

Extensión y profundización de la Red de Comunicación Indígena (Extension and penetration of the Indigenous Communication Network)

SUMMARY

The project was developed through the joint efforts of an NGO network and indigenous communities determined to regain their cultural identity and help integrate the indigenous populations to local white communities in Salta, Jujuy, Formosa, El Chaco and Santa Fe, Argentina.

The idea originated within these indigenous communities that were conscious of the negative image that the local white community had of their culture - one associated with poverty and marginality – and were determined to improve and strengthen their cultural image and identity in the zone.

With this objective in mind, and with the support of an NGO network, the project developed a mass media communication strategy (mainly using radio and press bulletins) to open positive communication channels among indigenous and white communities that transmit public opinion messages favorable to their indigenous interests. Further, they publicly promote local popular leaders and their local development projects as a way to help overcome poverty, increase the community's living standards and contribute to building a more democratic society.

The development of a radio communication strategy to help bring value to local indigenous culture (inside and outside the indigenous community itself) is considered the most innovative element of this project. The constructive use of mass media to strengthen the integration of minority groups- whether they are indigenous, black or others- could also be used to help migrant or relocated populations.

Indigenous community members (especially young members) are provided with technical training by the *Red de Comunicación Indígena* and then join the technical staff. They also act as correspondents, gathering information from different indigenous communities. Currently,

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there are 50 staff members, all between the ages of 17 and 30 years. Thirty (30%) percent of staff members are women, contributing to gender equality in the community.

Due to financial reasons, the *Red de Comunicación Indígena* does not own radio stations. Despite this, it has managed to create a huge network of 135 affiliated radio stations and 12 satellite transmission antennas which air a weekly program, free of charge.

The relevance of this lies in the fact that the project has actually managed to improve and strengthen the indigenous identity and has effectively opened a communication channel to the dominant white culture in each of these communities.