

## **PM&E and the Empowerment of Producers' Organizations**

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### **Abstract**

The Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) system developed by International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), was applied by the Promoting Changes project in the context of the Bolivian Agricultural and Livestock Technology System (SIBTA), and others organizations of the technology innovation, prior adaptation and adjustments of the methodology for the different rural areas, characterized by having one of the highest levels of poverty in Latin America. The principles of PM&E are oriented towards contributing to the empowerment of the people, organizations and institutions. This article is based on analyses of information about the progress made and results accomplished in processes of implementing PM&E in Small Farmers Economic Organizations. Poverty in the rural area characterizes 82% of the population; extreme poverty is 55%. In the rural area, poverty is explained in great part by the low productivity of the agricultural and livestock sector and the low value of the products on the market. After analyzing the effects of applying PM&E in organizations, it was possible to determine that the methodology contributes to empowerment, primarily in the following aspects: Appropriation, greater participation and levels of commitment of the beneficiaries in the projects; better performance of the service-providing entities as a result of the producers' evaluation; greater knowledge of the beneficiaries about the products, milestones and activities that the projects consider; and farmers' management and leadership capacity enhanced.

**Key Words:** Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E); empowerment; Bolivian Agricultural and Livestock Technology System (SIBTA); Cochabamba. Bolivia.

## **PM&E and the Empowerment of Producers' Organizations**

### **Background**

Despite the fact that the Bolivian Agricultural and Livestock Technology System (SIBTA) was created around an approach centered on demand, which places a high priority on the participation of agricultural and livestock producers in the different phases of a project, the Operating Regulations of the Competitive Fund for Innovation (RO-FCI), which regulates the process of the Applied Technological Innovation Projects (PITAs), does not contemplate mechanisms that permit the participation of the beneficiaries during the process. The PITA's M&E system continues to follow a "traditional" approach, where project beneficiaries are limited to a passive role of providing information.

As a way of supporting SIBTA and other R&D programs, while contributing to the empowerment of producers' organizations, the Promoting Changes Project (FOCAM<sup>1</sup>) has promoted the implementation of PM&E in demander organizations of the PITAs, using "action training."

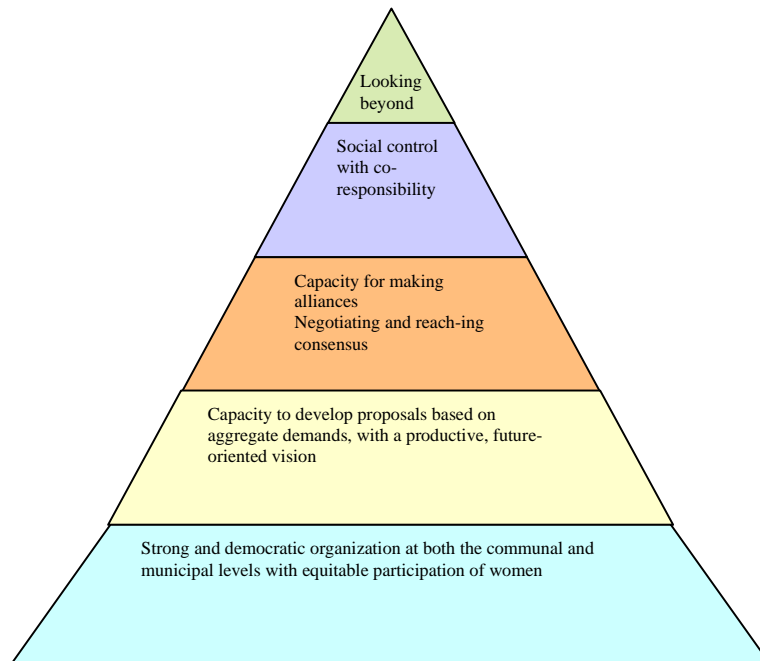
Empowerment is a process of self-determination, whereby the people or communities gain control over their own lives. It involves a process of conscientization (becoming aware of all the factors that influence people's lives) and liberation (gaining power to decide about their own destiny) (WHO 1998).

Studies carried out by PADEM (2003) regarding the empowerment of small farmers' and indigenous organizations (OC-I) formulate a series of considerations. Some indicators of empowerment proposed by this institution are the capacity of the organizations for:

- Strengthening themselves, developing their representativeness and internal democracy
- Participating effectively and with proposals in strategic planning exercises
- Negotiating with other institutions and actors to make decisions that favor not only their own sector but the others as well
- Developing a sense of co-responsibility and belonging to the municipality, which is expressed in the real and constructive exercise of social control of municipal management

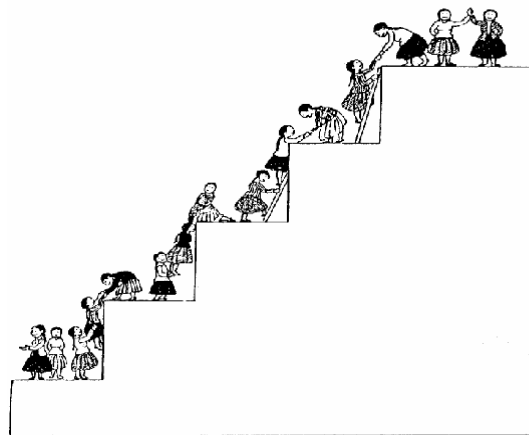
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<sup>1</sup> FOCAM seeks to balance the demand for agricultural research from low-resource farmers with the supply of agricultural and livestock research through the implementation of PM&E in the market for national agricultural and livestock technology innovation. The PM&E methodology proposed by FOCAM was developed by the International Center of Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) (Hernandez et al. 2000) and adapted to meet the Bolivian context.



*Figure 1. Pyramid of empowerment proposed by PADEM (2004).*

The concept of empowerment is directly related to that of participation. At higher levels of participation, there are greater levels of autonomy and empowerment (Fig. 2)



**Figure 2.** Ladder of participation showing levels of participation from the nominal to decision-making, equivalent to empowerment.

## Objectives

- Characterize the context where the PM&E methodology was implemented
- Determine indicators of empowerment
- Identify the relevant contributions of this methodology to the empowerment of small agricultural and livestock producers' organizations

## Methodology

This article is based on analyses of information about the progress made and results accomplished in processes of implementing PM&E in Small Farmers Economic Organizations (OECAs) that are demanders of PITAs, promoted by SIBTA and financed by the FDTAs (FDTA-Valleys) and in projects of the Services and Technical Assistance Program (PROSAT), supported by the Prefecture of the State of Chuquisaca, Bolivia.

## Results

### *Social context*

According to the Government of Bolivia (2001),<sup>2</sup> the country has one of the highest levels of poverty in Latin America. In 1992 data from the Population and Housing Census revealed that 70% of the population did not have their basic needs met; and at the end of the nineties, 63% of the population had family incomes under the poverty lines (Table 1).

**Table 1. Percent poverty and extreme poverty according to area of residence.**

<i>Area</i>	<i>Nov. 1999</i>	<i>Nov.-Dec. 2000</i>	<i>Oct.-Nov. 2001</i>	<i>Nov.-Dec. 2002 (P)</i>
<b>POVERTY</b>				
<b>Bolivia</b>	<b>62.03</b>	<b>65.47</b>	<b>64.39</b>	<b>64.60</b>
Urban	51.36	54.47	54.28	53.94
Capital	46.36	52.03	50.54	51.01
Rural	80.12	84.54	81.06	81.99
<b>EXTREME POVERTY</b>				
<b>Bolivia</b>	<b>35.84</b>	<b>39.17</b>	<b>37.29</b>	<b>36.77</b>
Urban	23.51	27.93	26.18	25.71
Capital	20.66	25.69	22.28	23.94
Rural	56.72	58.66	55.60	54.78

*Source: MECOVI survey<sup>3</sup> (in Casazola 2003).*

<sup>2</sup> Bolivia: Estrategia para la reducción de la pobreza. Diálogo Regional de Política.

<sup>3</sup> This information comes from a continuous survey of households/living conditions that forms part of the program for improving surveys and measuring living conditions (MECOVI); data gathered by the National Institute of Statistics (INE) (INE et al. 1999).

Poverty in the rural area characterizes 82% of the population; extreme poverty is 55%. In the rural area, poverty is explained in great part by the low productivity of the agricultural and livestock sector and the low value of the products on the market.

The social context of the demanders of projects where PM&E was implemented is characterized by the following aspects:

- The producers are small, their landholdings ranging from 1-6 ha.
- The principal activity is agricultural production.
- The level of formal education is low; the majority does not finish primary school.
- With respect to health, there are endemic problems such as Chagas' disease and malaria.
- The strongest organization is the agrarian *sindicato*.

To illustrate the foregoing, the socioeconomic stratification of a zone where PM&E implementation was facilitated, is provided: the municipality of Padilla, State of Chuquisaca, Bolivia (INE et al. 1999) (Table 2).

**Table 2. Socioeconomic stratification in the Municipality of Padilla.**

Strata	Percentage
A	20.5%
B	31.2%
C	48.3%

*Source: HECOP (2003).*

Some 50% of the population in the municipality is found in Stratum C, the majority of whom are living in poverty. Stratum A corresponds to families that have more than 4 ha under production, more than 45 head of cattle, housing that has more than four rooms, and higher levels of formal education. The majority know how to read and write. Stratum B includes families that have the same assets as in Stratum A, but in smaller quantities and quality. (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Doña Cristina Loayza and her three children represent a typical family from the lowest stratum of the rural area of the Municipality of Padilla, community La Ciénega.

Families from Stratum C generally have a production area of 0.5-2.5 ha, very few sheep (no more than 20) and their houses do not have more than 2 rooms. They generally correspond to young families in the process of consolidation, the majority of whom do not know how to read or write.

### ***Institutional context***

***Municipal Government:*** Given the level of poverty in the zone, the policies that form part of the Municipal Government of Padilla in the productive environment are to:

- Promote and drive the process of productive transformation
- Encourage the economic development of the municipality, making effective the concept of a productive municipality, allocating a greater proportion of public investment in the agricultural and livestock sector
- Promote research and technology transfer applicable to local conditions
- Open, repair and maintain roads to guarantee commercialization of the products
- Promote tourism and ecotourism in each of their stages

To accomplish part of its objectives, the municipality of Padilla is linked with the following schemas of rural development policies at the national level:

- *The Bolivian System of Agricultural and Livestock Technology (SIBTA<sup>4</sup>):* SIBTA is an interinstitutional system that seeks to optimize its technical, human and financial capacities around the planning, promotion and execution of activities of agricultural and livestock, forestry and agroindustrial technology innovation in the national setting and based on regional needs.
- *The Foundations for Agricultural and Livestock Technology Development (FDTAs):* Through their Competitive Fund for Technology Innovation (*RO-FCI*), the FDTAs finance the execution of Applied Technological Innovation Projects (PITAs). In the Municipality of Padilla the FDTA-Valleys (2004)<sup>5</sup> is financing two technological innovation projects in the chili peppers and peanuts agroproductive chains, at the request of a Small Farmer Economic Organization (OEC), the Association of Producers of Chili Peppers and Peanuts from the Municipality of Padilla (APAJIMPA), with support from the Municipal Government of Padilla.

***PM&E and empowerment of the OECs:*** It would be an overstatement to assert that the implementation of PM&E empowers the organizations and the people; or said differently, that

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<sup>4</sup> SIBTA was created in March 2000 as a model of interaction between the country's public and private sectors, constituting a network that links up with the need for technology innovation of the actors from the agroproductive chains.

<sup>5</sup> This is the operational branch of SIBTA for the adequate execution of the PITAs in the macro-ecoregion of the Valleys.

the people and organizations that use PM&E are empowered. PM&E is one element among many that contribute to empowerment.

In the case of APAJIMPA, they underwent a process of about one-and-a-half years to adopt PM&E. In this process the Association's leaders were committed to institutions and entities such as the Municipal Government, which provides the services, and FDTA, as well as to fulfill the objectives of both the PITA and the organization. In the Chaco<sup>6</sup> region, different from APAJIMPA, which had a "bottom-up" process, the executive bodies of the FDTA-Chaco, based on the successful application of PM&E in other settings, promoted the validation of the methodology in their context and contributed to generating mechanisms for its institutionalization.

Based on the information of the experiences regarding the effects of PM&E in different contexts, it was concluded that overall, PM&E contributed to empowerment in the following aspects:

- The organizations have begun a process of appropriating PM&E, in which their leaders have played an important role in training and disseminating it among the farmers.
- PM&E is permitting the supplier entities to provide a better service.
- PM&E is contributing to there being a better response and participation of the beneficiaries in the process.
- The producers in their different strata are informed about the characteristics and development of the projects of which they are beneficiaries.
- PM&E is contributing to improve the management and leadership capacity of the producer organizations' managers.

## **Conclusions**

- PM&E contributes to the empowerment of the producers' organizations, basically because it promotes the active participation and involvement of the members of the organization in all project phases and decision-making related to their own development.
- The use of PM&E is contributing to a change from a passive (receptive) attitude to an active one (decision-making) on the part of the farmers. Thus it is improving their capacity for (a) representativeness and internal democracy, (b) participating effectively with proposals in the strategic planning exercises, (c) negotiating with other institutions and actors, and (d) developing a sense of co-responsibility.

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<sup>6</sup> Hot, semiarid lowlands.

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