



Promotion of rural women's agricultural organizations in the Province of Magdalena Centro-Cundinamarca.

**Fomento de las Organizaciones de mujeres rurales agriculturas en la Provincia Magdalena Centro-
Cundinamarca**

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the department of Cundinamarca (Colombia) has suffered a decrease in investment and, therefore, in the development of local agriculture. Within the department, the province of Magdalena Centro has the highest poverty rates; the armed conflict that has been going on for decades has encouraged forced displacement and lowered sustainability indicators, so it is essential to encourage collective work and community development in this region. The project "Dandelion, seeds for rural entrepreneurship in Cundinamarca" was conceptually based on rural development with a territorial approach and, through the DesignThinking methodology, a training plan was analyzed and proposed for rural women's associations in the province; the plan was based on the diagnosis of problems in the substantive, strategic and operational dimensions of the associations. For this purpose, workshops and structured dynamics were carried out under the participatory rural approach methodology, identifying that the training program should focus on intervention actions for training in the areas of entrepreneurship, business development, financial management, solidarity human relations and marketing fundamentals, and technical support in clean production.

Keywords: Endogenous development, Rural development Agricultural development, Agricultural policy, Agricultural enterprises

RESUMEN

En los últimos años, el departamento de Cundinamarca (Colombia) ha sufrido un decrecimiento en la inversión y, por ende, en el desarrollo de la agricultura local. Dentro del departamento, la provincia de Magdalena Centro tiene los índices más altos de pobreza; el conflicto armado del que ha sido escenario durante décadas, ha fomentado el desplazamiento forzado y bajado los indicadores de sustentabilidad, por lo que es fundamental incentivar el trabajo colectivo y el desarrollo comunitario de esta región. El proyecto "Dandelion, semillas para el emprendimiento rural en Cundinamarca", se basó conceptualmente en el *desarrollo rural con un enfoque territorial*, y, por medio de la metodología de DesignThinking, se analizó y propuso un plan de formación para asociaciones de mujeres campesinas de la provincia; plan que se basó en el diagnóstico de problemáticas en las dimensiones sustantiva, estratégica y operativa de las asociaciones. Para esto, se realizaron talleres y dinámicas estructuradas bajo la metodología de enfoque rural participativo, identificando que el programa de formación se debía centrar en acciones de intervención para la formación en las áreas de emprendimiento, el desarrollo empresarial, el manejo financiero, las relaciones humanas solidarias y fundamentos en mercadeo, y apoyo técnico en producción limpia.

Palabras clave: desarrollo endógeno, Desarrollo rural Economía agraria Política agraria, Empresa agrícola

INTRODUCTION

The following project was born from the initiative of teachers and students of the Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, Madrid Regional Center, San Juan de Rioseco Tutorial Center, who observed the need to strengthen the solidarity sector, and accepted the challenge of training and accompanying projects typified within this field. Likewise. The vocation of the professionals working in the institution, and of the new professionals in training, led UNIMINUTO to generate research and social projection proposals, focused on the solution of daily problems of the inhabitants of the municipalities of the department of Cundinamarca; in this case, the project "*Dandelión, seeds for rural entrepreneurship in Cundinamarca. Development of the organizational and entrepreneurial capacity of rural associations in the province of Magdalena Centro*", focused on supporting rural associations in the province of Magdalena Centro and aimed at generating efficient training to enable entrepreneurship and development of the province's associations.

In the department of Cundinamarca, the province of Magdalena Centro has the highest rates of poverty, due to the decades in which it was submerged in the Colombian armed conflict, but at the same time, it is one of the regions with the greatest agricultural activity due to the potential of the soil and its diversity of climates. (Gobernación de Cundinamarca, 2015). . Although its rural vocation can be seen as a potential for economic growth, in reality the small farmers of the region do not have strategies and knowledge to carry out their productions, so the economic gap between the rural area and the city (Bogota is three hours away from the province), is increasingly higher.

According to the National Planning Department DNP (2015), small agricultural producers have different problems to generate economically viable and sustainable production, among which we find: *low capacity of small producers to make medium and long-term investments and increase their productivity; restrictions in the management of risks associated with production; low bargaining power of producers when marketing their products; informality in marketing contracts; low level of entrepreneurship; low technification and generation of economies of scale; little or no vertical integration; and low levels of human capital formation.* These risks increase as farmers do not have the capacity to *work as a team*, generating individual, unsustainable production with a high probability of failure.

The Presidential Agency for Social Action (2006), shows in the conceptual framework of the report "Productive organizations that make alternative development possible in Colombia", that peasant organizations face different common problems, among which the following

stand out: *1. Lack of strengthening in terms of collective and equitable participation among the members that make up the organization, 2.*

Based on the identification of these problems, the objective of the "Integral Rural Development Program with a Territorial Approach", led by the inter-institutional technical roundtable composed of the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace (OACP), the Office of the Minister Counselor for Post-Conflict, Human Rights and Security and the National Planning Department (DNP), sought, through education and active participation of society (participatory governance), to generate productive, institutional and social transformation processes in rural territories, where the inhabitants, duly organized and trained, are responsible for the productive, institutional and social transformation of the territories, sought, through education and the active participation of society (participatory governance), to generate processes of productive, institutional and social transformation of rural territories, where the inhabitants, duly organized and trained, have the primary responsibility for managing the development of their territories. This same work approach has become the pillar of the integral agrarian development proposal, generated by the government, and a fundamental basis for the post-agreement. Talking about endogenous development and participatory governance in favor of the development of the country's agricultural territories, envisions the possibility of transforming the conditions that have allowed the establishment of violence and its long duration in rural areas, with lower levels of development and institutionality. (Office of the High Commissioner for Peace (OHCHR), 2016). .

On the other hand, the project was based on the theoretical foundations of solidarity economy, especially the concepts of solidarity economy, popular solidarity proposed by José Luis Coragio (2008), and by Ladrón de Guevara, R.; Vargas Prieto, A.; Blanco, L.; Roa, E.; Cáceres, L. & Vargas Luis. (2018), and the epistemological approach proposed by Paulo Freire, on which peasant schools are based, a fundamental concept of agroecology.

For this reason, the purpose of this project was to propose an educational plan that would involve farmers as active individuals who require the development of basic competencies and the learning of specific knowledge in entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship. The ultimate goal of the project was to be extended as a strategy of social projection, with the aim of generating business development processes with emphasis on clean production, processes of social appropriation of knowledge with the different actors of the municipalities of San Juan de Rioseco, Guayabal de Síquima and Vianí; and as a strategy for the development of citizenship processes and active social participation of the inhabitants of the region.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The project was developed under a participatory research approach with a qualitative-descriptive tendency, aiming to answer the question: what are the social and administrative problems that affect the competitive development of agricultural producers' associations in the region of San Juan de Rioseco and Guayabal de Siquima?

The project was based on the application of the DesignThinking methodology, which according to Vianna, Alder, Lucena, & Russo (2016), is an "innovative model of research and prototyping tailored to the needs of the participants". The proposed methodology was divided into 5 phases which are: empathizing, defining, co-creation of a prototype (ideation), implementation and evaluation, this last phase was not managed to be carried out in the project and it is expected to make the evaluation of the proposal in a future project.

Before applying the methodology, the agricultural associations in the region were characterized and a sample of them was selected for the development of the pilot project. After selecting the sample, the first phase of the methodology, the "empathizing" phase, was implemented to diagnose the problems of each association in the areas of administration, finances, job security and entrepreneurship. To achieve this, a survey was conducted with 50 farmers from 5 selected associations. After conducting the survey, and having already empathized with the associations, the next phase was to "define" the problems of each association, for which a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was conducted under different group dynamics with methodologies such as problem tree and social mapping. After having the results of the survey and the PRA, the third phase followed with the "co-creation of the prototype of the training or assistance plan", which was carried out with the evaluation of the diagnosis, through joint work with experts and with the farmers surveyed during this work. The proposed training plan was taken to "Implementation" with two associations that showed interest in continuing to work with the project, the proposed plan was a co-created work between experts and farmers, responding to the methodological development proposed by the PENUD and ECLAC. (Roura & Cepeda, 1999; Licandro, 2012). .

RESULTS

Phase 1. Selection

Seven rural associations with agricultural vocation were identified in the province, of which five were selected for the first diagnostic phase. The selection criteria were:

1. Associations in operation and in the process of consolidation or initiating an associative process.
2. Associations of agricultural production or commercialization of manufactured agricultural products.

3. Women's or minority associations.

Table 1

List of selected partnerships for the first phase of the project

MUNICIPALITY	ASSOCIATION	Nº ASSOCIATES	ACTIVITY
Guayabal de Siquima	AGUAYCAFE		Sugarcane, coffee, livestock
	AGROSÍQUIMA		Coffee and panela
	ASOAGRO GUAYABAL DE SIQUIMA		Cultivation of aromatic plants
San Juan de Rio Seco	ASOCAUCHEROS		Rubber cultivation
	SANSOYA		Transformation of soybean products.
	ASOSANJUANERAS		Integral farm - women.
	ASOPANELA		Panela cultivation.

Taking into account that the population was infinite (the census of the population would be wasteful considering the man/sample ratio), we proceeded to determine the sample size with a significance of 90% and an error of 36%, determining a minimum of 5 surveys to be carried out per association. The sample was determined by means of an Excel macro from the website <http://www.colombiamercadeo.com/documentos-de-aprendizaje/4-documentos-para-aprendizaje/50-calculer-sumuestra-gratuitamente.html>.

Phase 2. Empathize and define (diagnosis of associations).

After determining the sample, the associations were surveyed: ASOSANJUANERAS, ASOPANELA, ASOCAUCHEROS, AGROSÍQUIMA AND ASOAGRO GUAYABAL DE SÍQUIMA. The associations Sansoya and agua y café commented that they were not interested in working in the research process. The survey consisted of 5 sections: 1. General data; 2.

According to the results of the statistical-descriptive analysis of the survey, all the associations do not know the processes of solidarity economy and the real basis for the functioning of an association; two of the five associations surveyed do not know their work plan and the objective of the association, and only the leaders say they know the organizational processes of the association. The members of the associations live 25-45 minutes away from each other, which reduces their teamwork process. All of the associations surveyed said that their biggest problem is the marketing of their products, and although all five associations market their products in their town square, only two associations have external buyers for their products.

All of the associations were diagnosed with a lack of knowledge of occupational safety and process certification.

After the second phase of participatory diagnosis, it was concluded that the associations would need training actions in the areas of entrepreneurship and business development; explicitly in organization, financial management and marketing fundamentals; it was also determined the need to develop training processes in human relations and teamwork (the main problem for the sustainability of the associations is perceived as the lack of commitment of its participants), and in technological processes of soil and water management, as a strategy for adaptation to climate change.

During this phase, a low participation of farmers was evidenced, which is already a result in itself, since most associations did not work with the university because they do not see a monetary profit or marketing contacts, showing that they are accustomed to receive profit or support from institutions.

The results of the description of two of the associations can be seen in Figures 2 and 3, which describe the demographic, social and economic characterization of the associations with which the following phases of the project were finally developed. Likewise, in the article by Garza Puentes (2016), the description of one of the associations can be seen, which was carried out by means of Checklan's soft systems methodology, MSS.



Figure 1 Description of the asoagro guayabal de síquima association. own source

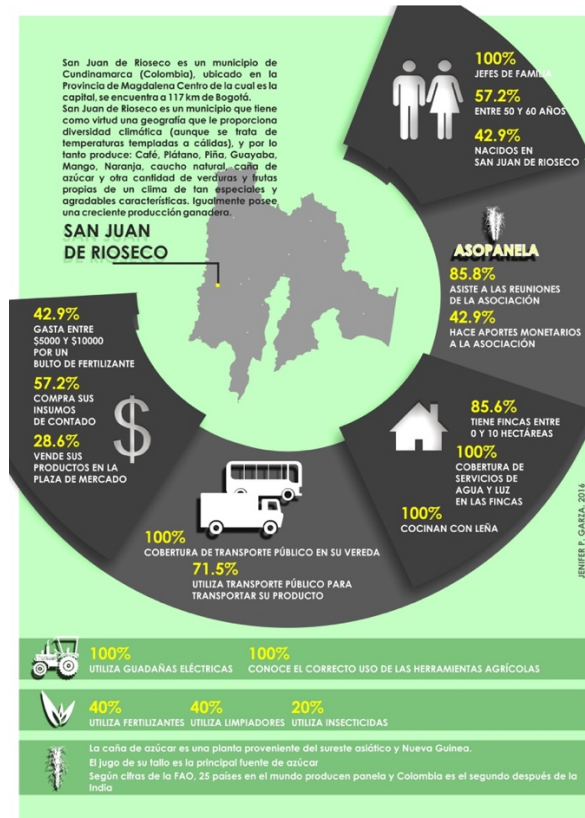


Figure 2 description of the ASOPANELA association, San Juan de Rioseco. own source.

Phase 3 and 4. Co-creation and implementation (Pilot Test of training plan)

After the diagnosis, and with the aim of generating assertive and effective processes, it was decided to continue working with only two associations: ASOAGRO GUAYABAL DE SÍQUIMA and ASOPANELA, who are interested in continuing the work with the university and renew their commitment to the project.

This phase of the project was carried out with 10th semester students of the business administration program of the San Juan de Rioseco Tutorial Center, who developed their professional practices and degree projects as valuable contributions to the project, and with 8th semester professional practice students of the occupational health administration program of the Villeta tutorial center.

Three (3) workshops were held with the two associations mentioned above, the workshops were divided into: baseline training (common to both) and specific topics (according to the specific needs of the association).

The topics covered were:

- Occupational Health: Asoagro Guayabal del Siquima

- Strengthening of associative processes: Amabas associations
- Sustainable financial management: ASOPANELA
- Entrepreneurship and Teamwork: both partnerships.

The proposed workshops were complemented with visits to agricultural research and development scenarios by the farmers, with the aim of encouraging the work of the associations with Uniminuto, and with the objective of generating spaces of social appropriation and dynamic learning for the farmers.

Starting from the fact that the objective of solidarity economy is to fight against inequality, poverty and social and economic discrimination, making a special emphasis on endogenous and economy development of minorities and those who have less social and economic opportunity (Ladrón de Guevara *et al*, 2018), this, is an appropriate vision for the analysis of the realities of social organizations in Colombia, since in a country with so many economic imbalances, which impact the income of human capital and increase social inequality (an evident case in the analyzed associations), it is necessary to generate proposals that help to interweave social processes, which have been disturbed by the problems of national security, the corruption of the political classes and the positions of free trade and the "market economy" that have affected peasants and increased the pauperization of their quality of life (Gómez Rodríguez, Ibagón Martín, & Forero Cañón, 2014). .

Likewise, for the case of rural development analysis, and the development of inclusive and sustainable enterprises, it is necessary to take into account that the productivity of a business should not be measured by the increase in production areas, but in the progressive reduction in production costs, satisfying internal and external demand, preserving the ecological integrity and productive capacity of natural resources, and the improvement in the environmental quality of these processes (Bohorquez Carillo A., Lendechy A., and Florez Novelo A. 2020). For this reason, training the farmer in management and business development, in addition to agricultural and technological processes that are focused on clean production and soil and water sustainability, will lead us to the "sustainable empowerment" of the countryside, in fusion with the development of farmers and their families.

In the female case, the associative phenomenon, should occur through the model proposed by Mora Guerrero and Constanzo Belmar (2017), where the associates "*jointly articulate multiple purposes whose origin is located in the sexual division of labor of the family unit*". According to the authors, the associative process must go through three moments: *(i) the a-associative phase, marked by women's productive activity, according to the traditional sexual division of labor; (ii) the pre-associative phase, during which women form an associative*

venture according to various personal purposes; and (iii) the associative phase, in which the venture functions according to the articulation of multiple internal positions, occupied by women according to the way they harmonize their associative roles with their places in the traditional sexual division of labor. The three phases described above allow women to fulfill their associative role, to empower themselves, but at the same time to achieve the economic objective they desire.

As shown by this study and articles such as those by Mora Guerrero and Constanzo Belmar (2017), Hoinle, B., Rothfuss, R., & Gotto, D. (2013), comments that women with economic or minority deprivation seek to start a business, since "*association to a cooperative offers women the possibility of working with more self-determination and to develop their own skills*", but, they face problems of self-management and self-esteem, which must be managed with constant accompaniment.

Likewise, it should be taken into account that if the issue of empowerment and equal work is difficult for women in the cities (Hoinle, et al. 2013), in rural areas the precariousness and poverty is greater, as is the perception of machismo (power relations within the household) and inequalities in the distribution of household work, not to mention that the technology associated with home care, and security and health facilities, are difficult to acquire in rural areas Alberti-Manzanares, P.; Zavala-Hernández, M.; Salcido-Ramos, B.; & Real-Luna, N. (2014). Thus, the empowerment of rural women goes hand in hand with the development of their work and their "independence", since throughout this work it was perceived that women's participation in the process was reduced and conditioned by the "support" or "permission" of their partners.

In general, the solidarity organizations in the two municipalities have similar administrative and production problems. At the beginning of their activities as associates, they do not receive information for their legal, administrative and productive performance; and if they do receive it, it is given at the discretion of the speaker and generally with technical language. The institutions that accompanied the process of organizational growth supported in an uncoordinated manner, creating in the associates the distortion of concepts and procedures for the development of their activity, in such a way that they quickly "lost the north", creating in the members expectations of actions that do not correspond to the purpose of the accompaniment.

Contrary to what is documented by CIREC (2015), which comments that 80% of the social organizations in the country state that they have received sufficient information on the characteristics of the type of organization they develop; in this diagnosis, only one association stated this situation, and even the lack of awareness towards the creation and development of the association is one of the strongest shortcomings of the remaining associations.

Likewise, in this same document it is commented that 65% of the social organizations surveyed, comment on their positive impact towards peaceful coexistence; but in the associations analyzed in this research, although indeed the majority of those surveyed perceive the same, the group workshops show that in reality coexistence and teamwork are the most important shortcomings in these associations. It is worth noting that CIREC (2015), highlights that this condition of "low associativity" is common at the beginning of the associative processes, coinciding with the fact that the associations analyzed in this study, only one, can be said to have been founded more than four years ago and considers itself a consolidated association.

Likewise, Hoinle, *et al.* (2013) comments that one of the obstacles in the beginning of the development of a cooperative or association is teamwork, "*Many women are used to working with a boss and obeying*". Self-management is precisely a topic of work for these associations, thus seeking the empowerment of women, and with them the growth of the association, as stated by Brumer and Dos Anjos, (2008, p. 225), cited by Hoinle, *et al.* (2013) Women are first organized out of necessity: "*From the struggle for land*" in the encampments women, go on to "*discuss problems of the feminine condition; so the concept of transformative potential unfolds from immediate needs to more universal issues of society and gender roles*".

With respect to the reasons why to associate, as well as the results of Gómez, Aguilar, Pineda, Collazos, Herrera and Rojas (2015), the associations of the two municipalities associated in order to achieve trade agreements, better prices in the market and growth opportunities, but, they have begun to become disillusioned with the process; or even have given up on it, because not knowing the processes and not persevering in the same, leads them to feel disappointed and abandon the association.

According to the National Administrative Department of Statistics DANE (2013), approximately 74% of MSMEs (small business units) are rural, and provide more than 56% of rural employment, however, a large number of small and medium producers in the agricultural sector do not make appropriate decisions on issues of financing, marketing and strategic trade alliances; and mostly leave the trade of their products to third parties that acquire their products at very low costs and sell them on the market at high prices. In this case, the associations analyzed commented that they "felt used" by third parties for profit, without generating real economic sustainability for the associates and, as stated by Bohorquez Carillo, *et al* (2020), the results of this experience are "*unequal conditions of commercial exchange and generate imbalances, which leads to small producers continuing to live in conditions of poverty*". Fair trade is precisely one of the pillars of the social economy or solidarity economy and, therefore, it would be interesting to conduct a study on fair market prices and strategies with the associations in the area.

On the other hand, according to Fantova (2014), the accompaniment process for associative entrepreneurship processes should last at least five years, a situation that has not been visible in the associations analyzed, which have been created an average of two years ago, and have not received state or private sector support for their development. They all comment that the only support for their growth is provided by SENA (academic ally of this project), and in some cases, for rubber and coffee production, by the corresponding federations. This lack of support generates a feeling of "distrust" towards the organizations and the state, making it difficult to work with the organizations and all their members.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, one of the most important problems that demonstrate and afflict the five associations and that is also documented by CIREC (2015), is the reduced market and commercialization capacity they have. This fundamental factor for their development, and which shows a lack of articulation between the state, the academy and the associations; reduces the possibility of generating endogenous development process, through appropriate training, articulation of the trade network and fair prices and sustainable market for the products. Affirming this result, associations such as AGROSIQUIMA and Agua y Café, which are consolidated associations, were not interested in the project, since they consider that they are *over-trained* by academic entities, and are only interested in financing processes and trade networks.

From the academic point of view, direct intervention in the territories, such as the cases presented in this project, constitutes a useful tool, since they provide new conceptual structures that will allow the development of methodological perspectives on the associative character and regional entrepreneurship, as well as a source of new hypotheses and questions, which will surely be addressed by other research.

Finally, in relation to the students, with the practice in the exercise of research and within it the application of methodological tools, they reinforced concepts and theories, which will allow them to solve social problems, advocating for a business development open to the participating society, which shortens distances between social classes, modifies structures and opens effective channels of security with real opportunities for all. Likewise, the results of the project can be considered as a methodology in the application of the University Social Responsibility model, since the Corporation not only seeks to *train excellent professionals but also human beings, ethically oriented and committed to social transformation and sustainable development of the regions* (Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios-UNIMINUTO 2014); therefore, it is demonstrated that the research conducted at the university can have a social-business approach, of active participation with the community and that allow the

development of citizenship skills and responsibility in students and professors working at the university.

Another of the contributions of this study was the identification of the needs of the agricultural sector in the province, thus providing the farmers with the opportunity to learn directly about the tools and techniques that will allow them to be aware of the cost of producing their products and what they should charge for them, thus mitigating possible losses. In addition to this, the farmers of the region who are part of the villages under study, had the opportunity to strengthen their skills, to have a greater appropriation of the economic and financial problems that they face in their daily lives, since the training received had the ultimate goal of contributing to the social and individual strengthening of the participants.

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