

Dossier 1: Analysis of Vulnerabilities



[Peru]

A Case of Institutional Reinforcement and Community Involvement

Introduction

In recent years, the local authorities and social organisations in the districts¹ of Acopía and San Pedro de Cachora (from now on abbreviated to Cachora), located in Peru's southern Andean region, have sought the support of both public and private institutions to implement sundry local development strategies designed to alleviate their situation of geographical isolation and poverty. Although they have indeed helped to improve the quality of life of people in the area, these strategies are subject to certain weaknesses, such as, for example, their discontinuous application, compounded by a lack of coordination and disconnection between the various social players involved.

1. Location and population

The districts of Acopía and Cachora are located, respectively, in the departments of Cusco and Apurímac, at altitudes that range from 2,600 to 4,900 metres above sea level. They share a similarly rugged terrain of hills, ravines, valleys and tablelands, which are the result of a series of geological events that occurred during the formation of the Southern Andes.

These two districts are located fairly close to the capital cities of their respective departments: Acopía is 141 km away from Cusco, and Cachora is 52 km away from the city of Abancay.

The Acopía district consists of three farming communities (Acopía, Santa Domingo and Tactabamba) and two *anexos* (Huayrachapi and Miskiuno), with Acopía being the district capital.

In turn, the Cachora district is made up of its eponymous capital, Cachora, and three farming communities (Ttastapoyoncco, Asil and Pantypata).



Map: location of the districts of Acopía and Cachora

The total population of these two districts amounts to around 6,000 people, half of whom are women, and it is a very young one, as almost 50% are under the age of 20, 20% are aged between 20 and 40, and 30% are over 40.

The population is made up of around 1,450 households, which according to the main activity they un-

¹ Within Peru's system of territorial organisation, a district is the smallest political-administrative unit; several districts make up a province, and various provinces make up a department. In the rural Andean area, a district consists of a town called a *centro poblado urbano* (a term that denotes a district capital) and a series of farming communities and their *anexos* (towns or villages politically dependent on the district council), which are generally at some distance from one another.



Town centre in Acopía and the lake of the same name in the background (Zabalketa)

undertake and to their access to key basic services may be classified into the following four groups:

a. Households with more resources and better conditions of access to basic services

These are families that live in the district's largest urban area, and the head of the household's main economic activity is as an employee (in restaurants and shops), running a small hostel, or working in some other municipal job, such as in schools (as teachers), amongst others. These economic activities provide a steady income throughout the year, and at the same time most of these households also have plots of land for farming and raising livestock, which provide them with supplementary income.

As they have more income and live within the district's main urban area, these households have greater access to key basic services within their homes (running water, sanitation and electricity). They are

also the ones that enjoy better conditions of access to schools and health services.

According to the survey conducted within this project, this group accounts for no more than 3% of all the households in the district.

b. Households with average resources and regular access to basic services

This group includes livestock-breeding households with the highest number of heads of cattle. These families are defined by their slightly stronger links to the market, maintaining a relatively constant flow of sales of produce, albeit in small amounts; the majority have several hectares of natural grazing pastures and small tracts of cultivated land; they invest in the purchase of animals for breeding, and they observe certain practices in animal welfare and sanitary control. Most of these households have access to running water and electricity. The children from these families regularly

attend local schools, and this group accounts for around 35% of the overall number of households.

c. Poor households with scant access to basic services

This group corresponds to those households whose main activity is farming and livestock breeding, but which have little land and few animals (cattle, sheep and/or cubs²), and which do not have a productive breeding infrastructure. For these small producers, livestock is an activity that supplements farming, and the produce obtained is used mainly for their own consumption, and to a lesser extent for sale at market. These families also have limited access to the basic services of running water, sanitation, electricity, education and healthcare, and they account for approximately 55% of the total.

d. Extremely poor households

This group consists of very poor farming households that have very little land and no livestock. They grow food for their own needs, but this is not usually enough for ensuring their own subsistence, so their members tend to work as labourers or shepherds on other people's land in exchange for payment either in cash or in kind in the form of farm produce or animal products.

These households have severely restricted access to drinking water, with no sanitary facilities or electricity. Furthermore, the children do not attend school on a regular basis. These households account for around 5% of the total.

2. Housing and Basic Services

The housing in the area consists mainly of adobe dwellings that are traditionally built by the local people themselves. Only the towns have some houses built with cement and bricks.



Farming family in the district of Acopía (Red Sur de Cáritas)

In general, there is a major shortage of homes with access to the basic services of running water, sanitation and electricity. Only the houses in the main streets in the towns generally have a mains water supply and are connected to drains that empty into a general septic tank.

Those households that live in communities that are not connected to the mains water supply or to drains draw their water directly from rivers or springs, and their sanitary facilities involve latrines.

As regards drinking water, which is obviously a priority requirement, this is managed by the potable water committees - "*Comités de agua potable*" - and a system of pipes is used to deliver the water from springs to homes; nevertheless, these systems provide insufficient coverage, and the existing infrastructures (reservoirs and canals) do not receive adequate maintenance, which means they leak, and so water is lost.

The supply of water to homes is neither constant nor continuous due to the drop in flow from the sources during the dry season, and in some communities there are households that are left without water for several days in a row.

² An edible species of guinea pig



Classroom in a school in the district of San Pedro de Cachora (Red Sur de Cáritas)

In terms of water quality, people often have to drink water that is not fit for human consumption, as its regular chlorination is often overlooked. The charge made for the water supply is set by the community, which means that the price differs from one community to another, although the minimum charge per household and month is one new sol³, and the maximum is 12 new soles, with the monthly per capita income in the districts of Acopía and Cachora being 155 new soles.

As regards the energy households use for cooking, only 7% have electricity or gas, and in all the other cases a stove is used that burns organic matter: firewood, dung, and farming waste, for example.

Education

Concerning education, although the level of illiteracy still remains high (mostly among women), today almost 100% of the school-age population (both boys and girls) attend local schools, which contrasts with the lower level of schooling prevailing among older people.

Both districts have infant and primary schools, and there are three secondary schools (two in the district of Acopía and one in the district of Cachora), located in the main towns, respectively.

All the schools have running water and electricity, but they do not all have sanitary facilities. The schools are poorly equipped and the furniture is generally in bad condition.

The teaching is wanting and little suited to the realities of farming life (these are areas in which Quechua is spoken). Furthermore, teachers are not familiar with current teaching methods and academic content, and there is high absenteeism among the children, as there is little to no control on the part of the State.

All children attend school from the age of six onwards, although those pupils that live in more remote areas have to walk for over an hour to do so.

There is no provision in either district for higher education or occupational training, which is why young people, mostly males, migrate to Lima or

3 1 New Sol= approx. 0.3 euros.

other cities in search of opportunities in education or employment. Young women, however, tend to stay in the area, with no access to better opportunities in education or employment.

This means that many people are very young when they start a family, having to take on parenting duties when they are still relatively immature and have little money.

Health

Both Acopía and Cachora have a health centre, but these are in the main town, which means that people living in the communities need to travel long distances to receive medical care, as there are no local health visits or campaigns.

The State has a care programme for pregnant women and children under the age of six, making it obligatory to attend check-ups during pregnancy and for healthy growth.

In general, the health centres have little equipment and few staff, and they are insufficient for suitably covering and caring for the entire population in these two districts, with children and women being the ones most affected by the poor quality of the health services.



Health Centre in Acopía (Zabalketa)

The most common disorders among children are linked to malnutrition due to a lack of the essential components of a healthy diet. The index of vulnerability to chronic child malnutrition recorded by Peru's National Statistics Office (INEI) in 2010 was 85% and 74% in the districts of Acopía and Cachora, respectively.

There are also problems of parasites and diarrhoeas caused by a lack of hygiene. In addition, the extreme cold is a common cause of respiratory complaints. All this is compounded by the problem of environmental pollution caused by the poor disposal of solid wastes.

In the case of women, there are shortcomings in the care provided during pregnancy, as not even an echograph is available, as well as during childbirth, so they often have to be transferred to other medical centres; they also suffer from urinary complaints.

Another major health-related problem involves domestic violence, which mainly involves men physically abusing their wives and children. Although this is a known problem, the districts of Acopía and Cachora do not have a local office for defending children and adolescents - the *Defensoría Municipal del Niño y Adolescente* (DEMUNA) - which is the authority responsible for responding to cases of domestic violence.

Roads

As regards **access by road**, both districts are geographically well located, as their main towns are about two hours away by road from the capital of their respective departments. As noted earlier, Acopía is 141 kilometres from Cusco, and Cachora is 52 kilometres away from Abancay. Although there is a significant difference between these two distances, the journey by road takes roughly the same amount of time: about two hours. This is due to the rugged terrain and the poor state of the roads.

The largest city interconnecting these two districts is Cusco, which is the main hub for all the economic corridors in the area. These economic corridors have



Group of people using public transport (Old Port Films)



Young woman leader using the Internet (Old Port Films)

been favoured in recent years by the building of the Interoceanic Highway. Nevertheless, the accessibility the communities of Acopía and Cachora have to these corridors is fairly limited, mainly because the roads in the area are largely unpaved or in a poor state of repair, and basically involve unsurfaced tracks, which hinder and delay the transport of passengers and goods.

The **public transport** service to both districts, Acopía and Cachora, caters solely for the main town in each case, and there is no regular bus service between the town and the communities, nor between the communities themselves, so people generally have to walk from one place to another. Only a few households own a private vehicle: car, truck, motorbike or bicycle.

Regarding **telecommunications**, neither of the two districts has a landline telephone service, but the two main towns and some communities have a satellite phone service, which is available to the public in small shops or community centres. There is also a mobile phone service provided by a single operator, and coverage tends to be only partial, as the surrounding

mountains and long distances weaken the signal. The internet can only be accessed in the town of Acopía, and its use is restricted to council staff.

3. Natural Resources and Productive Activities

Natural Resources

The districts of Acopía and Cachora have major natural resources (water, land, natural pastures, and forests) that provide a good platform for the development of agriculture, cattle farming and forestry.

The **lands** suitable for crop-growing and grazing account for around 35% in the case of Acopía, and 23% in the case of Cachora. All the other land area is suitable for forestry and protecting the environment (infiltration trenches, areas for the recovery of flora and fauna, etc.)

Nevertheless, the **soils** and their capacity for use are affected mainly by three factors:



Scenery in the Community of Miskiunoo (Zabalketa)

- Overexploitation (due to un-rotated crops and overgrazing)
- The use of chemical fertilisers and inputs
- Water erosion (large amounts of soil are washed off the deforested slopes during the rainy season)

The outcome of the combination of these three factors is a progressive loss of fertile soils, whose economic value is extremely important for the farming households in this area.

The local soils are suitable for **crops** such as potato, *mellico* and *oca*³, bean, pea, and barely, as well as for growing fodder species, such as alfalfa, ryegrass, clovers and others for cattle feed; and the higher lying areas provide natural pasturelands that are used for grazing livestock.

Both districts, Acopía and Cachora, have numerous different sources of **water**: rivers, lakes and springs. These cater for needs in terms of both human consumption and farming. Nevertheless, the dry season (between May and November) significantly reduces the levels in the lakes, as well as the flow in springs and rivers, which leads to water supply issues.

The use of water for irrigation is managed by the corresponding committees - “*Comités de riego*” - being regulated by a small annual payment that depends on the size of the plot. Use is made mainly of flood irrigation systems, which waste water and erode the soil.

In recent years, some institutions have promoted the use of technified irrigation systems involving sprinklers, but they are inefficient due to inadequate instruction

3 *Ullucus* and *Oxalis tuberosa* are root vegetables

in their use and the poor state of the infrastructures themselves, caused by a lack of maintenance.

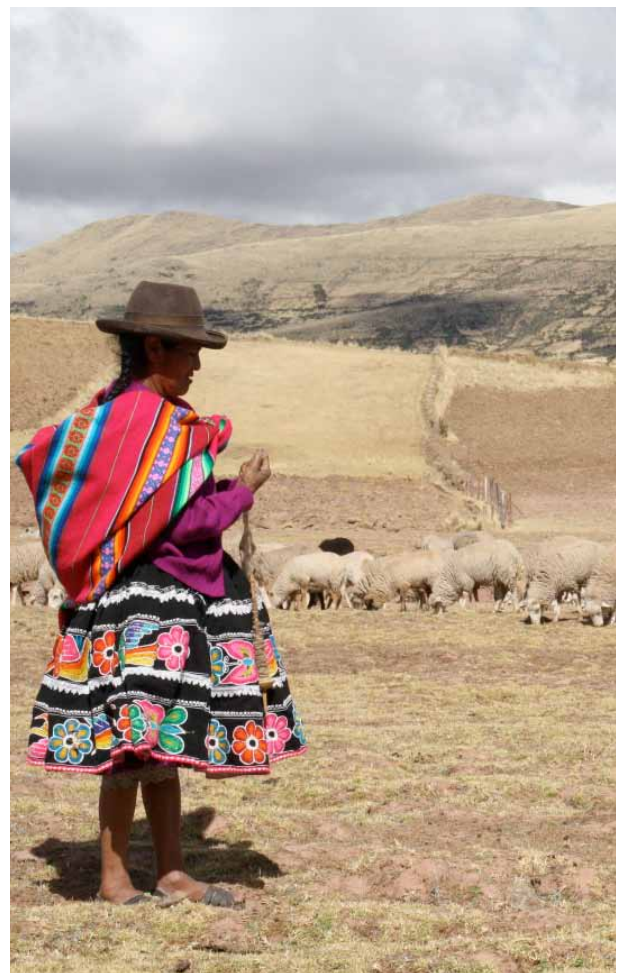
These natural resources of soil and water, together with air and the landscape, are negatively impacted by the **solid waste pollution** caused by domestic, commercial and institutional activities, as well as by the cleaning of streets and public areas in the towns. Refuse is collected only in the towns, being dumped on land on their outskirts without being treated in any way. What's more, there is a persistent habit of fly-tipping in the middle of fields, paths, rivers and streams.

Productive activities

The economy in the districts of Acopía and Cachora is based on farming and livestock activities, which employ around 90% of the economically active population of both sexes. Agriculture is pursued mainly to ensure food security, while livestock farming is a commercial enterprise designed to bolster household incomes.

Farming activity is pursued mainly on unirrigated land (dependent on rainfall), and still today it mainly involves the use of traditional tools, such as a scythe and a simple plough, and is therefore highly labour-intensive. The output from the land is being increasingly affected by ongoing climate change and the resulting increase in the severity of frost, hailstorms, droughts and flooding, which have a major impact on soil productivity. Thus, the crop yields per hectare may vary significantly from one campaign to another.

In terms of **livestock activity**, both districts are involved in breeding cattle, sheep, cuys, pigs, horses and poultry, with the number of animals per household ranging from just a few head up to several dozen. In recent years, dairy cattle and cuys have increased in economic importance in response to a greater demand from local and regional markets. Some institutions, furthermore, have promoted the breeding of cuys within women's organisations in order to meet the need for protein in the diets of the farming households themselves.



Woman farmer tending to her flock of sheep (Zabalketa)

As regards the technical management of these livestock concerns, different projects have been launched to develop several schemes in training and technical support, but this husbandry is still clearly lacking in both technical and commercial terms, with readily apparent shortcomings in feed, health, breeding, infrastructure, and the generation of value added, with limited access to competitive markets.

Concerning the involvement of women and men in these farming activities, they are both involved in agriculture and livestock activities. The tasks in agriculture are complementary, so the soil is ploughed



Agricultural farmers working in farming communities
(Zabalketa)

by both men and women, with the latter also weeding and removing any plant waste. Both sexes are involved in sowing, hilling⁴ and harvesting. On the other hand, women in livestock farming are traditionally involved in shepherding, milking and feeding the animals, while men are responsible for caring for their health and breeding. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable increase in the number of women involved in cuy breeding, and in many cases they are the ones mainly responsible for this activity.

In spite of their significant and growing involvement in farming activities, women are less prepared for their technical and commercial management, given they have had less access to skills training. The factors that curtail this access are low self-esteem, the little time available because of their greater devotion to domestic chores, and the little or non-existent support

they receive from their husbands and the community in general.

Furthermore, although both partners in the household are involved in the production, marketing and administration of their economic resources, men are by far the dominant partner in decision-making, either because they do not take their wives' opinions into account or because the women do not feel capable of making certain decisions because of their lower level of education.

As regards ownership of the land, although these farming activities take place on communal land, as the households are the rightful users it is registered in the name of the *comunero* or *comunera* in each family, although in some urban areas there are beginning to be cases in which the land is registered in the couple's name.

4. Political and institutional analysis

The districts of Acopía and Cachora are politically and institutionally alike, as they both have a network of institutions and organisations, and a series of interrelations with each other, which are the same in nature and importance.

The following are the main institutions: (A) Farming Community; (B) Local District Government; (C) Farming associations; and (D) Women's organisations.

A. Farming Community

Peru's Law on Farming Communities (Law No. 24656 of 1987) recognises and defines them as "organisations of public interest, lawfully established and with legal status, comprising households that live in and oversee certain lands, linked by ties of an ancestral, social, economic and cultural nature, expressed through the communal ownership of the land, communal work,

⁴ The action of forming hills or heaps; especially the earthing-up of plants (OED). This process is used with celery, thistles, endives, asparagus and other vegetables to make them more tender and whiter.

mutual support, democratic governance and the development of multi-sectorial activities, whose aims are focused on the rounded development of their members and of the country overall”.

The origin of this type of organisation dates back to the time of the Agrarian Reform, which began in 1963, with each one having the remit to address the administration and management of the natural and productive resources within their area, and thereby guarantee the means and conditions of life.

It is the area’s smallest organisational unit, being responsible for administering natural resources, and it provides the setting for the expression and survival of the cultural features and traditional forms of work of the Inca culture, which are based on the values and principles of solidarity, reciprocity and mutual support.

The people who are members of the farming communities have a series of common rights and duties based on the exploitation of certain natural resources, and they are organised into a governance structure that has three levels: (i) the communal assembly; (ii) the communal governing board; and (iii) specialist committees.

1. Communal assembly

It is the supreme authority, with ultimate responsibility over the approval of the main decisions related to the community’s development, and it is made up of all the *comuneros* and *comuneras* that are formally recognised as such.

On a monthly basis, the communal assembly holds an ordinary meeting, which is convened by its Governing Board, and decisions are reached democratically by simple majority, with one person one vote.

Within a community, the entire population (men and women) of legal age (18 and over) is required to register as members of the community. Amongst those registered, only men (husbands) receive the title of *comunero*, as the male is the acknowledged



A communal assembly meeting (Zabalketa)

“head of the household”. Accordingly, the only women accorded the status of *comuneras* are widows and/or single mothers. This means that the bulk of the communal assembly is made up by men, who on average account for 80% of all its members.

Women’s involvement is either not even considered or simply dismissed. This situation responds to a double rationale: it is assumed that women lack the necessary skills (given their lower level of instruction and training) to have an opinion on “apparently technical” matters, while in other cases it is thought that women are not interested in the topics being discussed. There is also a noticeable lack of self-esteem among women, and they are ignorant of their rights, which generally means that women attend these communal assemblies as mere spectators and do not play a truly active role.



Women and men attending a communal assembly (Zabalketa)

2. Communal Governing Board

This is the body responsible for managing and administering the community. It meets once a month, and it is renewed every two years by all the people registered in the community through a personal, secret and mandatory ballot. The election of the Governing Board is the sole decision at communal level in which men and women take part on an equal footing.

The governing body reaches its decisions by a simple majority, and it is generally made up of seven people: Chair, Deputy Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Auditor and two Members. Only a handful of women are present at this level, and we generally find only one woman, or two at the most, holding the offices of treasurer (because women are deemed to be more responsible when handling money) and/or simply members (which are auxiliary offices). Not a single woman has so far held the office of chair or deputy chair.

3. Specialist committees

There are, on the one hand, standing specialist committees for the supervision of a natural resource, such as water or woodlands; and on the other, there are those set up for a specific activity or task, such as, for example: sanitation, land ownership, livestock, etc., which are generally temporary or short-term.

The eight intervention communities have “Irrigation committees” supervising the management and use of water in productive activities, and “Potable water committees” responsible for overseeing the quality of the water for human consumption.

The foremost resource and strategy among these farming communities is communal participation and labour, through which they undertake productive activities, social schemes and infrastructure projects, which are submitted as proposals to the community budget, the *Presupuestos Participativos*.



Women and men voting in a communal assembly (Red Sur de Cáritas)

Nevertheless, because of the poor management skills of the communal governing boards, either at an administrative and technical level or of some other kind, some of the projects approved are never carried out; with the negative repercussions this has within the community.

B. Local District Governance

The local district governments are the main and closest authority representing the State, and they are run by the mayor and councillors, who are elected by popular vote for a four-year term.

According to Peru's Organic Law on Municipalities (Law No. 27972 of 2003) "Local governments are the grassroots agencies for the territorial organisation of the State and the immediate channels of neighbourhood participation in public affairs, which institutionalise and autonomously manage the specific interests of the corresponding collectives..."

Within the regulatory framework of the current process of decentralisation being undertaken in Peru, local governments are being afforded new powers and are managing more funds, which in turn mean new responsibilities and faculties for the design and management of schemes that favour the economic, social, cultural and environmental development of their districts.

In the case of Acopía, the intervention has focused on improving access to basic water and sanitation services, as well as on promoting dairy cattle farming for the sale of dairy products, such as cheese and yogurt, and boosting the breeding of cuys for their sale as meat.

In the case of Cachora, the breeding of cuys is being promoted through support for setting up groups of producers of both sexes in each community.

As regards women's participation in local government, a series of formal issues have been addressed, such



UA community leader presenting a proposal to the assembly
(Red Sur de Cáritas)

as, for example, the appearance of women candidates on the lists of political parties, although their specific weight is small, and they are perceived socially as merely a token presence.

There is a woman councillor in both the local governments of Acopía and Cachora. In Acopía there is another woman heading the technical team in the department of social development, and there are a few more women in the accounting department and secretariat.

Citizen Participation

This same new regulatory framework also provides for different and diverse areas and mechanisms that enable people to become involved in local public management, largely through the following bodies and instruments:

- Communal Development Plan, which is a process of hands-on planning in which people adopt an

organised approach to the proposal of suggestions that favour the development of their community or district.

- Local Coordination Councils, which provide a setting for coordination and consultation between local authorities and organisations from civil society.
- Surveillance Committees, which are responsible for overseeing the proper performance of development plans and the fulfilment of agreements.

These hands-on mechanisms are part of the machinery to be articulated jointly by the Farming Communities and Local Authorities.

Nevertheless, there are a number of omissions and inconsistencies in current legislation, and there is still no system allowing for the efficient allocation and distribution of economic resources by the Local Authority, which has a direct impact on local public management. What's more, there is some resistance to citizen participation among local authorities and a widespread lack of information among both men and women in the local population regarding the exercise of their rights and the fulfilment of their duties as citizens.

Women's involvement in citizen participation and decision-making bodies is also limited. One such example is the Local Coordination Councils - *Consejos de Coordinación Local* (CCL), in which civil society is represented by communal chairpersons, who are all men. At present, the area where women have the best chance of making themselves heard is in the drafting of the Communal Budgets, the *Presupuestos Participativos*, as the different grassroots organisations, including women's organisations, are entitled to submit their proposals.

C. Farmer organisations

These are officially recognised organisations, as they are recorded in the public register; they are governed by their own articles, and they have been set up for



Farmers' organisation displaying the produce from its harvest (Red Sur de Cáritas)

the purpose of enhancing the activities of production and marketing.

They have members of both sexes, who propose, organise and undertake administrative procedures, as well as provide labour and perform tasks linked to their productive sector. They share a vision of the future they would like, albeit with short-term goals, but they have limited know-how regarding potential productive activities and their suitable management.

The resources at their disposal come either from the contributions made by their members or from sundry payments in kind from the local authority and other public and/or private institutions. Unfortunately, these organisations rely heavily on government subsidies, and when these dry up, the impact is keenly felt at organisational and technical level. The most effective associations are those whose members pay a fee and organise fund-raising activities on a regular basis. This

provides the cash they need to invest in infrastructure (chicken coops, sheds, etc.), buy cattle for breeding, or cover other needs.

Despite this arrangement of associations, the actual marketing of produce is generally undertaken on an individual basis, and only in a few cases are the profits earned through these activities shared out among their members.

The district of Acopía has one organisation for dairy producers, three for cuy breeders, one for sheep farmers, and one for beef cattle farmers.

The district of Cachora has five organisations for cuy breeders, one organisation for agricultural and livestock farmers and beekeepers, and one organisation for avocado producers.

These farming organisations, especially those for breeders of dairy cattle and cuys, now play a crucially important role within the social fabric, as they are



Meeting of a women's organisation (Red Sur de Cáritas)

championing the new proposals and strategies for local economic development, as regards both public players (the local authority above all), and private ones (with international cooperation organisations above all).

D. Women's organisations

Both Acopía and Cachora have organisations that have been set up for women in response to their motherhood, as the ones responsible for feeding their families. These organisations have been promoted both by the State (through Food Programmes), and by private institutions, such as NGOs, for example.

The *Comités de Vaso de Leche* (Glass of Milk Committees) and *Clubes de Madres* (Mothers' Clubs) are responsible for distributing the resources received from the State through Food Programmes and for providing a food bank service for vulnerable groups within their community (pregnant women and nursing mothers, and children between the ages of 0 and 6, adolescents, and the extremely poor, amongst others). These are generally seen as "women's" organisations, as the provision of food and infant childcare are associated with a female role. These types of programmes play a key part in local development because of their ability to mobilise farming women.

The communities and *anexos* in the district of Acopía have food security organisations called *Organizaciones de Seguridad Alimentaria*, which are made up of associations of mothers with children under the age of five, whose remit is to improve food security. To do so, these women receive training and support from a local NGO for the breeding of cuys and starting organic vegetable gardens.

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