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Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply**



Sustainable Development Goal 5

GENDER EQUALITY

CONTRIBUTIONS OF EMBRAPA

*Cristina Arzabe
Valéria Cristina Costa*

Technical Editors

Translated by
Paulo de Holanda Moraes

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Embrapa

Parque Estação Biológica (PqEB)
Av. W3 Norte (Final)
70770-901 Brasília, DF
Phone: +55 (61) 3448-4433
www.embrapa.br
www.embrapa.br/fale-conosco/sac

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Chapter 4

Access to natural resources – strengthening of mangaba gatherer women in Brazil¹

Dalva Maria da Mota

Josué Francisco da Silva Junior

Raquel Fernandes de Araújo Rodrigues

Introduction

Accessing and controlling natural resources, including water, flora and fauna, is particularly important for women in the countryside and in the forest, indigenous women, *quilombolas* and other traditional communities. In this sense, this chapter will address the contributions of the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa), which work to grant recognition and equal rights to female rural workers, especially extractive workers, in accordance with national laws (target 5.A). In this manner, research and development activities contribute to ending the different forms of discrimination against women (target 5.1) through strengthening national policies to promote gender equality (target 5.C).

The work presented is a result of the accumulation of 15 years of research and development carried out by Embrapa and partners in Brazil, from an inter-institutional and interdisciplinary team composed of committed professionals, both with the production of knowledge about traditional communities in situations of economic vulnerability and with the conservation of biodiversity, especially natural areas of mangaba tree occurrence (*Hancornia speciosa* Gomes). Mangaba is a native Brazilian tree whose fruit has great aroma and flavor, being used especially in the production of juice, ice cream and sweets. As such, the objective of the work was to trace the trajectory of studies and actions aimed at

¹ The research that gave rise to the results presented in this chapter have been carried out over the years in partnership with several institutions and people outside the framework of Embrapa. The role of Professor Heribert Schmitz of the Federal University of Pará (UFPA) and the agronomist Emanuel Pereira Oliveira of the Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (Incra) in Sergipe should be highlighted. They are authors of various papers and chapters and coordinated important stages of the work, without which the understanding of the binomial conservation of natural resources vs. traditional communities could not be achieved.

improving the conditions of life and gender equality by supporting the political action of women extractivists of mangaba.

Due to the importance and preservation of the stages and habits of fruit collection and consumption, as well as the conservation of mangaba tree remnants, the coast of Sergipe and a region of the Extractive Reserve (Resex) of Maracanã, Pará, were the targets of the most complete studies. The dialogue with representatives of public and private institutions directly involved with the subject of mangaba extractivism occurred in parallel with the research efforts. Methods of the social and natural sciences were mixed in order to constitute a set of data in the institutions through the specificity of extractivism and the pluriactivity of those who practice it.

Taking into account the problem of extractivism carried out by women, five lines of study and intervention were defined within the scope of institutional action, namely: 1) characterization of women; 2) in situ conservation of genetic resources; 3) collective action and recognition; 4) access to public policies; and 5) socialization and exchanges, as described as follows.

Characterization of extractivism and mangaba gatherer women

Mangaba extractivism is predominantly carried out by women who live in mangaba trees occurrence areas in the Coastal Shore, Coastal Tablelands and *Cerrado* of Brazil. However, these women do not have guaranteed access to resources and alternate between different activities according to the environmental offer. They accumulate great wisdom regarding the natural resources they manage and are, admittedly, responsible for the conservation of biodiversity in the areas where they live.

The recent changes in land use and the disorderly occupation of the regions where they live have reduced the work space of these women, due to the opening of paved roads and bridges; tourism and leisure activities; expansion of urbanization and agriculture. Shrimp farming, real estate tourism, eucalyptus plantations and the promotion of agrofuel-producing plants, especially sugarcane, are also risks to the conservation of the natural resources on which they depend to survive. The valorization and privatization of the land makes extractive women even more vulnerable, meaning, in many cases, the expulsion from the places where they traditionally worked and lived.

Investments were made by the authors to produce a set of data and knowledge about the extractivists. Approximately 300 people were interviewed to characterize these women. At the same time, subsidies were built and actions were taken to support their participation in forums that bring together traditional peoples and communities, guarantee access to public policies and recognition actions. By means of a request from the Federal Prosecution Service (MPF), studies and mappings on extractivism were carried out to demonstrate the situation of access to resources and the conservation level.

In situ conservation of mangaba trees genetic resources

The mangaba tree is an important component in maintaining the sustainability of the ecosystems where it occurs, and its conservation is closely related to the traditional communities that use their fruit in the harvest season as a source of income. In situ conservation, that is, the conservation of the plants in their places of origin and the germplasm of the mangaba tree by the extractivists is an efficient alternative of conservation of genetic resources, since these traditional communities depend on the maintenance of this resource for their survival, both in private areas and in areas of common access.

In this sense, 227 natural areas of mangaba tree occurrence and more than 170 mangaba tree extractive communities in Brazil (Northeast, Minas Gerais, Tocantins, Goiás and Pará states) were identified, mapped and georeferenced, as well as the threats to these remnants. In Sergipe, two detailed mappings of natural areas and communities were made in 2009 and 2016, identifying 222 natural areas, which occupy 34,033 ha and 64 mangaba collecting communities (Vieira et al., 2009; Rodrigues et al., 2017).

The knowledge of the extractivist ways of life allowed the understanding of its relations with the environment and other actors and in common agreement with the communities; different types of intervention for conservation and access to natural areas were carried out. A set of good practices for in situ conservation of resources was also generated by the mangaba collecting communities in conjunction with researchers and involved management practices in natural areas, in private and post-harvest areas (Silva Júnior et al., 2016).

Collective action and recognition

The studies on collective action began with the mobilization for the *Meeting of Female Mangaba Collectors* in 2007, in Aracaju, SE. From this event, there was an investment both in the support to the political organization of gatherer women to make themselves recognized, as well as in relation to the written and photographic record of the different events. Sequentially, both the problem of conflicts to access resources and mobilization initiatives and the management of natural resources were studied.

With regard to the forms of resource management, the modes of access to resources were identified, namely: extractivism in areas of free access; extractivism in private areas with restricted access; extractivism in private areas by the rural partnership namely *meia*²; extractivism in own private areas; and extractivism in community-owned areas (Mota et al., 2011).

The issue of the political mobilization of the extractivists privileged the experience of Sergipe, considering that there was an emergence of an exclusive social movement of women extractivist of mangaba in 2007, with the foundation of the *Movement of the Female Collectors of Mangaba* (MCM). In this process, an important fact was the achievement of a collective identity of female mangaba collectors who provided recognition for themselves and for others. The conditions for the creation of the movement, the political opportunities, the purposes, the strategies of action and the modes of mobilization were at the center of the analyzes and persisted until 2017.

Since 2007, extractive women from Sergipe have been mobilized with the support of public and private actors and have conquered different initiatives specific to them, among which the recognition by Law 7.082, of December 16, 2010, that recognizes them as culturally differentiated, accessing the Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos (Food Acquisition Program – PAA), adding value to mangaba by the manufacture of sweets, candies and biscuits, and founding of associations and construction of fruit processors.

Access to public policies

The relationship between female mangaba extractivists and public policies was analyzed from an objective and subjective perspective, with emphasis on the

² One provides the means of production, and the other employs his/her workforce and both share the profits and losses resulting from the partnership contract.

predominant access to the Bolsa Família Program (PBF) and Seguro Desemprego do Pescador Artesanal (Unemployment Insurance of the Artisanal Fisherman – SDPA), the latter, due to the fact that they are also shellfisherwomen (Mota et al., 2014a).

Particularity should be attributed to the participation of a small group of extractivists in the PAA, the first experience of commercialization of mangaba in a collective and institutionalized manner (Brasil, 2003).

Regarding the organization of work in the perspective of gender equality, the main conclusions of this work have shown that public policy programs influence: a) the reorganization of daily work in extractivism, especially with regard to the reduction of the involvement of children and young people in the activity and the intensity of the work; b) strengthening the traditional roles of men in the public sphere and women in the domestic sphere, in the case of the BFP, and in diluting the boundaries between these roles in the PAA; c) the reduction of the workload in the case of SDPA and in the increase of the work in the PAA; and d) the different senses that are attributed to the work (Mota et al., 2014b). In the data of 2017, no group of extractivists participated in the PAA. The causes presented by them are related to excessive bureaucracy.

Different groups of extractivists have provided products derived from mangaba to the Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar (National School Feeding Program – PNAE). However, the bureaucratic difficulties of regularizing and accessing the program and irregular participation mean that a small number have access to this policy.

More recently, the actions related to the demarcation of an extractive reserve conservation unit on the southern coast of Sergipe have relied on the attention of researchers of the team through the provision of data and information on extractivists and natural resources, as well as their participation in the interinstitutional debate to seek alternative public policies to guarantee access to plants by those who use them traditionally.

One of the most outstanding achievements of the work of researchers in partnership with MCM and politicians linked to social groups was the creation of State Law 7.082 of December 16, 2010, which recognizes the Sergipe female mangaba tree extractivists as a culturally differentiated group.

Socialization and exchange between gatherer women

The events of socialization, training and exchanges between mangaba gatherer women began in Sergipe in 2007, the mobilization of which was carried out by Embrapa and partners with the *I Meeting of Female Mangaba Collectors of Sergipe*, when, for the first time in the history of this traditional group, their problems and outlined actions for the mobilization in defense of their ways of life and knowledge and, consequently, of the conservation of the mangaba trees and of the biodiversity were discussed. The meeting was attended by a representative of the Movimento Interestadual das Quebradeiras de Coco-Babaçu do Maranhão, Pará, Piauí e Tocantins (Interstate Movement of Female Coco-Babassu Breakers of Maranhão, Pará, Piauí and Tocantins – MIQCB). At the time, a committee was created that originated the current formation of the MCM.

In March 2008, exchanges were provided in three municipalities in the state of Sergipe to provide the exchange of experience among the collectors about the daily work of extractivism, as well as the survey of local problems faced with possible solutions alternatives. Also in 2008, the mangaba collectors started attending forums of technical-scientific discussions of national scope, like the *VII Simpósio Brasileiro de Etnobiologia e Etnoecologia (VII Brazilian Symposium on Ethnobiology and Ethnoecology)*, in Belém, PA.

In April 2009, the *II Encontro das Catadoras de Mangaba de Sergipe (II Meeting of Female Mangaba Collectors of Sergipe)* took place. The objective of this meeting was to analyze the main achievements and obstacles faced by the MCM from its creation. In that same year, an exchange took place between the mangaba collectors of Sergipe and the women from the north of Minas Gerais, in Rio Pardo de Minas; and the participation of these women in the Seminar on *Conquistas, Demandas e Experiências do Extrativismo em Sergipe e Norte de Minas Gerais (Achievements, Demands and Experiences of Extractivism in Sergipe and North of Minas Gerais)*, promoted by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Brasília.

Between 2013 and 2014, exchanges were also carried out between the mangaba tree collectors of Pará and Sergipe, one of them in the Resex Marinha region of Maracanã, PA, and others in the municipalities of Indiaroba and Barra dos Coqueiros, SE. The aim of the exchanges was to share experiences and draw up a common platform for action to reinforce the status of extractivists.

In addition, Embrapa and partners have been supporting gatherer women in the process of political mobilization in the last 10 years to guarantee access to the areas in which they practice extractivism, by providing information on their relationships with different institutions through the Comissão Nacional de Desenvolvimento Sustentável dos Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais (National Committee of Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities – CNPCT), chaired by the Ministry of Social and Agrarian Development (MDSA); Comissão Mista Intersectorial do Plano Nacional para Fortalecimento das Comunidades Extrativistas e Ribeirinhas (Mixed Inter-Sectoral Committee of the National Plan for the Strengthening of Extractivist and Riverside Communities – Planafe); and the Comissão Nacional de Fortalecimento das Reservas Extrativistas e dos Povos Extrativistas Costeiros e Marinho (National Committee for the Strengthening of Extractivist Reserves and Coastal and Marine Extractivist Peoples – Confrem).

Final considerations

Research and development work by Embrapa and partners in Brazil lasting almost 2 decades to strengthen the condition of mangaba gatherer women presents the difficulties of social reproduction of groups that depend on access to natural resources to survive in a context of increasing privatization, and access to public policies. This situation implies challenges that involve the recognition of the importance of these groups as holders of knowledge and practices essential to the in situ conservation of native species and to guarantee their access to natural resources.

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