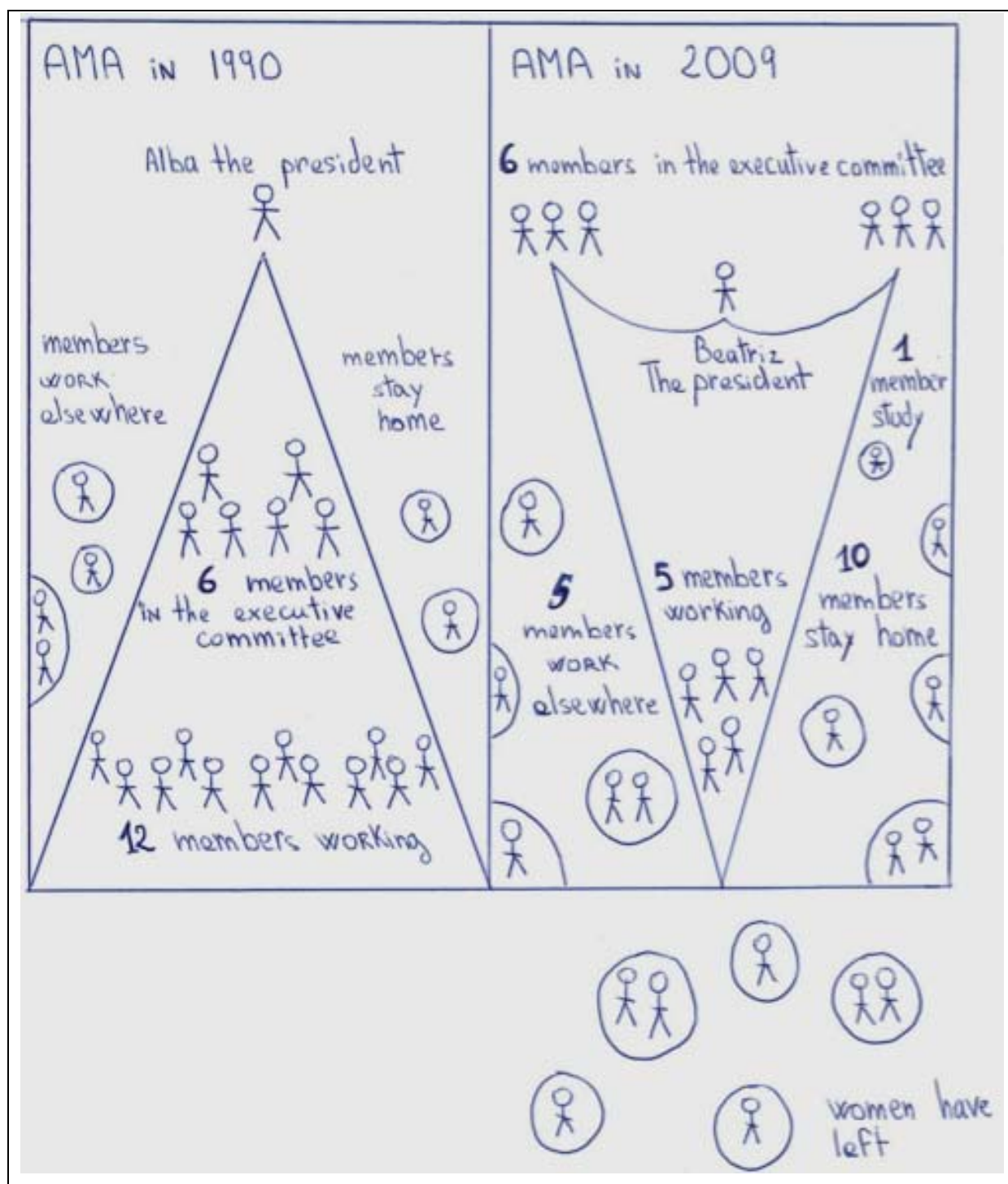
- Communication problems as many members were not aware of important administrative details. Scared of being seen as foolish or critical, few members were confident to questions or challenge the information and/or decisions from the executive committee.

- Human relationships concerns within the association due to problems of bossiness, lack of responsibility, favouritism, jealousy, selfishness, laziness and a strong sense of pride for some members.

Today, even if most of the issues encountered by Kindon and Odell are still present within the association in 2009, a major difference can be noted: AMA is more democratic but the association does not work as well as it used to. What are the reasons for AMA's weak situation?

These following drawings (Fig. 5.3) represent AMA's situation and power relationships in 1990 and 2009, and attempt to communicate my understanding of what happened in AMA in 1990, and what is happening for the association nowadays.

Figure 5.3: Drawings comparing AMA's situation and power relationships in 1990 with 2009



Source: The author

Interpretation of the drawings

The main difference between 1990 and 2009 is in the distribution of power in the association. In 1990, Alba Sánchez Corrales, then president, held all the power. The association was not

democratic but it regularly provided work to 12 members (Kindon and Odell, 1990). At that time, all members along with the president were from the same generation and age group.

However, in 2009, the president, Beatriz Calderón Mora is now in a weak position of leadership as the executive committee (older members in their 60s) has the power to block decisions for AMA. These generational conflicts prevent AMA from being as successful as before, and consequently, AMA does not offer consistent work to its members.

5. 3. Comparing AMA with other gender and development organisations in Latin America

So as to situate AMA into a wider context, I visited similar organisations around Central America, and even had the opportunity to see two associations in South America: one in Argentina and one in Chile. My aim is not to compare rigorously AMA with these associations, but rather to contextualise the data already presented with AMA.

In the following subsection, I first introduce these organisations and later, subsection 5.3.2 compares these organisations with AMA.

5. 3. 1. Presentation of other organisations I have visited in Central and South America

In Costa Rica, Central America

1. '*Afaorca*', ('*Asociación de Familias Orgánicas de los Cerros Caraigres*'), 'Alliance of Organic Families of Costa Rica', in Tabarca de Asserí, San José.

This association buys all the coffee grains from farmers of Acosta and processes them in its own roasting factory. Both men and women are working in the association. It is a good example of a successful GAD approach, which includes gender policies and practices. It exports organic coffee to the United States, and three years ago opened a coffee shop where it sells along with coffee, jewellery and handicrafts from Oxfam. It also distributes jam and food products from other local women groups. '*Afaorca*' has shown much success, as many visitors come to enjoy the homemade coffee because the product is known nationally and overseas.

Figure 5.4: Illustration and products of 'Afaorca'



Source: The author

2. 'Grupo de Giras', in San Ignacio de Acosta, San José.

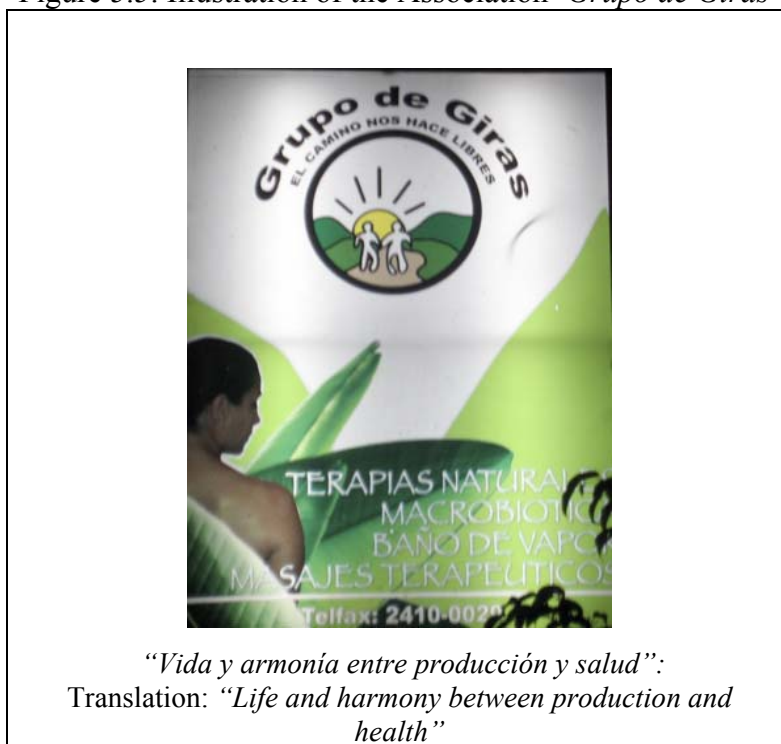
The women of this association process natural plants and herbs into health products. They make organic teas, infusions, shampoos, cream. They also propose massages, steam baths, and offer bio energy consultations, and prescribe *Bach* Flower essences. They advertise themselves as an association, which promotes natural health care and treatments for rural communities. In 1981, a priest from San Ignacio de Acosta, called Alfonso Quirós helped create 'Giras'. The aim was to promote the idea than 'faith can heal', which is a strong belief.

I discussed with Melba, the president of the association, a cultivated woman who went to University - the aim of development, asking her what is good for local women. She said: *"Women's roles have changed due to globalisation. Now women need to work to buy things that before they did not need because we now live in a consumerist world. Our country is losing its Costa Rican identity due to the impacts of gringos and its influence. Powerful countries bring us their ways of living and especially consumerism, which marginalise Costa Rican culture and identity. People are living in a world where they desire and want to possess more. They forget their values, and live too quickly. People do not analyse the changes in society to see if they are good or not"*.

She continued reflecting on development: *"For me, development is about being free and having the control of one's own development. Costa Rica is a wealthy country. However, it is as if this wealth does not belong to Costa Ricans anymore. Everything is for tourists who come and bring money into our country. I believe that if an association is willing to work well, it has to become independent and sustainable. Financial help at the beginning is good but it should not last for ever"*.

Since 1989, ‘*Giras*’ members cultivate aromatic plants within members’ gardens. By using bioenergetics methods that mix traditional popular medicinal knowledge along with modern techniques, they ensure the sustainable use of the earth and the protection of natural resources. Along with promoting health, this association allows women to use their personal qualities and abilities in local development projects. At the same time, members are benefiting communities with their service. In comparison to AMA, this women’s only association is much more successful and the women earn a steadier salary. Women in ‘*Giras*’ are much more united than in AMA, and Melba confirmed it: “*We work because we are a family and it is not really for the money, we enjoy working together. In addition, since I have become member of ‘Giras’ I have grown personally*”.

Figure 5.5: Illustration of the Association ‘*Grupo de Giras*’



Source: The author

3. ‘*Asodema*’, ‘Association of women from Acosta for business development’, in San Ignacio de Acosta, San José.

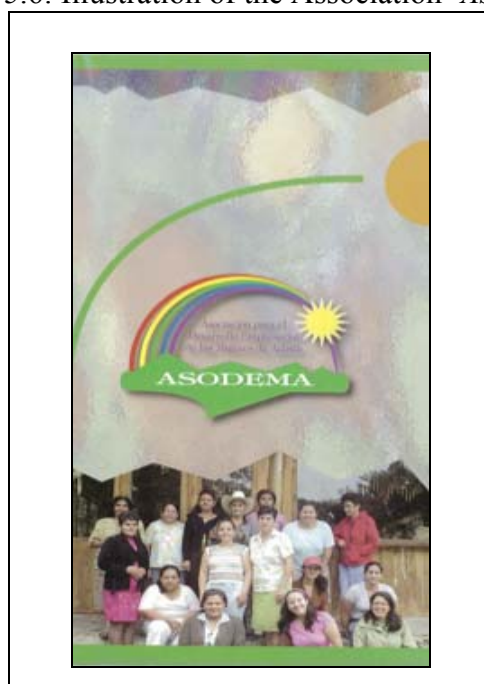
This association was established from two projects in the region on the 8th October, 2004. One project called: ‘*Municipality action for gender equity by helping local and immigrant women*’, and another one entitled: ‘*Potential centre for working women and enterprises*’. ‘*Asodema*’ started with 19 women, no men are included within the association. For Cecilia Mora Badilla, the mother of the president of the association Gabriela Mora, said: “*This place*

is for women, we need to value ourselves”. The association’s aim is to empower women economically as entrepreneurs and workers in Acosta. Their vision is to be a successful working team, who fulfils its objectives and goals with effort, joy and commitment.

These women started with farming goats for three years (in 2006), making cheeses and milk, and selling them in the region of Acosta. However, the project did not last because of ineffective organisation and in 2009; no women were working in any project. Besides, Gabriela Mora said: *“Working with animals was too much commitment and we needed to look after them every day”*, just as her mother Cecilia Mora Badilla: *“Women did not realise that a goat had to eat 365 days a year!”*. However, even if ‘Asodema’ has a similar mission as AMA (the integral development of women of Acosta, along with strengthening women associations for the promotion and exercise of their rights), I felt this group was more motivated than AMA in their search for new projects.

Currently, they are taking training courses from the Institute of Apprenticeship (INA). They also participate in the development of raising awareness, which promotes the personal and collective empowerment in themes like: gender construction, rights and citizenship, organisation and leadership, and communication and organisation.

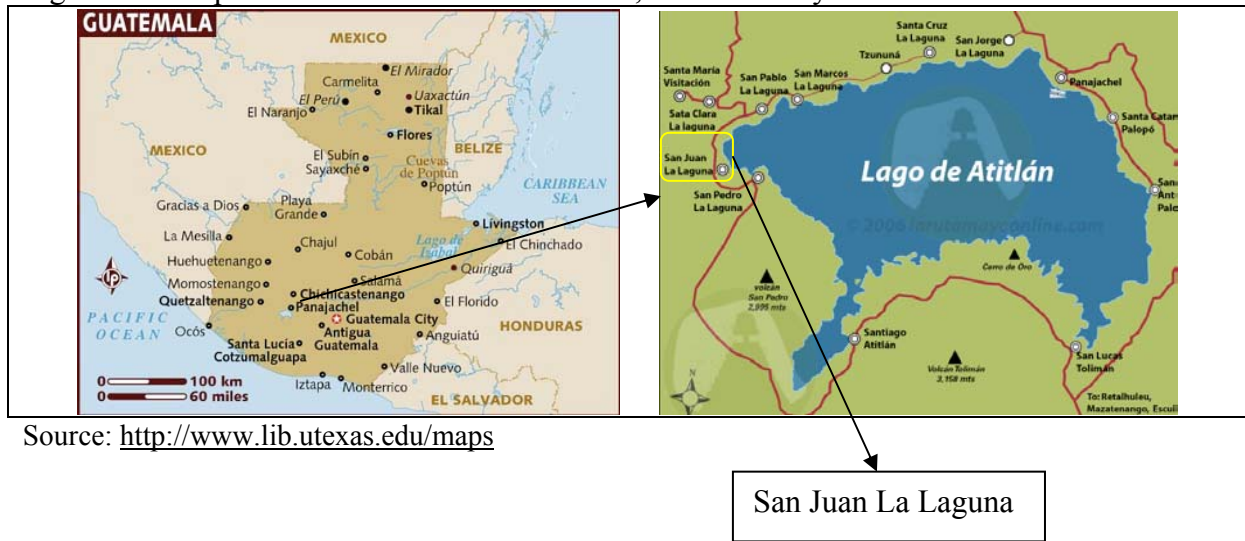
Figure 5.6: Illustration of the Association ‘Asodema’



Source: The author

In Guatemala, Central America

Figure 5.7: Map of Guatemala and Atitlán Lake, areas of study



4. *FUDI*, (*Fundación para el Desarrollo Integral*), is a foundation for integral development, created in 1976. It is a non-for-profit institution that seeks to alleviate the life conditions of communities with socioeconomic vulnerabilities in rural areas of Guatemala. Its mission is to facilitate access to development opportunities to individuals, families and to enable a better quality of life. Its vision is to create and facilitate models of self-esteem for rural development.

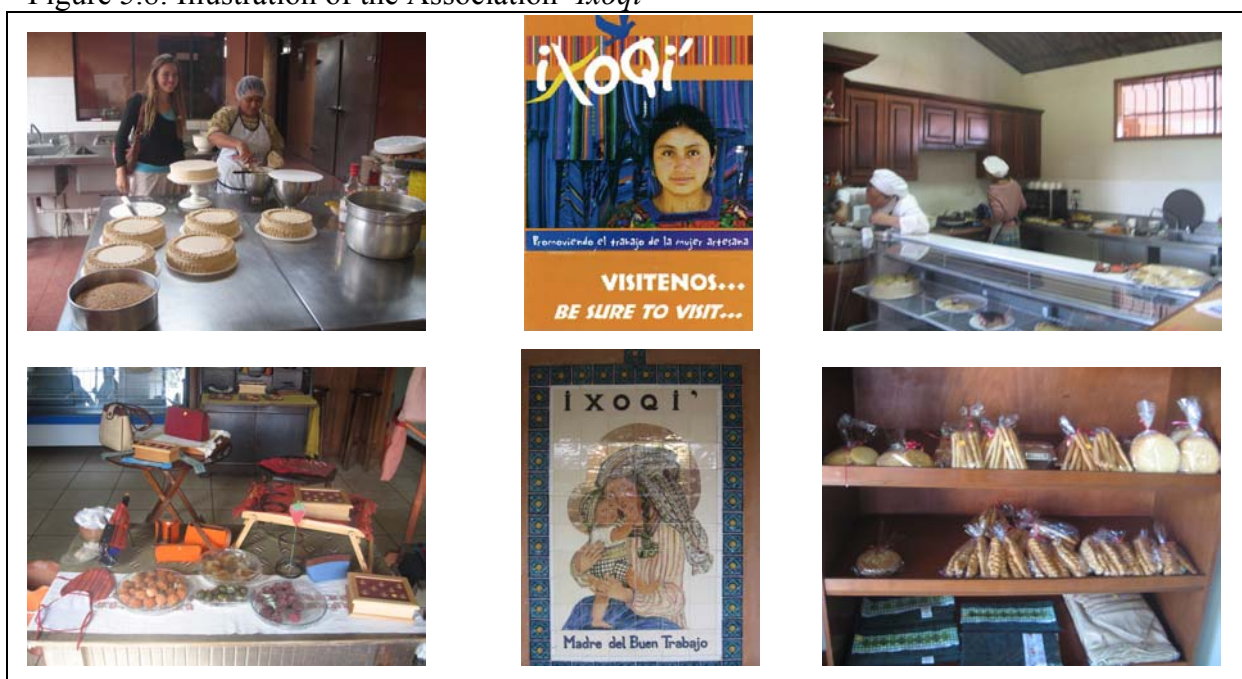
FUDI created an association called '*Ixoqi*' or 'Women' in Cakchiquel (one of the 24 indigenous languages of Guatemala). It is situated on the '*Interamericana*' road between Guatemala City and the Lake Atitlán in Tecpán, Chimaltenango. Established in 1998, it focussed on women living in poverty who did not have the opportunity to go to high school. With a diverse orientation (technical, human and enterprise), their mission is to help women from rural areas to alleviate and improve their living conditions, and participate actively in the development process of their community. To achieve their goal they work in different fields:

- Commercial bakery (bread, cakes and Guatemalan sweets)
- Sewing
- Preserved fruits and vegetables
- Traditional regional weaving of quality (clothes, bags, etc), different from the traditional artisan weaving, so as to export.

In this following quote, the president of the ‘Ixoqi’ explained to me how the association works and its goals:

“Women can earn little money so as to help their family and husband working in the fields. Over three months, 198 students come from Monday to Saturday, for four hours a week. Around 30 percent are staying after the course to work in the association. At the beginning there was some financial help from Belgium and Madrid, Spain. Some of the women are working at home, but some are working here because there are all the machines and the hygiene to process food... Only three women are not indigenous. Most of them are adolescents or heads of their households or mothers staying at home. It is a real necessity. Some of them are suffering from domestic violence. Women are now seeking the sustainability of their projects. There is no micro-credit, because people do not know how to investigate loans that we propose. They sell their products at markets and in the restaurant ‘Ixoqi’ (opened three years ago), where they expose their creations. Women are feeling proud of their work and valued. They want people to visit the factory where they work. It motivates these women to leave the house and feel useful by participating in local wealth generation. It is a whole process. There is a necessity to change the ‘machismo’ culture in the rural world. With time, women are seeing relational changes within their family. Now, we would like to be an enterprise that sells and has many customers, because if we don’t sell there is no project”.

Figure 5.8: Illustration of the Association ‘Ixoqi’



Source: The author

5. ‘Lema’, (‘Asociación de mujeres tejedoras con tinte natural’), in San Juan La Laguna, Lake Atitlán. In this women’s association, founded in 1993, each woman comes one day a week to work, either in the restaurant (two women a day) or the workshop. They dye cotton

with natural tint and then weave it. From this material they make mats, bags, hammocks and so on. One worker expressed her thoughts about the association: *“We are happy to be able to work because there isn’t much opportunity for work here. And we can bring some money back home to help our husbands. We do not have many expenses, just the gas in the kitchen, it is a sustainable place.”*

Figure 5.9: Illustration of the Association ‘Lema’



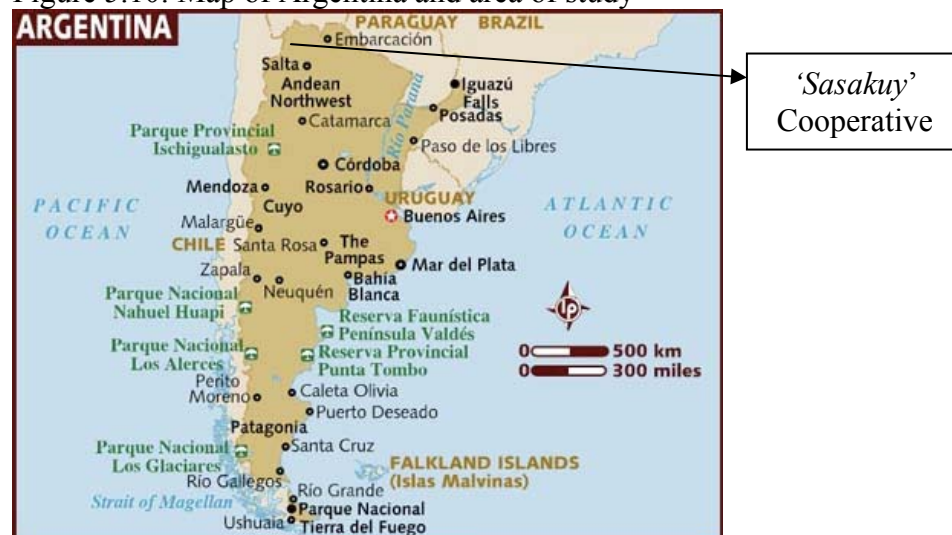
Source: The author

In Argentina, South America

6. On my way to Costa Rica, I stopped in the North Western Argentina; I went to Tilcara, a small village surrounded by mountains and dry desert. I had the opportunity to visit a cooperative called ‘*Sasakuy*’, with 160 local members. It allows local artists and artisans with different skills, such as ceramist, jewellery makers, weavers, wood carvers, clothe designers, etc; to display their work and sell it in the building of ‘*Sasakuy*’. The products are authentic pieces of art, traditionally made out of indigenous material from this region of Argentina. It offers an alternative for tourists to buy traditional handmade souvenirs compared to all the industrial Bolivian products, which are commonly seen in the markets all over South America. The ‘*Sasakuy*’ Cooperative shop in the centre of Tilcara, looks like a museum of

handmade local creations, where visitors can appreciate the artwork and the way this cooperative is functioning.

Figure 5.10: Map of Argentina and area of study



Source: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps>

Figure 5.11: Illustration of the Cooperative 'Sasakuy'



Source: The author and <http://www.artesasakuy.com.ar>

In Chile, South America

6. During my stay in Chile, I visited a village called San Vicente de Pucalán and lived with a family (*Familia Roman Cabello*) for ten days. In this village, 12 men and women have created a group called '*Club de Adulto Mayor*' (Elderly Club). They had different productive projects mostly based on farm and agricultural production. One of them was for women to bake '*empanadas*' (traditional Chilean food speciality) once a week and sell them. This association was a good example of a rural productive project, where elderly people could make some money and participated to the community life.

Figure 5.12: Map of Chile and study area



Source: <http://geology.com/world/chile-map>

Figure 5.13: Presentation of the 'Club de Adulto Mayor' in San Vicente de Pucalán



Source: The author

5.3.2. Where does AMA stand amongst these specific organisations?

It has been really useful for my research to be able to visit eight associations within Costa Rica and other countries. I was able to situate AMA into a wider context and understand the resemblance and distinction from mixed groups that already incorporated men. I looked at their achievements and strengths including if they were already following a GAD approach or not.

Table 5.3: Putting AMA into context: list of the different associations visited

Associations	Status	Project	Current situation
AMA	Women	Food processing and sale	Poor
Afaorca	Mixed	Coffee roasting and sale	Successful
Grupo de Giras	Women	Processing health herbal plants and traditional healing	Good
Asodema	Women	Rural project	On hold
Ixoqi	Women	Restaurant, food processing, and handmade products sale	Good
Lema	Women	Weaving and sale	Good
Sasakuy	Mixed	Handicraft and art products on sale	Good
Club de Adulto Mayor	Mixed	Food processing and agricultural projects	Average

Costa Rica	Guatemala	Argentina	Chile
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Source: The author

I noted many similarities between AMA and these different organisations in their missions and objectives. They all attempt to help their communities and give opportunities to women, and sometimes to men as well, to earn an income. I noticed that the first years of any associations are productive, attract new members and experience success. At the beginning, members are enthusiastic and believe in the benefit of working together within the community. However, like AMA, 'Asodema' members' interests started to wane and the number of associates reduced until the group got too weak to continue its projects. There are

problems of long-term durability and associations such as '*Asodema*' have collapsed, due to the lack of sustainability.

Like AMA, some associations I visited were focusing on women only and did not incorporate men yet, such as '*Asodema*', '*Lema*', and '*Ixoqi*'. As AMA, '*Asodema*' mentioned the difficulty of getting new projects going. Indeed, I attended two group meetings of '*Asodema*' and I noticed it was difficult for them to achieve their objectives. The success of the association also relied on the members' motivation, and the time they were able to give to their organisation. As AMA, being a member of a group seemed to be more a way to get out of their household routine and socialise with other women.

All these associations have projects involving the processing of local agricultural products. For some associations, projects were well organised, and the income earned by the members allowed them a decent living (on local rural standards). In addition, some associations were quite independent and did not need any help from outside institutions. Others however would disappear as soon as financial assistance was removed, and their ability to sustain themselves was dependent on external funding.

Unlike AMA, '*Lema*' involved women in control of the entire production process from raw material to the sale of the final products. And they also participated to the conservation of their cultural heritage through their weaving and handicraft.

Other associations such as, '*Afaorca*', the '*Club of Adulto Mayor*', '*Sasakuy*', and the '*Grupo de Giras*', integrated men along with women. According to their presidents (Manuel, Melba, etc) and their members, these associations had no major problem in working together and their projects were doing well.

As a conclusion, the possibility to compare different associations with AMA gave me a better understanding about:

- What it is to start an organisation
- How an organisation works
- What are common long-term problems
- What might be some solutions for their sustainability

I was then able to comprehend that even if associations had similar aims, most of their differences were due to:

- The financial help they received,
- The ability and motivation of the members to work as a group,
- Their cultural context,
- The type of project, and
- The geographical location of the association (isolation, close access to tourists, etc).

This chapter has documented the findings of my fieldwork. The following chapter will discuss these findings in relation to my research aims and theoretical literature, and offer a conclusion to my research.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSIONS

This chapter brings out the key findings and discusses them in a wider context associated with WID-GAD. The objective of this chapter is to demonstrate how the research findings connect with the literature reviewed in Chapter III.

6. 1. How is AMA positioned and supported at different scales?

This section will discuss how AMA is situated and sponsored at different levels: by government, development institutions, other organisations, the community, members' families and individual members of AMA.

Thirty years ago, at its inception, AMA benefited from training, advice and funds from donations from national and international sources such as CECODERS, USAID and ASONAGAF. Nowadays, AMA does not receive any financial help from any local institutions, the Costa Rican government or international development agencies. There is no support to start new projects or buy appropriate work equipment (i.e. a computer). In addition, AMA does not have anyone who is trained and well informed about new trends in gender and development theory, as the association does not get any assistance, training or recommendations from other NGOs or institutions.

Within their community, people in San Ignacio de Acosta are not very supportive towards AMA. The association is not highly visible in the village itself. And even if the association was invited to participate in the annual festival in August to sell their products, it would not be sufficient for AMA. Perhaps that AMA is not credible enough in the eyes of people in power within the community (i.e. the municipality). AMA may not have adequately asked for support and attention from its community as a means of making it popular and well known. AMA struggles to get acknowledgement and credit from the local population.

Through AMA, women are dreaming of becoming more independent by making their own money. But the low income they receive from their work in AMA (less than the minimum average wage, and for few hours of work), leads to a lack of enthusiasm from the members and outsiders. AMA needs some financial help or better business acumen to better pay their members and make it more attractive for new members to join and work there.

Some families have accepted AMA and believe in it. Amongst the relatives of AMA members that I interviewed, a few mentioned their willingness to join AMA, such as Beatriz's husband Ulysse, and her son Oscar Mario (13). They felt they could contribute positively to the development of AMA. Unfortunately, patriarchy is well embedded in the structures of the majority of members' families in San Ignacio de Acosta. These structures work to the benefit of men by constraining women's life choices and chances (Reeves and Baden, 2000). This strong patriarchy makes the women of San Ignacio de Acosta hesitate to stay members or join AMA. They fear it will bring too many tensions into their family relationships.

The patriarchal system is also a burden for AMA members. They have many other responsibilities and can not give much of their time to AMA: they need to look after their families. Their roles within the household are highly significant for the well being of everyone. In most cases, the constraints of their private lives do not allow them much free time to spend in AMA.

Patriarchy aside, even if women have benefited from AMA in the past and even if they love AMA and wish that it will become a successful enterprise in the future, women are still very individualistic and do not perceive AMA as a united group. They lack companionship. They want to get their own benefits from AMA individually, and therefore sometimes act selfishly. The current incapacity of members to see the strength of working as a team, is limiting AMA's success, and contributes to their failure to bring new projects alive. For example, their lack of organisational skills and team spirit prevented the creation of a childcare project allowing more time for members to focus on AMA: the idea was to pay one member to look after all the members' children, while the other women could work and earn money. I also noticed that the women liked to talk and gossip negatively about other members, trying to put the guilt of failure of the association onto others.

Women are not working regularly in the jam project as demand of usual local customers has decreased and new markets have not been found yet. Women are not as motivated as they used to be. In the 1990s, approximately 12 of the 84 members worked in AMA enterprise. However, nowadays, only five women are willing to give their time to AMA to produce jam or pack cashew nuts. They are not assiduous and do not want any strong commitment to AMA. Women still believe in AMA, but for AMA to be an effective agent of social and economic liberation for all of their members, there is a need for new training of members in order to create new project decided by members themselves. All members are conscious about the need for AMA to 'wake up' from this period of stagnation, not offering much work, just waiting on someone to bring change. Furthermore, maybe AMA needs to consider the option of integrating men within the association, like many members suggested.

The conclusion I can draw is that AMA lacks external and internal assistance at different scales. Indeed, with no exterior financial support, no marketing of the association and not enough free time outside the home for most members, AMA seems to stay in stagnation.

6. 2. Positioning AMA amongst other similar organisations through my findings

Most of the organisations I was introduced to operate better than AMA. The main reason is that they still receive funds from local institutions or governments, other organisations, to support them. Besides, members of these associations have been trained and been given capacity building from NGOs or institutions. Therefore, they benefit from networks and more guidance from external institutions. I also noticed that most of these organisations are not as old as AMA. A few were created within a GAD approach, and benefit from it so far. In fact, according to the other associations I visited in Latin America (such as '*Afaorca*', '*Sasakuy*', '*Club de Adulto Mayor*', see Table 5.3), which directly included men and women together; it seems that it is easier for associations to start directly with a GAD approach, than to shift from a WID to a GAD approach. In fact, including men might have been a requirement of funding.

In most cases, members of these associations are also younger than AMA members. They have received more education, and the traditional '*machismo*' system in this new generation is not as strong as in the lives of oldest members of AMA. Indeed, through education, they have a better approach towards the management of their associations. For example, '*Asodema*'

formulates working plans with a computer, which makes it easier and shows their ability to work with new technology. This enables them to be more organised, and therefore manage their projects better.

Finally, during my brief stay, I did not notice any confrontational relationships between men and women both working together in these other associations. It seemed that they worked in harmony with no sexist power hierarchy amongst members. However, I noticed in most cases that the number of women involved was higher than men.

6. 3. What has been wrong with WID? The need to move to a GAD approach

It is important to keep in mind that gender inequalities are crosscut by other social inequalities such as class, caste, ethnicity and race, which could be prioritised over gender concerns in certain contexts. Has GAD proved to be better than WID?

As seen in Chapter III, GAD emerged from a frustration with the inefficiencies of WID policy, in changing women's lives and in influencing the broader development agenda. In contrast, GAD challenged the WID focus on women in isolation, seeing women's 'real' problem as the imbalance of power between women and men. Although WID and GAD perspectives are theoretically distinct, in practice their application is less clear-cut. Many programmes involve elements of both (Reeves and Baden, 2000).

Analyses and conclusions led to significant rethinking of the WID approach. It became evident that projects focusing exclusively on women (like AMA) implied that the problem, and hence the solution, could be confined to women. For example, programmes that exclusively targeted women were often unsuccessful, since their male partners, whose consent was integral to project success, were not targeted (Asian Development Bank, 2003).

Relying on women as the analytical category for addressing gender inequalities meant a focus on women in isolation. In practice it isolated these women from the rest of their lives and from the relations through which such inequalities were perpetuated and reproduced. The evaluation of past failures led to the major shift from women as the key focus of analysis, to a gender relation focus. This change allowed a movement from a narrow WID approach to a more dynamic GAD approach.

In the GAD approach, the strategic emphasis is to include women's rights, women's role as active participants and agents in development. It also incorporated women as actors with a specific agenda for development. Hence, welfare-oriented approaches that treated women as passive recipients of development were replaced by approaches that attempted to engender development, empower women, and perceive them as active agents in their own right. A GAD approach recognised that improvements in women's status require analysis of the relations between men and women, which implies the analysis of the competition and cooperation between them.

In addition, building equity between men and women works well, when their differences are acknowledged but not stereotyped. Programmes have to focus on education for men, so that men can develop awareness of the effects of their behaviour towards women, and so that they can desire to change this (Chitsike, in Sweetman, 2000).

6. 4. Why AMA has not moved from a WID to a GAD approach yet?

As mentioned above, in contrast to the situation in 1990, in 2009, AMA is in a position of stagnation. Today, the longest serving members have become older and less motivated and can not work as they used to. AMA does not appeal to younger women members as not much work is offered. In addition, most of the women of AMA do not yet want to invite men into the association. They do not understand why and how including men, could enable better gender relations. Different factors might explain this reluctance on the part of AMA members:

- AMA members lack knowledge about new development theories. Women are not trained and not informed about GAD approaches. They are not linked into any national or international network of development.
- The lack of study and knowledge in enterprise management for AMA members limits the development and success of AMA.
- As the association has not changed anything about its organisational framework and has not implemented their own new projects over the last 10 years, the new generation

of women (mainly daughters of first members) are not satisfied and not motivated by what AMA can offer them.

- The current president, Beatriz Calderón Mora, lacks leadership skills and is struggling to keep the group together and find solutions. She mentions how difficult her role and responsibilities are as being the president. She feels pressure from the other members and complains how the executive committee is not supporting her enough in the development of AMA.
- Members of the executive committee, without much motivation, do not accomplish their tasks and therefore they do not help the president in the management of AMA. It is the contrary of what was happening in the 1990s. According to Kindon and Odell (1990), at that time women were complaining about the uneven distribution of power. In fact, the previous president Alba Sánchez Corrales held all the power in decision-making for the association. Nowadays, the power and decisions seem to be more widely and democratically distributed. Suggestions made by other members are now considered. However, the organisation is less efficient.
- Members fear working with men because of hierarchical power relations and the '*machismo*' system. Some elderly and long-term members do not want any change. They would rather stay as they are and think the situation will be worse for women if men are part of the story. For many, sharing AMA with men would mean losing powers of decision-making. The few younger members of AMA and the new president Beatriz Calderón Mora are willing to open AMA to male members, but they can not decide alone for the rest of the group.
- There are tensions between members from old and younger generations: there is still an age hierarchy. The words of the elder women are more respected and given more worth than those of the younger members. For example some members of the executive committee do not understand why it could be beneficial to include men into AMA. They fear losing power in their presence. This reflects the durability of traditional culture, just like the '*machismo*' culture. Consequently, the lack of good intergenerational relations does not enable clear communication, strong commitment, and change. It seems a vicious circle: on one hand, young people do not want to join

AMA, as the association does not change; and on the other hand, because of the lack of young members, there is no change.

- The resistance of AMA's elder members may also reflect their life experiences (i.e. being recipients of more '*machismo*' compared with younger women). The key issue is the experiences and understandings of the AMA's executive committee. Indeed, elder members of the executive committee have experienced more '*machismo*' and therefore are more attached to the importance of a women-only enterprise and space. This attachment dominates and pushes out other possibilities for AMA. It is a paradoxical situation because elder members' resistance is choking the life out of the organisation they love.
- Members of AMA also fear losing a special space where only women can gather and discuss their problems. If they allow men to integrate AMA, this would not exist anymore. It is clear that most of AMA members see AMA as a 'safe' place to be. In that aspect, AMA is also a 'sanctuary' for women in a '*machismo*' society, and not just a place to make money. This shows that AMA has a social positive role for women. However, this specific aspect may lead AMA away from being a sustainable and sufficient small enterprise.

Finally, if I reconnect international policies at the local level (i.e. my level of study), it is clear that AMA has not followed the shifting trends of international development policy, which has moved from WID to GAD. There are many barriers and limitations at different scales (individual, family, community, institutional, national and international), which have prevented AMA from moving from a WID to a GAD approach. Other groups created later on in the 1990s for example, have been following a GAD approach, whereas AMA's association (created in 1980) has persisted in a WID orientation. Development is about change, and in AMA, it seems that the inertia of tradition is stronger than the will of change and therefore development.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter summarises the thesis findings in relation to my research aims and questions. It also draws attention to future areas of research, and the challenges and future recommendations for AMA. It shows the contribution of this thesis. Finally, the chapter gives my reflections and understandings of my experience of being a researcher while living in a rural Costa Rican area.

7. 1. Summary of my findings

My research aim was an investigation into a long-term women's organisation project and aimed to provide a longitudinal investigation of the impacts on its members. It examined AMA's progress over the years, highlighting its positive and negative dimensions, and attempted to answer the question has AMA moved from WID to GAD?

At the beginning, the objectives of my research were to:

1. Document the history and evolution of AMA since its inception in 1980 – paying particularly attention to the period 1990-2008;
2. Describe members' experiences of being involved in AMA and their assessment of its impacts on their lives and the lives of their families;
3. Assess whether AMA has reflected international and national development trends and shifted from a WID approach to a GAD approach over the last 30 years; and
4. Discuss the implications of any shift for AMA's future and its development effects on its members, particularly in light of some similar organisations in Central and South America.

After completing my investigation, my responses to these objectives are the following:

1. The organisation was established in 1980 with five members. Membership peaked in 1990 with 84 members, 12 of whom worked in the jam project. Sadly, the bread project had already finished in 1990, and only lasted two years (from 1987 to 1989). By 2009, however, there were only 21 members. Since the late 1990s, with changes of presidents, AMA has struggled to maintain its success. Major issues mentioned by Kindon and Odell (1990) still remain.
2. Members and their relatives like AMA and its objectives, which are to help and empower rural women in San Ignacio de Acosta. Most of the women affirmed that they would like to work in AMA as a full-time job if AMA could pay them properly. However, the lack of a sufficient salary obliges them to work elsewhere, most of the time far away from their home, like in San José. Even if AMA does not provide its members enough income, it is still a place where women feel free to express themselves. Finally, AMA has become less important within the community, over time as it has not shown much activity. Most of members' families were aware of the situation of the association and were encouraging AMA to find some solutions.
3. AMA has not shifted from a WID to a GAD approach after 30 years of existence. The association has not reflected international and national trends. Most of the women have not realised yet the benefits of working with men, and do not understand how it could enable better gender relations. In fact, most of the women of the executive committee are the oldest members and reflect thinking dominant in first and second waves of feminism. They currently have the power of decision-making and are scared to lose it if men are included in AMA. The younger members, who belong to the third wave of feminism, on the contrary are willing for changes. These generational differences are some of the reasons for AMA's stagnation in WID.
4. If AMA incorporates men in the future and shifts to a GAD approach, new projects might be established and thus, reinforcing the association. In fact, the research I have carried out with other organisations in Latin America incorporating GAD, has demonstrated the advantages of men and women working together. In fact, members did not express any power issues between men and women and their associations were doing well.

7. 2. Reflections

7. 2. 1. On my own approach

During my research, I felt that my contribution to the group was positive. Women were happy to have me around, even if my role was only to observe. My presence made them realise that AMA was important and boosted more confidence. However at times, I felt frustrated, as I would have liked to do much more than what AMA members were achieving. Things were moving slowly, and I had to prevent myself from not being too intrusive and directive in my encouragements, as changes had to come from them. I could only listen and give them my point of view if asked.

This said, I was asked to help them, as they did not have a computer or skills to create a brochure about AMA (see appendix 9), which could be widely distributed. The aim was to advertise AMA better. I also painted the logo of AMA on the façade of the building. I wrote a menu for AMA's café (see appendix 10), and typed all the correspondence for members or institutions (see appendix 11). Actually, I became part of the group and felt like I had many roles: I was a researcher, a member of AMA, a friend, part of the community of Acosta and a foreigner visiting Costa Rica.

In general, participants felt important to be interviewed. At the end it was valuable for my research to have both men and women's views so I could compare their opinions and thoughts on gender and development. As mentioned in my discussion of feminist cross-cultural research (in Chapter IV), I might have been influenced in some particular cases. For example, I became really close to some members while interviewing them such as Florita Abarca Durán. I had to constantly be aware about my position and my role, and therefore control my behaviour.

7. 2. 2. On my views about women and gender development

The study of AMA and its impacts on women's lives has demonstrated that some changes have slowly occurred in their economic status and behaviours since its inception 30 years ago. These changes have also impacted their power in decision-making within the household. The

intra-household relationships are being reshaped little by little, and gender roles redefined throughout education and between generations.

In order to understand better how the world of development organisations works, it was important for me to visit and study other organisations and see the pros and the cons of each of them: why some of them worked, and why others did not, and to compare similarities and differences with AMA. It enabled me to have wider perspective about what was going on within Costa Rica and other countries for women and gender and development.

Despite the disappointment of encountering AMA in a weak situation after 30 years of existence, I had an incredible time learning, researching, and experiencing development processes. This experience taught me how to be a researcher. I really enjoyed interviewing women in their homes. I also was able to make strong friendships and connections by living five months in Costa Rica. I felt disillusioned with the evolution of AMA in relation to the report of Kondon and Odell (1990) as the association is not running as well as it use to. However, I hope AMA members will keep fighting and move forward for themselves, for their families and children, for their community and finally for the status of the woman.

For many women, working in AMA could be definitely more than just a way to earn an income. It could also become an instrument for personal and social transformation. The AMA experience could allow women to craft a new identity as professionals, refashioning their appearance and redefining their role in the community. Alas, AMA has not yet opened new possibilities for women to become agents of personal and social changes. Indeed, this achievement would not be a small accomplishment in a context where gender inequality, exclusion and disempowerment often frame a woman's life. In order to do so, women of AMA would need to maintain their involvement and enthusiasm over time.

I became aware that international theories about gender and development are 'beautiful' on paper but do not necessarily work as well in practice. At the local level, people need more training and attitudinal changes to put in place new development policies. Development has to be wanted by the people concerned. Outsiders can not impose it. Development is about a change in thinking, and in action. People have to feel a need for a change to find a 'better' way of living. However, any change is hard to accept because it is scary. People are afraid of what they do not know and do not understand. As Nelson Mandela said: *'One of the most*

difficult things is not to change society - but to change yourself' (2000). In the case of AMA, the key to moving forward is a change in the members' attitudes and practices.

Overall, it seems that most of women in rural areas of Costa Rica still feel confined by traditional roles. Therefore, it is important to find ways to improve their quality of life. According to Ramos (1995), this situation of discrimination and subordination can only be resolved with increasing consciousness around gender, which implies an increased awareness of both women and men and the will of the majority of both to guarantee their participation and equal conditions. If so, men and women will then arrive to work together and develop cooperation.

Furthermore, economic independence has, together with education, been identified as a key to the emancipation of women and to national development. However, female entrepreneurs lack experience of leadership and command, due to women's generally low level of education and experience of leadership at the community level. In addition, women require personal empowerment skills: assertiveness; skills in negotiating and balancing the tasks that women and men do in the family; time-management skills; and self-awareness. This was exactly what Margarita Castro Campes (from ASONAGAF) covered in her workshops with AMA members in 1990 (Kendon and Odell, 1990).

Changing the roles between men and women, and their attitudes towards each other might be possible. It is important to realise that what is learnt socially is changeable. Within the family, it could therefore be necessary to reformulate understandings and interpretation of what it means to be 'mother'. Reconceiving motherhood should also mean reconceiving fatherhood whereby father, mother and children begin with less stereotyped and more egalitarian bonds. In this context, the family can become an important resource for women stimulating and provoking fundamental changes that help to eliminate their oppression.

"Freedom cannot be achieved unless the women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression" (Nelson Mandela, 1994, p. 32). Thus, it is important to understand the kind of decisions women make, as well as the degree of influence they maintain within and outside the family. Besides, women need to discover the power they possess within their family, and make use of it to improve the quality of life for themselves, their families and their societies

7. 2. 3. Recommendations for AMA and further research

In the future, I think AMA must change and improve certain aspects of their operation if they are to be as successful as they wish to be. First, women need to realise that they have the power to change their own future. To achieve it, they might require a 'catalyst' to work as a team, not individually. They are aware of their rights and have the key resources necessary for positive growth. They are conscious of the possibility of integrating men within the association and maybe in the near future they will do so, therefore changing the status of the association.

Until women of AMA reach a stage when they can truly become equal partners with men in development, special attention to address these women's needs and concerns will be required. In the case of AMA, women ask for training in different fields (handicraft, cooking, languages, recycle project, etc). AMA members, especially the executive committee, also need some training and knowledge in enterprise management to foster the development and success of AMA.

Funds are needed to up date the workspace of AMA by modernising it. In addition, AMA requires a transition period during which the dual approach of mainstreaming, plus special projects and initiatives targeted directly at women, are required to facilitate women's full and equal participation with men in development. In addition, improving the quality control of their products is indispensable to improving their production and satisfying clients.

Men and women should better promote women's work at home and not taking it for granted. It is important assuming the domestic space and reproductive tasks as necessary to the survival of the family, and that should be realised by men and women (Dolan and Scott, 2009). In majority, women decision-making is limited within the household and often in communal groups. Moreover, there should be greater attempts to establish gender sensitive policies, and help local people to incorporate the knowledge, experience and ideas of gender awareness. Nevertheless, it is clear that men are still the heads of households and the major decision-makers in the family. Therefore, many other studies could be carried out to make deeper understanding about these issues remaining.

Finally, further research could be undertaken with AMA and/or with similar development projects concerning gender issues. For example, undertaking follow-up research with the next generation of AMA members: children of current members (with girls, such as Roxana, Tatiana, Ericka, Roxana and Paula, and boys, such as Oscar Mario or Julio), and evaluating whether the association will shift to a GAD approach. In fact, a new executive committee will be elected in May 2010, and might include younger AMA members.

Another interesting piece of research would be to carry out a study focusing on the power of the Catholic Church in gender relations in the region.

7. 3. Contribution of this thesis

Being able to follow the research carried out by my supervisor Sara Kindon and Carol Odell with AMA in 1990, was an amazing and rewarding experience, both personally and professionally.

This research represents a unique insight into the evolution of a women's association over 30 years. It highlights some of the challenges of sustainability women face without external support from donors or family members. It would be desirable to continue long-term study with AMA to see how changes over time may lead the association to be self-sufficient and successful.

In addition, fieldwork towards this thesis helped the women of AMA to reflect and take stock of their situation. I hope this work will provide an example to other women's groups, to help them identify their challenges and reinforce their objectives. Other students may also use my work with AMA for further research.

My hope is that this research will raise awareness about the need to challenge embedded gender inequalities in rural areas of Costa Rica. I also wish it would show the necessity to redefine gendered spaces, to fight against the '*machismo*' culture perpetuated through generations and stereotypes. It is imperative to create spaces where both men and women can interact with each other, and where cultural issues such as '*machismo*' and patriarchy, can be faced.

Epilogue

I am still in touch with AMA and follow its evolution, as I am concerned about its future. When I called the president, Beatriz Calderón Mora on the 27th January 2010, she was happy to tell me that the National Institute of Apprenticeship (*INA*) had come to see AMA, visited the building and talked about new projects. At present, the Institute plans to give two training courses to the women of AMA; one on recycling waste (which is strongly needed in the region) and one on food processing and transformation. These courses will be given in 2010. Beatriz also told me that AMA's café was successful. She mentioned how much I contributed to this move by being there and doing this thesis research. I feel really pleased about their progress.

Finally, I hope to put my time with AMA in a wider perspective. I intend to go back to Costa Rica again and work in development fields. In the future, I also wish to expand my own ideas on approaches to development in a PHD and especially on the role women are to play in our imperfect but unique world.

Appendices

1. Human Ethics Committee approval



Phone 0-4-463 5676
Fax 0-4-463 5209
Email Allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz

MEMORANDUM

TO	Mathilde Hegarty
COPY TO	Sara Kindon, Supervisor
FROM	Dr Allison Kirkman, Convener, Human Ethics Committee
DATE	November 14, 2008
PAGES	1
SUBJECT	Ethics Approval: No 16172, From Women in Development to Gender and Development? A case study of AMA: a women's organisation in the rural village of San Ignacio de Acosta, Costa Rica.

Thank you for your application for ethical approval, which has now been considered by the Standing Committee of the Human Ethics Committee.

Your application has been approved from the above date and this approval continues until 31 December 2009. If your data collection is not completed by this date you should apply to the Human Ethics Committee for an extension to this approval.

Best wishes with the research.

Allison Kirkman
Convener

2. Correspondences: Letters from the organisation AMA

- From AMA president: Beatriz Calderón Mora

San José Costa Rica

16 de Septiembre 2008

Sta:
Mathilde Hegarty

Reciba un cordial saludo de la Junta Directiva de la Asociación de Mujeres de Acosta, AMA.

A la vez, responder a su carta, efectivamente nuestra asociación sigue funcionando con el mismo proyecto de mermeladas de hace veinte años. Cuando estuvieron por acá Sara y Carol actualmente nos encontramos iniciando nuevas alternativas para desarrollar otros proyectos, en los cuales esperamos puedas participar con nosotras. Desde ya te esperamos en Costa Rica y en AMA. Espero podamos mantenernos en contacto para preparar tu estadía con nosotros.

Sin mas por el momento de despide.

Beatriz Calderón Mora
Presidenta AMA

- From AMA previous president : Alba Sánchez Corrales

Alba E. Sánchez Corrales
Bach. Educación Rural
Universidad Nacional
San Luis de Acosta

San Luis de Acosta, 4 de noviembre de 2008.

Señor
Cónsul de Costa Rica
Nueva Zelanda
Presente

Estimado señor:

Sirva la presente para desearle muchos éxitos en sus funciones como representante de este maravilloso país.

Aprovecho ésta para comunicarle que la suscrita mayor, Profesora Unidocente, vecina de San Luis de Acosta, 100 metros al este de la Escuela San Luis. Con cédula de identidad 1-0433-0182. Albergaré en mi casa habitación a la señorita, Mathilde Hegarty el próximo año por seis meses, tiempo en que la señorita Hegarty realizará una investigación en la comunidad con grupos organizados de mujeres y hará visitas a otros grupos de mujeres como por ejemplo las mujeres artesanas de Boruca, en buenos Aires de Osa.

Por lo anterior le manifiesto mi responsabilidad y compromiso durante la estancia de la señorita Hergarty en el país. Adjunto copia de mi cédula de identidad.

Desde aquí con todo respeto le solicito atender esta, a fin de que la señorita Hegarty pueda cumplir con el requisito no solo de ingresar a Costa Rica, sino con el plan de vida que es graduarse en la Universidad de Victoria, donde estudia una maestría en Geografía Humana.

Adjunto cédula de identidad, mi # de teléfono 2410-0591, mi correo electrónico, albasan@yahoo.com.

Sin otro particular se despide de usted atentamente.

Alba Eulalia Sánchez Corrales

3. Information Sheet (Source: The author)



Information sheet

From Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD)? A case study of AMA (*Asociación de Mujeres de Acosta*): a women's organisation in the rural village San Ignacio de Acosta, Costa Rica.

Researcher: Mathilde Hegarty: School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington.

I am a Master student in Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, in New Zealand.

As part of this degree I am undertaking a research project leading to a published thesis. The project I am undertaking focuses on women and development to gender and development approaches, with the case study of AMA (*Asociación de Mujeres de Acosta*): a women's organisation in San Ignacio de Acosta, Costa Rica. It looks at the impact and the evolution of this organisation on the lives of the women working with AMA.

The goals of my research are (beyond producing a research thesis) to:

- Document the history and evolution of AMA since its inception in 1980
- Collect and analyse members' experiences of being involved in AMA and their assessment of its impacts on their lives and the lives of their families
- Assess whether AMA has reflected international and national development trends and shifted from a WID approach to a GAD approach over the last 29 years
- Discuss the implications of any shift for AMA's future and its development effects on its members.

As well as being academic research, I hope that the research will be of use to people working in gender and development and contribute to a better understanding of women's need, roles and positions within the household and the community. I hope I can use this work to inform Costa Rican NGOs, development practitioners and academics about women's and gender issues in development. I also would like to use my findings as a basis for an article to raise public awareness about gender issues in Costa Rica.

This research has been approved by the Human Ethics Committee of Victoria University of Wellington.

I am inviting women working with AMA and women that used to work with this association to participate in this study. I will talk to and work with the participants over the course of 5 months (April 2009 to August 2009) at San Ignacio de Acosta, Costa Rica.

While I expect to conduct some life history interviews, the majority of my observations and notes will be made as working as a volunteer. Information obtained from interviews in Spanish, conversations, and general observation will be translated into notes which I will use to highlight and analyse the impact of AMA into the women's lives. I am planning to interview people for one to two hours long. I intend to make two interviews with each person, one at the beginning of my stay and one at the end.

During these life history interviews, the topics areas discussed will be around women needs, and roles in their family and the community along with their own past. I will also mention their relationships with their husbands and the other women working in AMA. I will talk about their sense of empowerment, the meanings of 'machismo' and the changes in their life since they have been able to work in AMA. Finally, I will ask them to tell me about their future and their aims in life.

I hope that the women of AMA will actively participate in the research process. Husbands and sons will be encouraged to participate and collaborate in the research if necessary.

Responses collected will be the basis of my research project and will be put into written report on an anonymous basis if required by the participants. All material collected will be kept confidential in Sara Kindon office for further research if needed and for a period of two years. No other person besides my supervisor, Sara Kindon, and me will see my research notes. The thesis will be submitted for marking to the school of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences and deposited in the University Library. It is intended that an article co-written with my supervisor will be submitted for publication in a scholarly journal.

Should any participants feel the need to withdraw from the project, they may do so without question at any time. Just let me know at the time.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at matildahegarty@hotmail.fr or my supervisor, Sara Kindon at sara.kindon@vuw.ac.nz, at the School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences at Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand.

Mathilde Hegarty

Signed:

4. Consent form (Source: The author)



Consent form

Consent to participation in research

Title of the project: From Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD)? A case study of AMA (*Asociación de Mujeres de Acosta*): a women's organisation in the rural village San Ignacio de Acosta, Costa Rica.

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions of the researcher and have them answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I might withdraw myself (and/or any information I have provided) from this project without having to give reasons from April to August 2009.

I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor.

- ☐ I consent to information or opinions which I have given being attributed to me in any reports of this research.

I would like my identity to be protected.

Yes ☐

No ☐

- ☐ I understand that I will have an opportunity to check transcripts of interviews before publication.

- ☐ I understand that the data I provide will not be used for any other purpose or released to others without my consent.

- ☐ I would like to receive a summary of the results of this research when it is completed.

- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.

- ☐ I agree to the data being kept in Sara Kindon office (supervisor)

Signed:

5. List of women interviewed and their characteristics

First and Last Names of AMA members	Age	Children	Address	Status
Leticia Zeledón Fallas	53	3	Barrio Auxiliadora calle san Gerardo 25m al sur este del Super Barrio, San Luis de Acosta	Married to Julio Zeledón and housewife
Daisy Fallas Mora	54	0	250m de la pulpería, Agua Blanca	Single and retired
Beatriz Calderón Mora	54	9	3km al oeste de la escuela Fernando de Aragon, Turrujal	Married to Ulysse and president of AMA
Emérta Castro Mora	63	0	Chirracá de Acosta	Married to Elvidio and housewife
Carmen María Castro Mora	73	9	30m del Kinder de Turrujal	Married to Javel Angel Prado (second husband) and housewife
Elsa Mora Bermúdez	56	4	350 m del Super Pozos de La Vereda	Married to Rafael and housewife
María Cristina Volverde Corrales	65	0	150m detrás de la plaza de deporte de Turrujal	Single and retired
Olga Padilla Mora	30	3	400m del Super Pozos de La Vereda	Married and housewife
Flora Durán Borbón	65	3	500m al este de la pulperia La Ortiga, Potrerillos, Acosta	Married to Antonio and housewife
Florita Abarca Durán	42	1	Potrerrillos	Single and working from home (weaving)
Angela Mora Bermúdez	54	6	La Vereda	Married (second marriage) and housewife
Patricia Ureña Mora	35	3	San Luis	Married and housewife
Regina Castro Mora	56	3	Turrujal	Married and housewife
Norma Mora Vargas	52	2	Turrujal	Single and working in childcare
Socoro Mora Vargas	62	6	Turrujal	Single and housewife

Lorena Mora Vargas	42	6	Turrujal	Single and housewife
Mariana Fallas Mora	19	1	Turrujal	Single and student at university
Amable Naranjo Picado	57	5	La Verada	Divorced and working in an orphanage in San José
Rosita Mora Naranjo	40	0	La Vereda	Single and recently unemployed, looking for employment
Ana Lucasta	57	4	Pozos	Single and working as a cleaner in a company in Heredia
Nieves Arias	60	6	San Ignacio	Married and housewife

Previous members of AMA	Age	Children	Address	Status
Alba Sánchez Corrales	54	1	100m al este de la escuela San Luis, San Luis de Acosta	Single and teacher in a rural school and master student at university
Noelly Castro Rojas	38	1	Turrujal	Single and housewife
Eulalia Sánchez	61	6	400m de la pulpería, Agua Blanca	Married and housewife

Source: The author

6. Questionnaire survey (Source: The author)

**Research
Questionnaire**

First and Last Name: _____

Pseudonym (if you wish to keep your identity confidential): _____

Address and Telephone Number: _____

E-mail: _____

Age: _____

Sex: F ☐

M ☐

Married ☐

Single ☐

Divorced ☐

Widow/er ☐

Children (number and age): _____

Education: _____

Which year did you start working in the association?: _____

When did you leave the association?: _____

If you worked/work in the association, how many hours of work did/do you do?

Per day _____

Per week _____

Time you have worked in the association (in years and months): _____

Time necessary to get to your work place (which transport do you use?): _____

Salary (approximately): _____

I wish to participate in the interview confidentially: ☐ yes ☐ no

I wish to participate in focus group: ☐ yes ☐ no

Questions

Why did you become member of the association? What were your motivations? _____

How did you know about the association? _____

What is your role in the association? _____

What did it change in the role you have within the household? _____

What are the benefits and the opportunities of the association for you? _____

What are the achievements and the strengths of the association? _____

What are the problems within the association? _____

How are the working relationships between the women? _____

What has changed in your life since you have started working in the association? _____

What is the use the money you earn in the association? (family, food, house, education,)?
Who controls the money? _____

If you have/had a husband, what does he think/thought of you working in the association?
What about your children, if you have some? _____

What are the impacts on the your relationship with your husband, if you have one, since
you have started working in the association? _____

Do you think one day the association could include men too? Why? _____

What would you like to change in the association? Why? Do you have any idea how to
introduce these changes? _____

For you, what is the role of the woman within the family and within society? _____

How does the association can help women who work in the organisation, women in the community, women in the country and women in general? _____

What would you like for your future? _____

7. Questions which helped me to find key themes in the transcriptions of the participants:

- What has happened to the women and their families in the period 1980-2009?
- Are they better off today than in 1980?
- Is there a lasting impact that incorporates some element of social empowerment?
- Are women more aware of the barriers they have faced as women?
- Have they more say in their children's education?
- Has their development created confrontations with their male relatives?
- What are the gains for the women?
- Business sense
- Familiarity with handling funds
- Recognition of the importance of saving
- Skills
- Awareness
- Improvement in their communication skills
- Confidence/ Mobility?
- Did AMA lead to women's economic independence?
- How much support does AMA have?
- What is the impact of excluding men from the project?
- Is there more friction between female relatives?
- Have men taken on some of women's traditional tasks and responsibility?
- How do men perceive their wife's greater mobility and increased absence from the home?
- Is there redistribution of power within the household?
- Is there an increase in women's status in the community?
- Do men accept the new role for women as a result of the project?
- Do women feel more respect from the men?
- Has men's general behaviour towards women changed? And domestic violence?
- Do men feel threatened by the women's new role?
- How can such projects, which are intended to empower women, be designed and implemented so as to ensure that male involvement is constructive rather than destructive?
- How could this project have been made more inclusive to men while remaining a women's project?

Source: The author

8. Results of a business cost-benefit analysis for AMA's jam production

	Opportunities	Problems/Worries	Solutions
Clients	Increasing population. They buy fruits from the region.	Some clients need to change their diet. Disappearance of dairy shops, more supermarkets (globalisation). Incorporation of substitute products (honey, cream cheese, etc).	Create a recipe for all these persons who need to change their nutrition habits. Sell to door-to-door directly.
Buyers/Suppliers	They give credit.	Natural disasters that lead to climate change may affect the production. The suppliers could increase their prices.	Have different buyers. Offer warranty and security of the product. Negotiate prices. Make and sell more jam so as to buy in larger quantities.
Competitiveness	Jam is made from natural products. Flavour and colour are natural.	A big quantity of brands exists already. They are distributed at national level by big multinational enterprises. They have publicity (radio, television and advertisements)	Emphasise with some specific aspects in the brand, such as the fact that it is made by a group of women. Increase the production so as to sell nationally.
Social	They work for the community.		Increase the production of jam so as to have a better utility for the community.

Source: Calderón Hernandez and al., 2004 in “*Proceso de transformación de frutas tropicales para la elaboración de mermelada en la Asociación de mujeres de Acosta (AMA)*”. National University of Costa Rica, School of Agricultural Sciences, p.35.

9. Brochure the author made for AMA

10. Menu the author made for AMA's café (in C: 'colones')

Menú



Comida

Pinto:	Medio	C 300
	Grande	C 700
Asado:	con picadillo, arroz, frijoles y ensalada de beefsteak, de chuleta, de carne en salsa	C 1800
Hamburguesa		C 800
Perros calientes		C 800
Tacos		C 600
Doraditas		C 400
Olla de carne		C 800
Tortillas caseras		C 500
Gallo de salchichón		C 600
Empanadas:	de papa, de pollo, de queso, de carne	C 500
Tamal		C 300
Chorreada		C 600

Bebidas

Frescos naturales	C 300
Café	C 500
Té	C 300
Chocolate	C 500

11. Correspondence with AMA members: Invitation for the general assembly

Asociación de mujeres de Acosta Unidad, Igualdad, Desarrollo



Asamblea General Ordinaria # 29 13 de Junio 2009

Pensamiento

Vuelo de la mujer

Mujer que perfumas la casa con tu
aroma

Y transformas con tus manos lo que
tocas;

Mujer que dices si todos los días y que
Comprendes tu labor con alegría;

Mujer que cantas a la vida una alabanza,
Y que a los tuyos tejes sueños y
esperanzas.

Mujer que oras, que ríes y que lloras.

Mujer descansa.

AGENDA DEL DÍA

1. Comprobación de Quórum
2. Saludo y Bienvenida
3. Oración
4. Lectura de acta anterior
5. Informes: presidenta y tesorero
y fiscal
6. Presentación de Matilde
7. Mociones y proposiciones
8. Refrigerio
9. Rifas
10. Cierre

Estimada compañera,

Sirve la presente para darle nuestros mejores deseos de éxito en todos sus proyectos y de saludarle en nombre de la Junta Directiva de AMA.

A la vez nos permitimos invitarle a la Asamblea General Ordinaria # 29 a realizarse el próximo Sábado 13 de Junio 2009 a la 1:00 p.m. en nuestras instalaciones en barrio María Auxiliadora.

Mucho apreciamos su presencia que será de gran importancia para la buena marcha de la asociación y así se estará cumpliendo con nuestro deber de asociadas.

Beatriz Calderón Mora
Presidenta

12. Scholarships

- **Victoria University Faculty of Science Award : NZ\$ 3000**

- **NZAID Post Graduate Field Research Award: NZ\$ 3500**

Dear Mathilde

NZAID LETTER OF AWARD (the 'Arrangement')

Programme: SAEG Postgraduate Field Research Awards

Assignment: From Women in Development to Gender And Development? A case study of AMA (*Asociación de Mujeres de Acosta*): a women's organisation in the rural village of San Ignacio de Acosta, in Costa Rica

Activity Code: Departmental

This email is to confirm and congratulate you on your successful application for an NZAID Postgraduate Field Research Award. NZAID wishes to award Mathilde Hegarty of 299 Karaka Bay Road, Seatoun, Wellington (the 'Awardee') with funding up to NZ\$3500 towards the overseas components of your research:

SCOPE OF AWARD

The agreed expenses and living costs are as follows:

1. Expenses

Budget item detail	Cost (per item)	Quantity	Total cost (up to)
Flights International and national flights	\$2160	1	\$2160
This figure includes all taxes.			
Total claim may not exceed this amount.			
Total expenses (up to) NZ\$2160			

2. Living Costs

Item (up to)	Quantity (up to)	Total cost
Living costs based on a daily rate of \$30 per day	72	NZ\$1340

3. Total Price

Cost Item	Total cost up to (inc taxes)
1. Expenses	NZ\$2160
2. Living Costs	NZ\$1340
Total price (up to)	NZ\$3500

- NZ Postgraduate Study Abroad Award: NZ\$ 500

*Empowering
New Zealand's
Education Exporters*

2 December 2008

Mathilde Hegarty
299 Karaka Bay Road
Karaka Bay
Wellington 6022

matildahegarty@hotmail.fr

Dear Mathilde

New Zealand Postgraduate Study Abroad Awards (NZPSAA)

Congratulations! I am pleased to advise that your recent application for a New Zealand Postgraduate Study Abroad Award was successful.

The Selection panel met on Monday, 1st of December, and have awarded you the amount of **\$500**. This money is to be used in relation to your travel to Costa Rica as stated within your NZPSAA Application form and cannot be used for any other purpose.

I have attached a copy of the NZPSAA Terms & Conditions for your records. Please read through these carefully, and if you agree to abide by them you are required to complete the attached NZPSAA Scholarship Acceptance form and return it to your institution's Scholarships Office.

Your NZPSAA payment will be made by the Victoria University of Wellington Scholarship Office. They will be unable to disperse any funding to you without a matching scholarship acceptance form. Please also note that if presenting at a conference, that you should include a copy of your paper acceptance notification with your NZPSAA Acceptance form.

It is important to be aware that if for any reason your trip does not go ahead, that you may be required to repay the funds.

Sincerely



Camilla Swan
Scholarships Manager

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