



REIMAGINING

IDEX

International
Development
Exchange

WEALTH



MEXICO



An Alternative in Practice

Is it possible to build an economic model that takes the needs of the entire community into account while respecting the rights of people and the planet? Indeed, it is.

Desarrollo Económico y Social de Los Mexicanos Indígenas (DESMI), an IDEX partner in Chiapas, Mexico, is guided by the ideology of the Solidarity Economy, which nurtures economic growth that is both fair and inclusive.

Chiapas is Mexico's most impoverished province, with an Indigenous population that is in constant struggle to defend its land and most basic human rights.

Without land, families are cut off from their source of food and livelihood. Coffee production, for example, has become increasingly unprofitable because trade agreements that favor cheap U.S. imports have suppressed the price of beans. This is economically devastating to many families, since coffee is the main cash crop in the area and often the only agricultural product they can sell.

DESMI has responded with programs in sustainable, organic farming. They have formed education centers to teach community members how to use natural fertilizers and reclaim native seeds. Their workshops have improved soil fertility and eliminated the need for expensive toxic chemical fertilizers.

Every day, DESMI is practicing a viable way for these communities to come together, fight for their rights, and create sustainable livelihoods.

NEPAL



Transformative Cooperation



Do you think that rural women in Nepal can transform the economic and political landscape in their country? Women Awareness Center Nepal (WACN) certainly believes they can.

Founded in 1991, WACN works with 35,000 women and 5,000 children throughout five districts of Nepal to develop women-controlled, grassroots economic power. With a tiny central staff and an annual budget of about \$50,000, WACN has achieved remarkable results. Collectively, the network of 42 cooperatives has mobilized over \$4 million in capital.

In 2004, a team of independent evaluators termed WACN a “market leader in Nepal in micro financing and women’s cooperatives.”

Each cooperative represents years of collective assessment and community based planning, the development of thousands of rural village women as agricultural experts, and the growth of sustainable infrastructure for long term income generation. Members are trained in health and wellness, violence prevention, and individual asset management. Multiply this process by 42, and you have the result of WACN’s first 23 years of progress.

WACN’s advocacy efforts have influenced government banks in Nepal and resulted in the passage of the landmark Women’s Property Rights legislation.

WACN’s model proves that rural women can leverage sustainable agriculture and small-scale savings into community development, social change, and locally controlled asset building.

SOUTH AFRICA



The Wealth Beneath our Feet



What do you do when a powerful multi-national corporation threatens your community's most precious assets? Like Biowatch, you build collective strength.

Since 1999, Biowatch has been committed to food sovereignty, biodiversity, and environmental justice in South Africa. A threat to all of these is the push for genetically modified (GM) crops by companies like Monsanto.

For rural farmers, there is no separation between the environment and the economy. Biowatch knows that seeds are life, and by planting and marketing untested GM seeds, Monsanto was destroying life.

Though GMOs are often portrayed as a solution to food insecurity and climate change, there is increasing evidence that they do more harm than good. Promised crop yields fail to materialize, farmers increase their dependency on pesticides, and seeds are contaminated.

Thus, Biowatch requested information on GM permits from the Department of Agriculture. When their requests were repeatedly ignored, Biowatch filed a suit against the government.

The chances of Biowatch winning were grim. The stakes were enormous and they were global. In 2009, in a hard-won, groundbreaking victory, the Constitutional Court ruled in favor of Biowatch.

Biowatch's case helped win legislative reforms around access to information and bolstered local organizing in South Africa and beyond. And, most importantly, it has helped advance the prosperity of small communities - their land, seeds, soil, and health.

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