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## Failure and Success of Tropical Research and Development Practices Using the Example of Pacora, Nicaragua

DIANA KURZWEG

*University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences (BOKU), Department of Sustainable Agricultural Systems, Austria*

### Abstract

The intent of this investigation was to evaluate the success of former development projects and research work to improve farmers' livelihood and promote environmental friendly farming. Investigations were carried out in Pacora, a typical rural Nicaraguan village of about 250 habitants with a high grade of poorness. In that village, different types of projects were realized, such as top-down approaches, participating action research, farmer-to-farmer programs, farmer trainings and classical field trials with low influence of farmers to the management and design. Failure or success of these projects are detected and explained. The findings are based on project reports and empirical studies. Over a period of five months, participant observation, as well as formal and informal talks have been done in Pacora. Various obstacles could be detected in the ecological field as well as in social and financial areas. Amongst others, these had been that farmers focus on their own advantages in the decision process and hardly transmit new technical knowledge to other families or groups of villagers. Neither they contribute to communal benefits or participate in common actions. The consequence was intensified, when new coming agencies were working with the same few families like other agencies before, despite of different approaches of participant finding. Further, the difficulty to change traditions, overcome apathy and convince to long lasting adaptation of new technologies was obvious. Participatory action research showed a high adaptation rate among farmers, when technologies were explained well. Several new technologies have failed due to ecological difficulties and unsuitability to the local situation, or because further adaptation for the local situation or technical support was missing. Several donations have failed to improve the farmers situation by far. Improvements, such as sudden connection to electricity, have caused new, fatal difficulties for the villagers. The on-side trials have contributed little to increase farmers knowledge or to change their agricultural practices. Diverse recommendations were concluded from the results to help development agents to realize greater and long-lasting success in comparable situations in rural areas. Furthermore, ideas for large scaled projects for basic progresses in rural low developed areas were derived, which need to be carried out in cooperation with the government.

**Keywords:** Evaluation, farmer training, livelihood, participation, poverty reduction, sustainable development

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**Contact Address:** Diana Kurzweg, University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences (BOKU), Department of Sustainable Agricultural Systems, Gregor-Mendel-Strasse 33, 1180 Vienna, Austria, e-mail: dk.starlight@web.de