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## **Feminization of the field**

Problematic:

Since 1950 the percentage of total population in rural zones in Mexico has decreased from 57.4 % to 22.2 % in the year of 2010 (INEGI, 2010)<sup>1</sup>. That means that in 50 years we have lost 35.2% of the total population of the rural zones in Mexico.

Migration means when there is a movement of people to a new place in order to find work or better living conditions. In rural zones, population decide to move to the city because they see at TV or hear in the radio that opportunities are far from their home and that if they stay where you only have a limited options of working, you will not live the true life. So they leave their families in order to look for these “chances” that the city offers to end up working for a minimum of the salary and to be always half-living because you don’t even have time to breathe if you want a better living condition. But in a city, that’s how things work.

Feminization refers to a process in which there starts being a balance between the roles of different genders when it comes to working force or a job in specific. It is when women start becoming more and more involved in activities where men were traditionally in charge. (Press, 2015)

Near Mazatlán, a city in Sinaloa, México, we can find the town “El Quelite” that has a population of 1722 persons, from which 901 are women and 821 are men (Pueblos America, 2015). In this place we can find a community of dairy products producers that also dedicate their life to cultivate mango, lemon and sorghum. One of the favorite places to visit in “El Quelite” is the cheese factory where you can learn the process of elaboration of the local products; products that habitants of “El Quelite” sell or buy for self-consumption.

The principal activity of this town is cattle breeding. That is why the production of sorghum is so useful because it is the main food of cattle and it is one of the most important seeds for humans thanks to its resistance to heat and droughts. (Historia de los Cereales y Derivados)

A common family in “El Quelite” is formed by a woman and two to three children. Women have to work at home separating grains but with no technique. Most of the times they raise her children by themselves because their husbands are working in the city or in the USA, which gives them all the responsibility of their children education and nourishment.

Agriculture is the art or science of cultivating the field for food production. Humans know this activity for more than 10,000 years, this helped them becoming sedentary and stop moving around which helped them become able to establish in a place that benefited their simple needs. With the Industrial Revolution and the creation of machines, this activity is each day less and less important for people that live in the field (Pimentel, 2014). In “El Quelite” agriculture and cattle breeding is a convenient activity thanks to the climate that is very hot due to the location near the coast and the “Quelite” river that helps the growth of sorghum. The only problem is that just like many other communities in Mexico, El Quelite is losing its population due to the migration and the search of new opportunities.

Now a days “El Quelite” has become one of the most visited places in Mazatlan thanks to the beautiful culture and the richness in traditions. One of the most admired things in “El Quelite” is the

love that its habitants have to their town and their origins. Tourists that visit this amazing town are surprised to find the ancient game of “Ulama” that is a tradition from the Aztec culture that consists on a ball game with a rubber ball. This village in Mazatlan is well known by the commitment and the unity in its habitants. For some months, the town paints the houses and the public spaces in order to give a colorful look to the streets and the center of the town. Unfortunately, the amount of attention that this place is receiving is convincing its habitants that living from tourism is a viable option and they are starting to forget about their original economic activities. So no matter how unite and how much they love their home, if they start forgetting about their traditions in agriculture and cattle breeding their culture will disappear and “El Quelite” will become a touristic place and no more.

In “El Quelite” the index of education is reduced to a kindergarten school, a primary school, a high school and a trade school, where mainly women learn basic house economics (Mazatlan). In this trade school the students learn how to take care of their houses and the majority of the students are women because men are supposed to be working in the field. When the young men of these communities go looking for money and progress far from “El Quelite”, women are abandoned to work by themselves without knowing the necessary techniques to continue with the tradition and the production of sorghum and caring of the cattle. (En El Quelite todo el mundo se reúne, 2014)

One good example of this situation is Dr. Marcos Gabriel Osuna Tirado, who was born and raised in “El Quelite”. Since he was a little boy he always looked for ways to improve the living in his town, and the only way that he could find it, was leaving his home behind. (Dr. Marcos Osuna Tirado, 2009)

What these people need in order to conserve their traditions and their culture, even with high index of migration is to teach women how to cultivate sorghum, to use tractors and to take care of the cattle.

The Global Gender Gap index was created with the purpose of increasing the awareness of the difficulties that the disparities of gender generate in small communities and towns. This index is divided into four main points that include: economic participation, education, politic empowerment and health. (AGRA)

Maybe the word “empowerment” can sound terrorizing in a place where things have been like this for a long time, but empowering means only to support an ability, to encourage women to do what they need in order to preserve what they love. Empowering women in “El Quelite” is to include them as an essential group of the community where they will support the small part of the pillar of their town to make it stronger (Press, 2015). Society talks all the time about our evolution as equals and the strength that we can earn by working together, but the truth is that this speech given all around the world is only words without a real meaning; we have to stop telling and start acting.

In order to preserve the production and the culture of this community its inhabitants have to get out of a bubble in which most of towns of this kind live; thinking that men and women are designated for specific jobs since the day that they are born. The truth is that one gender is as capable of doing something, as the other.

“Gender equality is not simply socially desirable; is the central pillar in the fight against hunger.” (UN Millennium Project’s Hunger Task Force, 2015) We aim gender equality when we are still tied to religion and old beliefs that stop us from advancing to a world full of possibilities. WE can measure gender equality by studying the balance between the roles that a man and a woman have in a community and the importance that each job has. In Mexico 50% of the workers are women and 70% of the poorest are women (UN women). How can this be if we hear every day that we have

reached the day in which we are all the same; that's not true, no matter which job we are talking about, a woman will always receive less than a man does for doing exactly the same.

Education is the root of progress; stopping this loose of culture and traditions depends on how the community helps each other. People that know how to work with the cattle and with the field can help women that stay in town while young men leave looking for opportunities in the cities. We could create workshops directed by persons of the community that have the necessary knowledge to help the ones that have the capacity of supporting the production and preserving the tradition. We also need to make the habitants in "El Quelite" realize that the traditions that they practice now a days are the main reason for the tourism to grow in their town, and that depending on tourist is not an option because they will be losing a long history of their home. No one will remember "The Bean Ladies" or will ever visit the cheese factory again because they will be busy looking for tourist and selling false legends and cheap souvenirs.

Persons that belong to the same community can direct the workshop and teach women how to cultivate sorghum, how to know if the sprout is healthy and in which time it is better to harvest. They can teach women how to make cheese and how to take care of the cattle properly. This workshop can take place at the center of the city where people are covered by the shade of the tropical fauna and where they will be able to be at an open space and at the same time be a big group of people taking the workshop.

In the speech of Dr. Marcos Osuna, he talks about the people in "El Quelite" and how important it is for them to be a united community and to preserve their history, to be known as one of the most beautiful places in Mexico and to be the town where all the habitants help each other because they know that in order to grow, they need to be together. That's why the workshop could be given in the morning while children are at school so that women can take it without concern and be back at home to prepare dinner. If we don't want to interfere with the daily routine of women in town, the workshop will have to last an hour or two so that they don't feel like they are forgetting some other responsibilities that they have had all their life. What good the people of "El Quelite" are doing to their home if they are abandoning the roots of what they are just to enter the modern and empty world?

## Conclusion

The feminization of the field in small places like "El Quelite" can be very important because migration of young men provokes that tradition of cultivating and cattle breeding are slowly disappearing. Things like sorghum, cheese and milk are resources that humans use to survive in their daily life and we can't stand losing this kind of information that can be used by future generations.

The big problem now a days is that we are being consumed by modernism, we are forgetting about the details of life that are really worth it and we forget to think for the future and to anticipate, as the native Americans did, the consequences of our acts (Ernesto Sabato, 2000). Media and stereotypes of what they are supposed to be doing are absorbing young people and they let go all the things in which they believe to chase a dream that is not even theirs.

Women in rural areas are recognized internationally for the importance that they mean for the progress and the development in the production of food and in the process of poverty eradication. One example is the International Day of Rural Women that is celebrated on October 15 and the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (UN women). We, humans are not ignorant. We know that we need each other, which we can learn from the person right next to us, but society has provoked fear on us of being judged for not being able to survive by ourselves. The detail that we

are not seeing here is that this fear that grows in our hearts day by day will end with us and with all the things that we have managed to build until now. And like in the myth of the Babel Tower we will not be able to understand each other thanks to the indifference that we have developed and we will fall apart, losing everything that we were trying to reach.

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<sup>i</sup> The National Statistic and Geography Institute (INEI) is an autonomous organism of the Mexican government that coordinates the national system of statistics and geography information of the country.