

About the Ecuador exchange project

In 2003 Grenverket together with the regional Lrf-women (LRF is the federation of Swedish farmers) joined a project started by a Swedish aid organisation called UBV(a Swedish aid organisation working for civil rights and education). Six women from the organisation FENOCIN (Federation of native small farmers in Ecuador) from the Cayambe-area visited six forestry farming women in Blekinge. In common for all these organisations is to work for a sustainable situation for women.

The purpose of the project was to exchange experiences from working locally in small networks. It was also meant to strengthen and inspire women in both countries working in organisations with focus on democracy and sustainable use of rural land.

The project was arranged so that each of the women from Ecuador teamed up with one of the six women from Blekinge. During their three week stay in August, they took part of the everyday life of their team mates, to promote cultural exchange. They visited several female farmers and forest owners, to give a picture of the rural heritage and development in rural areas in our county. At their study visit they also got to participate in forest planning, tractor driving, the milking of cows with milking machine and so on.

We also spent a lot of time discussing the aspects of the Swedish society such as the political system, democracy in general, social welfare and the cultural similarities and differences between the two countries. The Women from Ecuador were particularly interested in how the global problem with violence against women was handled in a welfare country such as Sweden, and of course noticed that we have not solved that problem at all.

In November the same year six women from Sweden made an unforgettable journey to Ecuador. They followed the Ecuadorian women as close as possible in their daily work. They found of course a lot of differences but also a lot of common problems and issues in the work for developing a sustainable situation for women.

The result of the exchange project for the Swedish women was:

- Respect for the culture of the indigenos (natives) of Ecuador
- Knowledge of the problems of the women in South America
- Experience of working with international issues and developing countries
- A strong feeling of solidarity with the native women in FENOCIN
- A commitment to go on supporting new projects in the Cayambe-area

The results for the Ecuadorian women was, as well as we can understand from our further contacts and a re-visit 2005 from Manuela Copacango, now secretary in FENOCIN:

Most of the participating women still work in women's projects. They have strengthened their positions and made achievements in their breeding of guinea pigs and in their production of vegetables.

The level of education has increased among the participating women.