WOMEN’S
EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM
IN RURAL NICARAGUA

Programa de Empoderamiento de las Mujeres en Nicaragua Rural
Laura An
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The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program is a two-year selective, interdisciplinary certificate program that prepares Rutgers undergraduate women to be informed, innovative, and socially responsible leaders.

Leadership Scholars design and implement social action projects to expand their understanding of issues and problems and to develop leadership skills.

This project gives Scholars the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained about leadership, advocacy, and social change with the practical and experiential knowledge they have developed about a particular policy issue or problem through the field site placement. It also further develops leadership skills by giving undergraduates the opportunity to practice leadership through action.

To find out more please visit the Institute for Women’s Leadership’s website at [http://iwl.rutgers.edu](http://iwl.rutgers.edu).
What does it mean to be empowered?

¿Lo que significa estar empoderada?

• “Agentic empowerment represents the process whereby an individual develops the ability to make choices, to act autonomously in order to achieve goals, and to obtain a sense of control over one’s environment.” – Susan Pick, et al.

Empowered individuals can:

• Create new opportunities/provide access to existing ones
• Participate in decision-making processes
• Better react to events as they occur
Survey Results
Resultados del Estudio

- **Education**
  - 21/29 people interviewed attended school
  - Only 2 made it to high school, and none graduated
  - Only 1-2 people per community attend college (rarely women)
  - Lack of resources

- **Sexual Health**
  - Received most education from MINSA between 18-24 years old
  - Younger women are learning in school
  - Family planning is discussed between partners
  - Stigma against condom use
What is the need?

¿Cuál es la necesidad?

• Globally:
  • 50% of total population are women BUT
  • 70% of those in poverty are women
  • MDG’s 3 and 5

• Nicaragua:
  • Stigma against contraception
  • Teen pregnancy: 25%
  • Domestic violence
  • Machismo

• Communities partnered with AMOS
  • Surveys
Case Study
Estudio de Caso
Challenging Machismo: Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health with Nicaraguan Men

Findings
- Men are unfaithful by nature but unfaithful women are bad women.
- Man’s right to decide when women have children.
- Using contraception is sinful, and it is not a man’s responsibility to use it.
- Female sterilization implies she wants to have sex with other men.

Conclusions
- Lack of recognition of double standards.
- Health promotion is not just women’s work—eager to help.

• CISAS, Nicaraguan health-promotion NGO
• “If you really want things to change, you have to work with men too.”
Recommendations

Workshops modeled after Dázon Dixon Diallo’s (SisterLove) “Health Education, Advocacy, and Prevention” program, combined with VozJoven.
- Address: STI’s, sexuality, contraception

Workshops modeled after CISAS’ Challenging Machismo study.
- Address: machismo, men’s involvement

Negotiation Training modeled after MWI’s “Women’s Negotiation Program”.
- Address: self-advocacy, domestic violence

Men’s and Women’s Sexual Health education through JOSECHAS, scaled.
- Addresses: teenage pregnancy

Participatory, iterative process for developing curriculums.
What I Learned

Lo Que Aprendí

Empowerment is complicated because it involves challenging cultural structures that have been in place for years.

It’s okay to not know all the answers. You can’t know all the answers when treading new waters.

Participation is key, especially when coming in as an outsider.

It’s more than okay to ask for help— in fact, ask for all the advice you can possibly get. No use in reinventing the wheel.
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Bibliography


Bibliography (ct’d)


