



*Information in English*

**Welcome to join the Branches Network in Blekinge**

**We want women to take an active part of family forestry.**

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# ***Facts about Grenverket***

Grenverket = the Branches Network in Blekinge

The association started as a loose network in 1992, sprung from a series of study-circles for 50 female forest owners. None of the participants in the circles wanted to end the studies, so the leaders had to continue by arranging a series of excursions.

In the first 7 years the network was sponsored by the local forest organisations, such as

Forestry Commission, all the local forest companies and Lrf (farmers association)

The loose network was 1999 replaced by a regular association. President ever since the start has been Helene Reiter, vice president is Cecilia Rooth. Both were leaders of the first studycircles, and both started their forestry career in the local forestry school 1972.

The vision of Grenverket is:

Female forest owners should in the same extent as male take interest in their rural heritage and feel that they are able to use and develop their properties.

The aim of Grenverket is:

To fortify and strengthen reliance, self esteem and self-confidence and educational knowledge in all forestry aspects. Women should venture/ dare to take decisions and regard themselves as rural enterprisers.

The activities in Grenverket are:

Study circles, excursions, “forest woman of the year”, participation in all kinds of rural activities, lectures, education of entrepreneurs etcetera.

The results of Grenverket are:

- 90 members, half of them frequently participating in all activities.
- Sisters, widows, single women daring to take over the family property without any male “back up”.
- Wives and daughters enthusiastic sharing forestry decisions and practice side by side with equally enthusiastic men.
- Higher business and silviculture activity in the forest, specially appreciated by the timber buyers in the region.
- The most active women have developed a group of entrepreneurs, planing to work together in different kind of activities in a rural development project.
- All nominations and elected women for the local boards of forest owners association Södra are recruited from Grenverket
- A contribution to development for native women in Ecuador

# “The Branches Network”- Grenverket

female forest owners in Blekinge

Welcome to the Branches Network!

We are an independent association of women interested in forestry, based in the county of Blekinge in SE Sweden.

We want to bring out the women to take part in decisions in the family forestry.

We also want to encourage young woman to take interest in forestry studies.

We provide education in forms of “study-circles”, excursions and so on to give women chance to study in community with other women

Each year we choose “the forest woman of the year”, to encourage and inspire other women.

We support and take an active part in rural development activities, in co-operation with other organisations in the region.

We spend a lot of pleasant, stimulating and instructive time together!

All women are welcome, with or without experience and knowledge of forestry!

Welcome to our web site [www.grenverket.se](http://www.grenverket.se)

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## *About the Ecuador exchange project*

In 2003 Grenverket together with the regional Lrf-women (LRF is the federation of Swedish farmers ) joined a project started by a Swedish aid organisation called UBV( a Swedish aid organisation working for civil rights and education). Six women from the organisation FENOCIN (Federation of native small farmers in Ecuador) from the Cayambe-area visited six forestry farming women in Blekinge. In common for all these organisations is to work for a sustainable situation for women.

The purpose of the project was to exchange experiences from working locally in small networks. It was also meant to strengthen and inspire women in both countries working in organisations with focus on democracy and sustainable use of rural land.

The project was arranged so that each of the women from Ecuador teamed up with one of the six women from Blekinge. During their three week stay in August, they took part of the everyday life of their team mates, to promote cultural exchange. They visited several female farmers and forest owners, to give a picture of the rural heritage and development in rural areas in our county. At their study visit they also got to participate in forest planning, tractor driving, the milking of cows with milking machine and so on.

We also spent a lot of time discussing the aspects of the Swedish society such as the political system, democracy in general, social welfare and the cultural similarities and differences between the two countries. The women from Ecuador were particularly interested in how the global problem with violence against women was handled in a welfare country such as Sweden, and of course noticed that we have not solved that problem at all.

In November the same year six women from Sweden made an unforgettable journey to Ecuador. They followed the Ecuadorian women as close as possible in their daily work. They found of course a lot of differences but also a lot of common problems and issues in the work for developing a sustainable situation for women.

The result of the exchange project for the Swedish women was:

Respect for the culture of the indigenos (natives) of Ecuador

Knowledge of the problems of the women in South America

Experience of working with international issues and developing countries

A strong feeling of solidarity with the native women in FENOCIN

A commitment to go on supporting new projects in the Cayambe-area

The results for the Ecuadorian women was, as well as we can understand from our further contacts and a re-visit 2005 from Manuela Copacango, now secretary in FENOCIN:

Most of the participating women still work in women's projects. They have strengthened their positions and made achievements in their breeding of guinea pigs and in their production of vegetables.

The level of education has increased among the participating women.