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## Participatory gender resource mapping: a case study in a rural community in Honduras

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### • Summary

Resource mapping and labour allocation analysis techniques were combined to gain a deeper understanding of intra-household division of control and responsibility for labour and resource-related activities. This combination of techniques, referred to as Participatory Gender Resource Mapping (PGRM), was tested in a rural community in Honduras. In addition to providing a vivid picture of the household/farm resources and labour allocation (by gender and age), PGRM was used to provide a framework for community members and outsiders to become aware of and sensitive to unequal gender and generational relations.

### • Introduction

Participatory Gender Resource Mapping (PGRM), a combination of participatory resource mapping and labour analysis techniques, was used to obtain information on gender and generational divisions of labour, control of resources and income generating activities. The goal of using PGRM was to provide:

- a thorough analysis of the different roles that men, women and children play;
- information on economic activities at the household level; and,
- a means by which the farming system as a whole and opportunities for development activities could be better understood.

The study was conducted in a small rural community (41 households and approximately 273 people) in Honduras. To maintain confidentiality, the name and location of the community is withheld. The community has limited access to resources and markets, and many of the households are involved in off-farm employment. The median land holding size was 1.77 ha<sup>2</sup>.

In March 1995, background data were gathered and permission to conduct research in the area was sought from, and given by, the community. In order to have the fullest co-operation of the community members, every effort was made to clarify the purpose of the research and to engage the community's interest in the work. The PGRM exercises took place over a five week period (July-September 1995). The researchers lived in the community during the study.

### • The process

Twelve households that we considered representative of the various socio-economic conditions in the community were selected for the study. The selection was based on wealth, location and unique characteristics (e.g. female headed households).

Basic data on each household were obtained through informal interviews. Households were then ranked by wealth (Grandin 1988)<sup>1</sup>. The

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<sup>1</sup> Grandin, B. E. (1988). Wealth ranking in smallholder communities; a field manual. IT Pubs, London. Four households were not included in the original wealth ranking. Community members did not inform the interviewers of their existence because of their distance from the main part of the community. Information on these households was collected at a later date.

household wealth scores were used to categorise the households into three wealth classes. One household from each wealth class was selected from each neighbourhood in the community for PGRM exercises. Given the length of time required to draw the resource maps (2 to 3 hours), two visits with each household were needed to complete the exercises. The resource maps were drawn during the first visit and the labour maps were drawn during the second visit. Each family selected the time and place for the exercises and, unless otherwise requested by a community member, all of the activities in the study were conducted in the community member's home.

The full PGRM exercise was preceded by a trial with one family. During the trial mapping exercise, we provided the household members with a piece of paper on which the house (a rectangle) and the roads leading to the rest of the village were already drawn. This created some confusion - the orientation of the map was not clear to the participants. All the other households were provided with blank pieces of paper. This resulted in a wide variety of map sizes.

### Resource mapping

During the first visit, the purpose of the maps was explained and the family members were asked to draw the plants, animals and structures that existed within their property boundaries. They were asked to draw the farm plots on the same paper as the land around the houses, despite the fact that much of the farm land was several kilometres away. Many of the participants insisted on drawing a condensed version of the road (and the landmarks along the road) that led to the farm plots.

Household members were given pencils and rulers to draw with and all members were encouraged to participate. At first, participants felt unsure about drawing, so we drew a few trees. This encouraged the participants. Men almost always began the drawing, while the women contributed later. In general, family members were eager to contribute to the maps and frequently worked late into the evening using candle light in order to perfect them.

### Labour mapping

The labour mapping was a complex process. Tracing paper was laid over the original map and each family member was asked to choose a different colour to use in tracing her or his activities. We explained that we were interested in knowing who was responsible for which activities around the house and on the farm. An object on the resource map would be pointed to (e.g. chickens) and then labour issues were probed (e.g. who feeds the chickens? Do you sell eggs, chickens? Who collects the eggs? Who sells them?). As a family member answered, a line with an arrow was drawn (using that person's colour) from, or to, the house to represent the activity. We started with activities around the house and moved outward to the farm plots. We drew labour lines, instead of the participants, primarily because of difficulties in explaining exactly what was desired.

Sometimes, an activity arose that involved resources not included in the original resource map. In these cases, we or the participants drew in the added resource before continuing with the labour mapping process. Also, in households with young children, the participants were frequently reminded to include the children's activities.

When we started the labour maps, one woman expressed a suspicion that we were conducting a census. We explained that the information would not be shared with others in the community and the maps would be identified with numbers, not names. After this occurred, we discussed confidentiality issues with each household before starting the maps.

### • Results and discussion

The maps, and the process of making them, provided much of the information we were interested in obtaining and led to discussions about the differences in men's, women's and children's activities. Figures 1 and 2 show maps from a wealthy and a poor family. During the map making process, family members, with very little discussion, divided up the labour. For example, when the whole family participated, the men drew the physical features, the women the plants and the children the animals. Throughout the process, men and

women consulted each other about the plants they had and where they belonged on the map.

The map making process provided community members with an opportunity to explain issues of importance and show the parts of their farms of which they were particularly proud. For example, one man spent a great deal of time drawing his pasture land, volunteering information on how he planted his grass and why he was using shrub and grass barriers for soil conservation. He drew lines (at right angles) to represent the grass and to show the slope of the land. He explained that five *patronatos* (local government officials) from surrounding villages wanted to buy his land to build a cemetery. They assumed he was not using it because of the shrubs. He had to explain to them that the shrubs were for soil conservation and that he was using the land for his cattle.

The maps provided information that was not forthcoming during the informal interviews. For example, during the interviews, the families had been asked if they had vegetable gardens. One woman had answered 'no', but then she drew a garden on the map. She did have a garden during the dry season, but not during the rainy season when the interview was conducted. In a number of other cases, there was confusion as to whether to include only things growing at the time of the map making, or all things produced by the household. Some families, for example, drew vegetable gardens without any plants and had to be encouraged to draw the plants, even if they were not currently growing. One household member drew snails in the fish pond instead of fish. We learned that the fish had

died there and that there were no plans to have fish again.

Gender and generational relationships are represented directly by the different types of labour activity lines. When the household members were asked about labour activities, they often discussed the labour activities among themselves, especially if some household members could not be present for the exercise. Sometimes, the parents were surprised by how many activities their younger children helped with. Often, the parents were proud of their children's participation in the activities. In some cases, as the number of labour lines increased, the participants became more interested in the exercise and in the frequency that their colour was used. Because we started with labour activities near the house and then moved to the farms, there was a tendency in the beginning to see mostly women's colours. This led one man to exclaim, "Where is my colour?".

In general, households that were wealthy tended to have more activities going on, both in and around the house, and often hired others to assist with farm activities. Poor families had fewer activities centred around the home and often worked for, and were dependent on, the wealthier families. Wealth also affected the amount of women's labour. In wealthy households, the women had more farm labour tasks as well as domestic tasks, thus expanding their domain. In the poorer households, the women's activities were closer to the home and centred more on domestic work. In both cases, women tended to do their trading and selling locally, while men went to the market town to sell and trade.

Figure 1. Household resource and labour map of a wealthy family

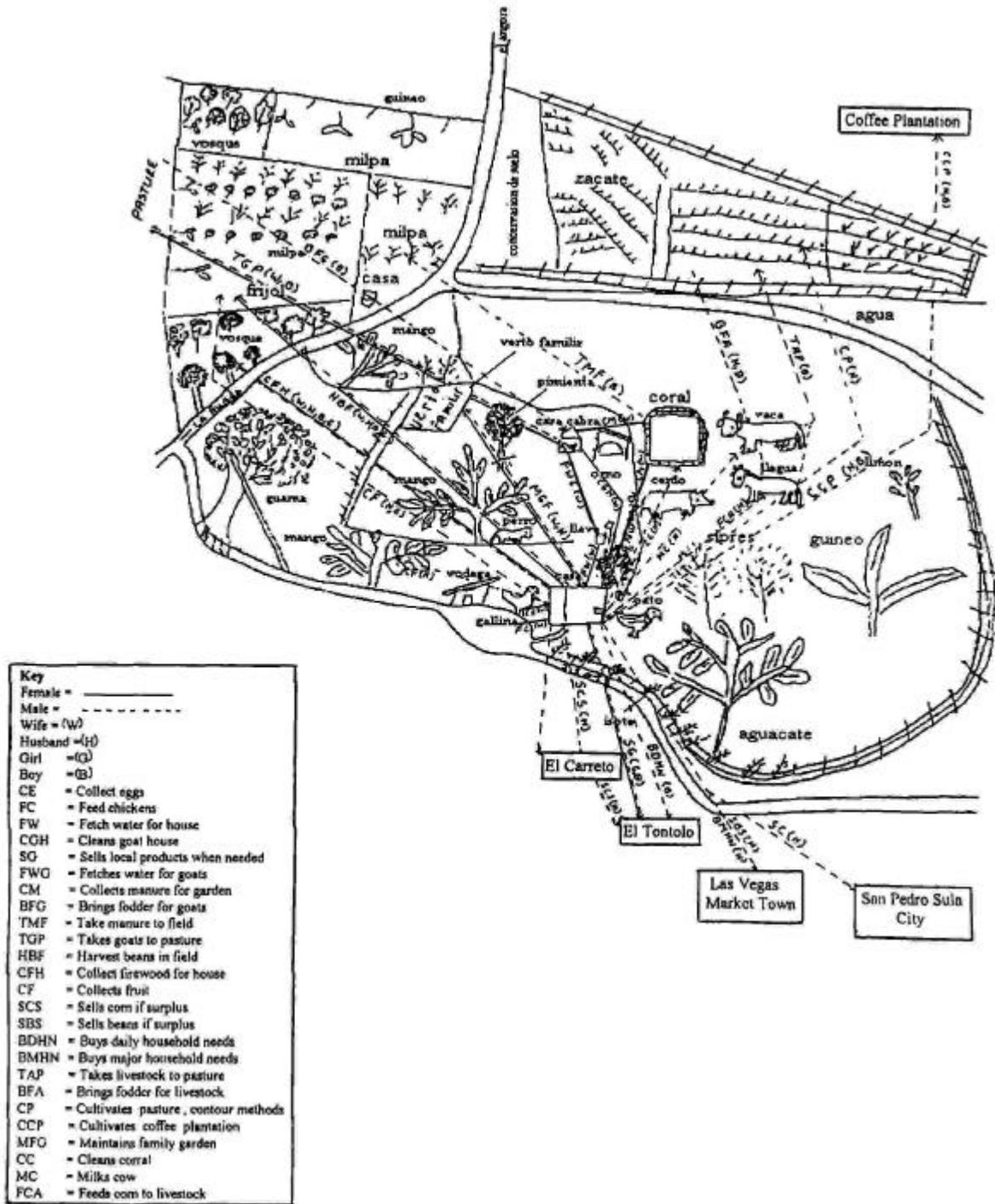
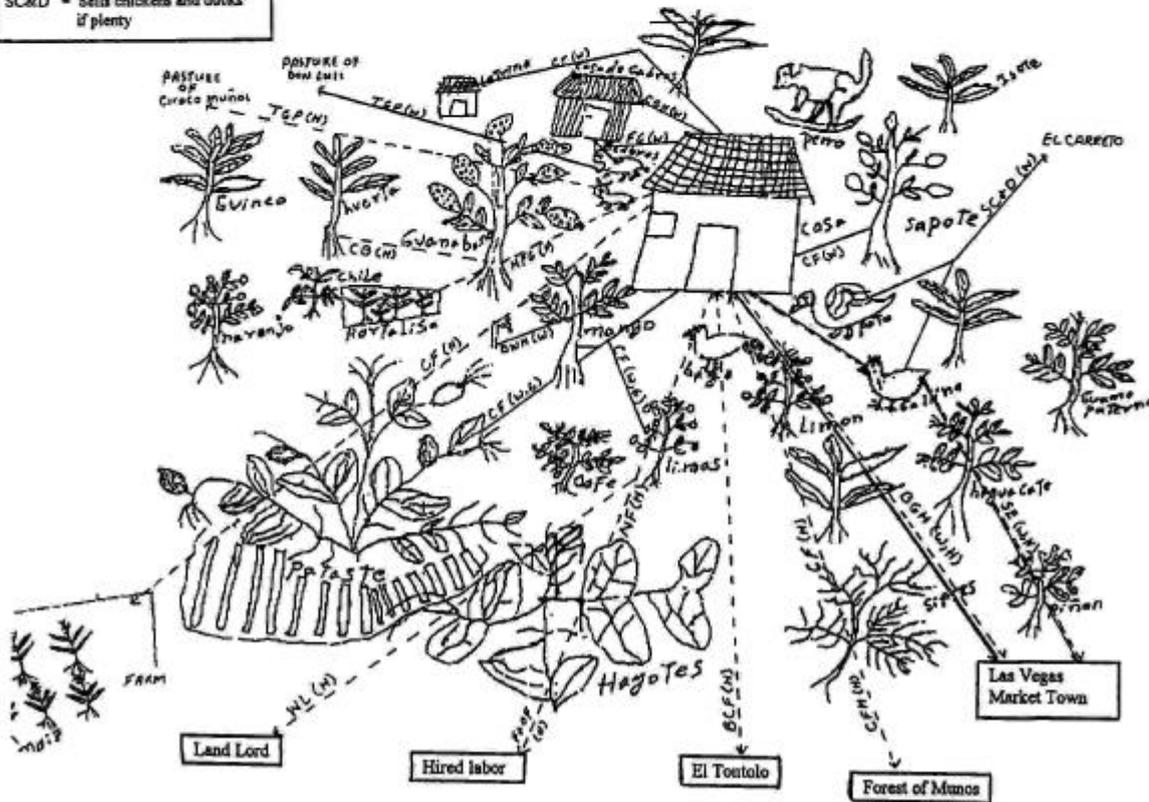


Figure 2. Household resource and labour map of a poor family

KEY	
Female	—————
Male	- - - - -
Wife = (W)	
Husband = (H)	
Girl = (G)	
Boy = (B)	
CT	= Cleans toilet
TGP	= Takes goats to pasture
CGH	= Cleans goat house
TGP	= Takes goats to pasture
FG	= Feeds goats
CB	= Cuts bananas
MFG	= Maintains family garden
F&OF	= Off-farm & non-farm work
WL	= Works for landlord to pay for land
CF	= Cultivates farm
NF	= Non-farm work
BWH	= Brings water to house
CF	= Collects fruit
BCF	= Buys cassava for family
CFM	= Collects firewood for house
FC	= Feeds chickens
CE	= Collects eggs
BGH	= Buys goods for house
SE	= Sells eggs
SC&D	= Sells chickens and ducks if plenty



### Impact of PGRM

During the PGRM, discussions among household members (both among adults and children) appeared to increase the awareness

of the amount and types of work done by different household members. But the process did not seem to create conflicts among household members.

It is difficult to determine the long-term impact of PGRM on the community. Our involvement in the community ended in 1995 and the NGO with whom we were working, changed its activity focus. Therefore, the maps were not used in assisting the community to plan for its future. However, one of us revisited the community in August 1997. Several interesting household changes were observed. The man who had exclaimed "Where is my colour?" had quit his job at the mines and taken over the farm. He explained that his oldest son was leaving and since his wife had another child, she could not do all of the work. Another household that maintained two houses (one near the farm and one in the village), had obtained water at both houses. Before, water had only been available in the village, requiring the woman and her daughter to haul water everyday. Another household had sold its pigs. In this household, the man liked the pigs but the woman fed them and really disliked them. It is impossible to determine if the changes seen in these households were brought up during the mapping. We believe that PGRM did raise the level of awareness, but the actual impact is uncertain.

## • Conclusion

PGRM enabled us to obtain a holistic picture of the community in action, compare differences in men's, women's and children's work and compare households. PGRM enabled the people to express what was important to them. Through these maps, we could see that families from different economic classes and individual family members had different needs. PGRM provides a tool for looking further into the socio-economic and gender issues that affect livelihood strategies. Equally important, it stimulates spontaneous information, enabling us to become cognisant of, and address, issues that were unknown and unanticipated. However, it can be complex to explain and is not therefore a rapid method. It requires sustained rapport with the households and community within which it is undertaken.

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