

Organization

Pana Pana serves the northern Atlantic coast of Nicaragua, which is the poorest region of the country. Women comprise about 70% of Pana Pana's borrowers. Many borrowers are Miskitu, the indigenous group of the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua and Honduras. Like indigenous people throughout Latin America, the Miskitu face severe discrimination in Nicaragua. Most of Pana Pana's loan officers speak Miskitu, thus making credit accessible to the significant portion of the Miskitu population who do not speak Spanish well enough to conduct business. Very few MFIs serve the Atlantic coast, and Pana Pana is the only one that concentrates on business loans to the lower end of the economic spectrum.

Pana Pana, "mutual help" in Miskitu, is headquartered in Bilwi, Nicaragua, also known as Puerto Cabezas. It was founded in 1991 to provide financial and non-financial services to people living in the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCN), an area heavily affected by the Nicaraguan civil war. The RACCN remains quite inaccessible, even for those in Nicaragua.

Pana Pana has been a staple in the Puerto Cabezas community since its founding in 1991. Many NGOs have come and gone from Puerto Cabezas. Pana Pana is the only NGO to have kept its doors open continuously for 25 years.

Borrower Impact

Before the women gained access to credit, the men took the fish into Puerto Cabezas to sell once they returned from the sea. The men bought new gear while in town, which resulted in considerable down-time for the fleet. Additionally, all of the family income entered the household through the men leaving women with passive roles in household finances.

When the women got access to credit from Pana Pana through a group loan, they could buy the catch from their husbands and take it to town for sale. Now the women transport the fish to market while the men are still cleaning and stowing gear, which results in fresher fish in the marketplace. After selling the fish, the women can buy new gear and return to the village.

Miskitu family in Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua



Pana Pana women borrowers selling fish in the local market.



Most of the women used the increased family income to start small stores in their houses. This further increased household income and made the family less vulnerable to the vagaries of the daily catch. Access to credit has increased and diversified household income and made the women equal financial partners.


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