



Decent Work

For women in the sugarcane sector



Vamos Tejiendo

Comunidades y aliados
construyendo puentes de EQUIDAD



Panela



Findings of research on labor conditions and conflict resolution mechanisms in the panela sector in Yolombó and San Roque - Antioquia.

The **Vamos Tejiendo** project, financed by **USDOL** and implemented by **Pact** and the **Escuela Nacional Sindical**, conducted research to understand the labor context of women in the panela sector in San Roque and Yolombó in Antioquia, and to identify the factors that favor or limit the exercise of their labor rights.



This research involved **110** individuals, including women and men working in the sector, as well as

civil society organizations, companies, owners of production units, union representatives, public entities and experts in decent work and social and labor conflicts.

Context



The panela value chain is the process by which panela block, a product derived from sugarcane, is produced, transformed and commercialized.



More than



350.000 families participate in this sector generating



287.000 direct jobs, and occupying

12%

of the economically active rural population in the country.



Despite its importance, the panela industry is characterized by informality and job insecurity, which disproportionately affects rural women.

Informality is evidenced by

- Non-compliance with labor rights
- Low associative capacity
- Lack of institutional mechanisms to resolve labor disputes

38%

of the workers in the panela sector who were interviewed during the study affirmed that they received an income of between US\$25-125 per month

Decent Work conditions

Decent work is work that is performed with respect for fundamental labor principles and rights:

- ✓ Allows a fair income proportional to the effort made
- ✓ Does not discriminate on the basis of gender or any other type of characteristics
- ✓ Promotes social security payment
- ✓ Promotes social dialogue and tripartism



Findings:

1.

The informal labor conditions affecting women and adolescents are reinforced by the precariousness of the production units for the production of panela.

60% of the production units visited during the study evidenced artisanal work methods, technical delays in production, poorly designed ovens and conditions that generate inefficiency in the use of energy sources, **14-hour workdays** and informal work relationships.



2.

Associativity is a key factor for the modernization of productive units. It contributes to identifying and implementing good practices to improve working conditions and reduce informality.

These are some obstacles to associativity:



- Weak institutional support
- Resistance to change and low generational turnover
- Failed associative experiences
- Lack of strong leadership
- Rupture of the social network as a consequence of the internal armed conflict

3.

There are wage gaps between men and women, and in some occupations, women earn half of what a man can earn for the same work.



Within the mills, the positions that generate the highest incomes are not offered to women. On the other hand, women have higher levels of education but this does not translate into better working conditions.

a.

In addition to their work in the production units, women have double or triple workdays, including domestic work, caring for their families and community commitments.

b.

Regarding gender-based violence, women can be victims of sexual, economic, psychological and physical violence. In most cases, women do not report violence because of low credibility and trust in institutions, lack of immediate protection mechanisms in their municipalities such as a temporary or foster home, economic and emotional dependence on their partners, and the effects on their mental health and self-esteem that violence brings with it.



Recomendations



Public institutions:

Promote women's participation in rural labor insertion as a measure to overcome poverty in rural areas. This can be done by raising awareness among productive units to facilitate the creation of equitable labor opportunities for women in the sector.

The gender approach should be a cross-cutting theme guiding policies from the Development Plan; therefore, the articulation of various agencies is important to achieve effective actions in favor of women and not be treated tangentially and marginally.

Promote associativity among small producers through the generation of financial support, administrative training and business vocation, and promote the diversification of new products to access new markets.



Panela Production Units:

Promote labor formalization through the implementation of labor contracts, compliance with decent work standards, fair pay and working hours, and occupational health and safety standards - OSH.

Implement specific measures to promote gender equity in the mills such as equal pay, training and growth opportunities for women, and establish mechanisms to prevent and address cases of gender-based violence in the workplace.

Seek technical advice in areas such as good production practices, financial management and business organization.

Working in collaboration with other mills can provide advantages in terms of economies of scale, access to resources and knowledge sharing.



Civil Society Organizations/ Cooperation Projects:

Offer vocational orientation opportunities to young people that contribute to their personal and professional growth, and that can be articulated with the needs and opportunities of the sugarcane sector to reduce the generation gap that exists in the sector.

Train women and promote their participation in decision-making spaces in the municipalities, such as the construction of local development plans and their oversight. In such a way that they actively incorporate women's proposals in their government plans, thus ensuring that women's voices and priorities are taken into account.

Consolidate relations with the National Learning Service - SENA and with educational institutions that offer training in the transformation of sugarcane honey as a raw material or input in the production of food products and other derivatives of panela. This will open up economic opportunities in emerging markets.

Regarding child labor, consolidate and strengthen awareness-raising actions with local authorities to prevent and eradicate this practice in the sector.

Work closely with production units to improve their knowledge of occupational health and safety, where the protection and well-being of workers is a strategic issue in preventing child labor.