

Title: Sharing risk reduction knowledge and flavour in Cocalito.

Country: Colombia

Name of the Organization submitting the experience: FAO

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Eight hours from Quibdó you find Cocalito, a small village located in the Alto Baudó near the Ancozó River in the department of Chocó. Cocalito is inhabited by an **Embera's indigenous community**. Life is simple in this village. Like many other indigenous communities in Colombia, agriculture is the main livelihood activity, but multiple climatic disasters, including increased rainfall and flooding, have affected crops and livestock and causing severe losses.

In order to help these communities reestablish their main livelihoods, the FAO Chocó field team arrived under the auspices of the Joint Response Programme for the La Niña Phenomenon. Over the next four months, Profesora Yeni – as she is affectionately called – visited the village in order to train people on new agricultural techniques to improve their crop production yields. The Professor also brought banana, rice and maize seeds, as well as tools in order to ensure that the community was able to resume cultivating their fields. FAO was able to improve agricultural practices, while also taking into account different disaster risk factors.



In order to improve nutrition, primarily of children, FAO introduced new vegetable seed varieties and worked with families to help them cultivate these new varieties in their home gardens. As soon as the first harvest was ready a workshop on food preparation was organized. An expert was brought in to teach villagers about the new vegetables and share with them the best and most hygienic ways of preparation.

Response to the needs of communities in planning, prevention and risk mitigation within the agricultural sector, as well as assisting affected populations in filling their food security gaps in remote regions of the country is a priority. The methodology used includes training participating families, and using local women leaders as promoters, like Profesora Yeni. This ensures a quick entry point to helping women, who are usually the most vulnerable members of an affected community, in the adjustment of planting dates, developing the most appropriate small-scale irrigation systems for their particular needs, establishment of food production plots near the home settlements, the use of light-weight agriculture tools, integrated pest management, the inclusion of new crop species, adaptation and recovery of seeds and soil rehabilitation. The project accompanies the community in selecting planting areas that are most suitable and have the least risk of flooding or climate variations. Capacity building is carried out in demonstration training centres that serve as farmer field schools, where staff share different agricultural techniques with community organizations to help them protect crops from possible flooding. Households then apply the knowledge learned in their own gardens and crop fields.

Prepared to face future disasters, the members of affected villages are ready to resume their productive activities with a higher awareness of the risks associated.

Back in Cocalito, Libia Estela, another trained female community promoter, leads a group with the Governor's council, and enthusiastically shows the visiting communities all of the vegetables they have grown, how to prepare them and even their nutritional value. She believes the entire community will have improved their nutrition, because even if some of the vegetables are new to them, they have brought new a flavour and color to their food.