

Changing a Machismmo society step by step

Beatriz Claros is a confident woman, part of the growing number of women working and taking their full part in society. She works at the Ministry of Economy and gives technical support to small cooperatives on business and agriculture. When I met her, she was visiting the shrimp cooperative supported by Christian Aid partner PROCARES.



She explained.

“Women have earned the opportunity to be in this cooperative. When it comes to fishing and agriculture they would earn about 60% less than a man doing the same job. In the cooperative, they get the same share as the men. They are learning to be more active and confident citizens.”

When asked if things are changing in the home, she laughed, “In most households, Mum still gets up first to get breakfast and then goes off to work. She comes home to prepare a meal and then returns to work. She returns in the evening to do start more cooking and washing etc. Whereas the man, he has his meals ready for him when comes home and everything is done for him. However, in this rural community, the women generally are more empowered because of education and training from PROCARES and this has resulted in less domestic violence.”

Beatriz, her partner and their two and a half year old son, live in San Salvador where they have a small business together. She is a fully trained agronomist, who studied at the National Agricultural College. Her mother and father were both guerrillas and she was born in exile in Nicaragua. She remembers that people then trusted you more and there was less violence. Today, she said, there is much more violence. The first time she was robbed was in San Salvador. She was on a bus and, although she made a noise, everyone just backed away down

the other end of the bus and did not help. She could not understand this but has realised that most people are fearful. From an early age, her mother taught her to work.

“I sold products on a little stall when I was 7 years old. I worked whilst I was at high school. I started studying biology but could not pay. However, I managed to get a scholarship to pay my way. The war changed my mother. I come from a long line of matriarchs so I am bringing up my son differently from many of my compatriots. My partner originally saw men as superior but now he understands gender inequality much more and is happy to take care of our son when I need him to. He sees the social inequality and the injustice women face and understands.”

IMAGE© Commitment for Life: Beatriz Claros