

MEMORY DARE THE TRUST – BOLIVIA

SOWING DREAMS IRRIGATING WITH DROPLETS OF TRUST

The support received by Both End through “Dare to Trust” inflicted many feelings, emotions, and challenges both for the Colectivo CASA team as for the women defender of the territories. It has meant working from the personal and collective dreams and strengthening trust, which is why we call the project Sowing Dreams, watering with drops of hope.

Beneficiaries:

In the first place we identify the women defenders of Mother Earth – RENAMAT who permanently defend their territories from mining contamination, the women of the Chiquitanía who suffer from land dispossessions because of the forest fires, and the defenders of territories with strong necessities. In total we identify 60 women in Bolivia.

The first challenge for Colectivo CASA was thinking the other way around: **WE HAVE BOTH THE MONEY AND THE PROYECT - HOW CAN WE TALK ABOUT ECONOMIC RESOURCES WITHOUT MONETISING NEEDS?**

We decided not to talk about money, yet about the personal needs, about the dreams that each of the defenders have, which we have never talked about because we know we can't fulfil them and on the contrary, we could generate wrong expectations.

We know many of the needs they have, and we have been feeling frustrated on several occasions because we cannot support them. We are an environmental organization and the projects we achieve are always for planned activities with an order, resources with a destination directed to the struggles. This time we saw ourselves with the money and we thought a lot about an efficient use of it, that is sustainable, that covers the personal needs but that also strengthens the defenders. This is how the dream workshops were born.

DREAM WORKSHOPS AND NEEDS

A first space for dialogue was realized with the coordination team of la Red de Mujeres defensoras de la Madre Tierra - RENAMAT, who were asked the question ‘If you could dream, what would you like to have to fulfil your dream?’

The majority of the answers were thinking about their family. For example, they said: “I would like to fulfil the dream of my husband...” or “for my children I would like...”.

We reflected together on how difficult it is to think about oneself, women are always thinking about the family, the community, the collective, and who thinks about us?

Subsequently we organized another workshop with 50 women defenders in which we spoke about self-care for them to think about themselves and their needs. We found age-differentiated answers:

- The eldest women answered that they would like to have health, work, and to be younger.
- The youngest ones focused their needs on wanting things for their mothers, others thought about school supplies so that their families don't need to spend money on them, and others on work investments.
- *Las hermanas* in between young and old expressed their major need from the economic point of view. For instance, they need pumps for water, ovens, some thought about very expensive things, and the need for paid work.
- Knowing the personal needs, we organised group works, because the needs are alleviated when we work together, so the proposal was born to make a comprehensive plan to improve living conditions.



PLAN TO IMPROVE THE CONDITIONS OF LIFE – PLAN FROM “LIVING GOOD”

The indigenous women from the culture of the towns speak about “Living Good” (Buen Vivir/Vivir Bien). Together we define that the plan should focus on:

HEALTH – PRODUCTION/FOOD – ECONOMY - ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTHENING TO DEFEND THE TERRITORY.



1. STRENGTHENING

Being together and sharing other types of activities strengthens us to continue the struggle. Therefore, we celebrated 15 years of work of Colectivo CASA:

We are celebrating 15 years of work of Colectivo CASA, bringing together diverse organisations and sharing the joy of knowing each other, accompanying each other and continuing together.



We also realized an evaluation workshop and we were able to prepare Christmas baskets for each of the defenders to share with their family. No project allows us, but the defenders dedicate their life at the defense of the territory and bringing products to their homes as a present and/or reward for the dedication provoked many emotions. So, it was very beautiful, a lot of joy.



We invested resources in workshops, meetings and we reached an agreement for the training we provide to be valid with an academic title of basic technician awarded by the Ministry of Education. 50 women are being trained at the Warmi Yaku (Woman of Water) school.

Recharge credit for the phone, to stay in touch, to improve the use of the social networks to report environmental problems and to see information.



2. HEALTH

With a focus on physical health, there were spaces to talk about natural medicine, the broad knowledge of the healing properties of the plants, and we bought technopor kits to preserve the plants.



In terms of emotional health, we had fun, we shared conversations, friendship, laughter, health and healthy food in a *balneario* (resort town).

Resources were given to many sisters who needed support for medicines, for the health of their children and family members. And it is confidence both to ask for help and to give the funds.

3. PRODUCTION

Seeds were bought for the community garden. We managed to have not only one community garden but 3 in different communities. The characteristic is that the entire production is divided between the women from the organization, as many of them do not have land suitable for production due to mining contamination. RENAMAT's approach is to work in solidarity with each other.



Solar tents: we managed to build a community solar tent to have production of vegetables and in the same way the production is shared between the women defenders.

4. ECONOMY

Work at home is unpaid and many times not valued, we knew that there was coming a strong economic crisis to the country (Bolivia). Therefore, by taking up the dream workshops again and using 50% of the resources, we put together combos that could be used to have another option for work and to improve the life conditions.

Each combo with the same price:

- Combo 1: Oven, gas canister
- Combo 2: Oven, kitchen
- Combo 3: Kitchen, gas canister, canister holder, wheelbarrow, blender
- Combo 4: Kitchen with 4 stoves



The first thought was that it would be a loan and that as a group they would work to pay it back over the long term. That is how they organised a *Kermesse* (food sale) and all the proceeds went to cover a small first instalment (in fact, the money raised will be used to make the project sustainable, that is, it will be used for cooking supplies).

We rushed to purchase the combos, which by truck were brought to each of the communities. With tears and a lot of joy they received their ovens, kitchens, and soon after, the *hermanas* would send us pictures of using them in their houses.



SUPPORT TO DOCUMENT THE EXPERIENCE: the young women of RENAMAT help with taking pictures, they took testimonials of the process. Administratively it reflects only one name, but the resources were directed to the group of young women defenders.

LESSONS AND REFLECTIONS

1. The trust we received from Both Ends and Dare to Trust has meant a great satisfaction for Colectivo Casa, to do what we have never been able to do, supporting the women defenders for their home needs, in the economy of their dreams.
2. How difficult it is to think about oneself, yet at the same time how necessary is it to express your needs, your pain and how exciting it is to dream together from the needs.
3. How challenging it is to have money and wanting it to be invested for a sustainable use yet that at the same time covers your needs.
4. What was challenging for us was very easy for the women defenders. They are administrators of the home and quickly formed a plan to improve their life conditions, or like they say, a Plan to Live Good, which encompasses health, economy, empowerment and production/food.
5. On the issue of health, we (Colectivo Casa) were thinking of agreements with hospitals and health centers. The women of the communities changed our vision from the traditional medicine, they have a lot of knowledge and they shared knowledge from territory to territory. Impressive, we put together medicine kits of medicinal plants!
6. The solidarity is a characteristic of the women`s organizations that has been present throughout the implementation of Dare to Trust.

7. Celebrating the joy together is also knowing that we are not alone.
8. The delivery of the ovens and kitchens generated a major appreciation from the organization, not only from the women defenders who received them, but also from their families and a change of attitude.
9. The economy of the women is improving, various are selling food during the weekends.
10. There is one *hermana* who makes food to pay the medicine for her son, and she is doing so with the support of all the *hermanas*. It is confidence and knowing that you have the tools to do it.
11. For the Colectivo CASA team this has meant a great satisfaction because we did what we have never been to do: helping the *hermanas* with something personal and that helps them to go forward.
12. It is dreaming and having confidence. Thanks to Both Ends and Dare to trust for trusting us, for allowing us to be the channel for satisfaction of so many women.

We are left with the valuable experience that we don't need to do everything so planned with projects, but that there is knowledge of the defenders that we have to trust, they will not think of the individual good but of the collective good. May the chain of trust multiply!!!





Thank you friends for trusting us!!!