

Mujeres: Granos de Cambio

Women's Leadership in Sustainable Coffee Production A baseline to develop a Gender Plan in Coopedota R.L.

This report is a summary of achievements, lessons learned and next steps in the development of a **Gender Plan of Action for Coopedota R.L. to promote Women's Leadership in Sustainable Coffee Production**. This progress report builds on work and research conducted by Earthwatch, the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and Coopedota R.L., in February 2013 as part of a U.S. State Department cultural and educational exchange program. This effort has engaged women members of Coopedota R.L. at different multiple levels, including both members and employees.

Workshops were held at Coopedota R.L to gather information and develop a baseline to be used in the future as input for the Gender Plan of the cooperative. The workshops were focused on women members and employees of the cooperative.

Background of Coopedota R.L.

Coopedota R.L. is located in Santa María de Dota, a coffee producing town of 4,960 people in the Central Pacific Mountain Range of Costa Rica. It was started in 1960 with funding and technical advice from Banco Nacional de Costa Rica. Some people see this area as a symbol of Costa Rica's economic and socio cultural life 30 years back, with communities cherishing simple rural life and cooperation.

The Coopedota coffee cooperative has 792 members processing some 55,000 fanegas (equal to 1.58 U.S. bushels) on average every year. Its relationship with the community is based on mutual commitment, with Coopedota R.L. serving as a hub of community activity. Women account for 35% of cooperative members, men for 60%, and the remaining 5% is made up of neighbor associations directly linked to Coopedota R.L. (Coopedota R.L., 2013).

Executive Summary

Ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment is key to sustainable development, human rights and greater prosperity around the globe. Research shows that societies which promote gender equality see a positive correlation to economic growth, and that gender inequalities not only result in high human costs but also economic costs by restraining productivity and growth.

Gender equality is an integral part of sustainability: if half of society is cut off from opportunities then an operation cannot claim either efficiency or sustainability. While also working to serve the rights and needs of all people,

programs and strategies to increase women's leadership at all levels of the coffee production chain have shown to improve benefit sharing within communities, result in better quality coffee and promote company credibility through socially responsible efforts.

Rationale

There is a lack of statistics regarding the number of women working in the coffee fields, their education level and their opportunity for advancement. As highlighted through observation and interviews with men and women in Coopedota R.L. in Tarrazú Coffee Region of Costa Rica, many farms are registered under a woman's ownership through inheritance or for tax benefit, but the women have little to no control over the property.

On the other hand, many farms that are registered under male ownership are run by women as men have emigrated to the United States and elsewhere for jobs. Although these women are in control of the farm, they often still look to male family and friends to make decisions on the farms production and finances. As a result of this, although officially women make up to around 40% of members in the Coopedota R.L., they have limited engagement in decision-making and administration for the cooperative.

Research from 2008-2009 membership of the Coopedota R.L. leadership shows that there was only one woman on the Board and one on subsequent cooperative committees.

Advancing initial efforts in this work, during the April 2013 assembly, two women were elected to be part on the board of directors of the cooperative in addition to the reelection of two current female board members.

Theory of Change

If Coopedota R.L. invests in developing a gender plan of action, to support targeted capacity and training to women to strengthen leadership in all levels of the coffee chain, from production to cooperative administration, and capacity to all members of the community on the importance of gender equality, then Coopedota R.L. will improve the quantity and quality of its production, cement itself as a leading brand in the coffee market for promoting gender equality, support benefit sharing in the community of Santa María and surrounding regions, and open up to new markets and certifications which value gender equality.

In addition to advancing human rights and gender equality, studies show that investing in women in smallholder-based supply chains can help deliver the following commercial benefits:

- Improved product quality;
- Increased productivity;
- Reduced management and coordination costs;
- A secure supply base;
- A stronger brand and improved access to premium markets;
- Improved delivery of broader Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) goals.

Plan of Action



Invest in developing a gender baseline

To understand:

- Perceived gender roles in coffee industry in Coopedota region;
- Percentage of women and men in positions of leadership in all levels of Coopedota coffee production;
- Gender gaps in income levels and education;
- Gender criteria in current Coopedota coffee certification;
- Best practice of integrating gender equality in coffee industry.

By:

- Desk research and data collection;
- Workshop with key stakeholders including: members of Coopedota R.L., men and women coffee farmers, community leaders, Coopedota R.L. clients, municipality leaders;
- Written surveys;
- Interviews and observations.

Develop Gender Plan of Action

From key findings in the baseline and in strategies highlighted from stakeholder engagement, Coopedota R.L. can develop a Gender Plan of Action for the cooperative. Following, the cooperative can implement the

first activities under the Gender Plan of Action, monitor results of activities and review progress against gender baselines and indicators in Gender Plan of Action.

Implementing Partners

- Earthwatch Institute
- Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)
- Coopedota R.L.
- Municipality of Dota County and Women's associations.
- UN Global Compact

Possible strategies to implement in Coopedota R.L.

Branding

Register a coffee brand labeled for the Women Program at Coopedota R.L. from which a certain amount of money from the sales of the coffee will be allocated to invest in the Training Program for Women. Coopedota R.L. could research special markets to sell the coffee brand to as Coopedota R.L. does with the Carbon Neutral Coffee and the rest of the special brands.

Certification

Review & research gender criteria of the current certification programs that Coopedota R.L. is certified with, like Fair Trade, Rain Forest Alliance, C.A.F.E. Practices to see which ones could be benefitted by the Women's Leadership Program at the cooperative.

Capacity Building

Design and implement a "Women Leadership in Sustainable Coffee Production" training program. A training model for women who are members of Coopedota R.L. to increase skills and capacity, and promote empowerment in coffee production. This would be

implemented through workshops, lectures, field trips, etc.

Sensitizing man and female leaders. To include men and women in the training and capacity building model to not exclude any of them in the training process. The idea will be to build together the training model.

Methodology and results of the baseline during 2013

As part of the methodology applied to gather information and develop the Gender Plan of Action for the cooperative, two workshops were held at Coopedota R.L. One focused on female cooperative members and the other focused on the female cooperative employees.

The main goal of both workshops was to get a better understanding of women's perception about their participation at different levels of the cooperative, problems to solve, proposals, strategies and solutions to transform the lack of participation from women at the coffee chain.

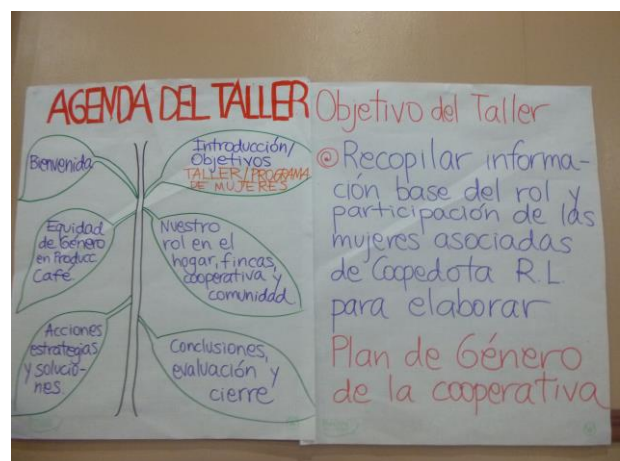


Fig.1. Agenda of the workshop and main goal of the activity.

The first two workshops were held on July 10th, 2013 at the coffee shop learning room of the cooperative. These workshops were designed and delivered by Natalia Ureña Retana from Earthwatch Institute - the leader of the initiative to develop the Gender Plan in Coopedota R.L.

Coopedota R.L. supported the organization of the activities and provided the learning room and coffee for the events.

Workshop with Women Members of Coopedota R.L.

The workshop was held on July 10th, 2013. In total 25 women members of the cooperative participated at the workshop. For all of them it was the first workshop related to gender equality and focused on women in coffee production.



Fig.2. Women presenting group work on women's roles at different levels of the community, family & cooperative.

Topics covered

Topics covered during the workshop ranged from basic overviews on gender roles, women's empowerment, and gender equality, to research on gender and the coffee chain and women's leadership and participation.

As part of the workshop, facilitators shared with the participants: initial work, potential strategies and research which had been put forward towards the development of a Gender Plan of Action for the cooperative. They had the opportunity to ask questions and to provide inputs to improve the plan.



Fig.3. Women sharing their criteria and perceptions about their participation and roles at the cooperative.

Methodology applied at the workshop

The entire group was divided in small groups and they work together to cover different topics. Every group then shared the ideas with all the participants.

Presentations and discussions were part of the main methodology applied. Also, participant surveys supported the gathering of information to be used as reference in the gender plan and to increase the statistics about women participation at the cooperative.



Fig.4. Women members of Coopedota R.L. working in small groups and discussing about their roles and participation at the cooperative.

Results

Women's members of Coopedota R.L. perceptions

Obstacles

- Lack of training.
- Lack of job opportunities for women associated at the cooperative.
- Limited knowledge of the rules of the cooperative and how it functions.
- Lack of motivation for women associated with the cooperative.
- Associated women feel they have little available time to participate in the activities of the cooperative.
- Their husbands do not consider their wives in

decision-making.

- Lack of knowledge in information by women to be able to integrate more in the cooperative and the work of the farm.
- There is a strong “machismo” culture in the community.
- Women have little information.
- Unfounded environmental and societal prejudices. Men are possessive and only they want to exercise the jobs they believe are strong and powerful and that women are weak.
- “Machismo” has not been canceled at all because there are men who leave their wives did not even learn to drive a car and less going to benefit deliver coffee.
- Lack of information, education and integration in our cooperative activities.
- The “machismo” culture is dominant and there is much that men think that women do not know and have no strength.
- There are women who have a lot to do at home and do not have the support of the husband to attend meetings and / or meetings.
- We need more training for the development of women in the community.
- Lack of communication associated women, lack of preparation and knowledge on issues and overall coffee.
- There are many obstacles we face as women in the development of coffee growing and in the community.
- There is criticism from men when women fully involved in the cultivation of coffee.
- We have little knowledge of the subject of coffee.
- Men take the name of the only woman to take on a role and make associated only to avoid taxes.
- Lack of respect for women in the moral and social development in the community.
- Lack of knowledge about our rights as partners.
- Lack of motivation to participate in the affairs of the cooperative.
- Missing more cooperative projection towards women.
- There is much indecision on the part of women to run coffee related events. Prejudice in such activities.
- "Sometimes you cannot make the coffee for health, lack of money, for the children (not because they are on the other side, but by the study)."
- Our parents didn't teach us to work on coffee plantation, only how to pick the coffee.
- The idiosyncrasy, misinformation, conformity and low self esteem.
- We fail to understand how women associated with the cooperative and community.
- Failure to have a stronger coffee culture, lack of information, knowledge and takes little account of women.
- Lack of knowledge of what our rights and regulations of the cooperative.
- Lack motivation to further develop our skills.
- Lack of authority to know little about certain issues, man always has the last word.

- Due to the existence of machismo, not value us as women.
- The closed minds of some men still think that women have neither voice nor vote.
- Lack of knowledge on coffee.
- We need more participation of women on the board of the cooperative.
- Lack give seminars associated targets women who are entrepreneurs.

Solutions and strategies from women members of Coopedota R.L.

- Prepare men with human relations courses to value the development of women in the cultivation of coffee and stop being so sexist.
- Empowering women more knowledgeable about the coffee management.
- Raise awareness to men to respect the work, your life, give them effort for many years.
- That women associated more involved and take the time.
- For the part of man to be given the right to take more account of the woman.
- Provide more training advice and talks to the woman.
- That women participate and integrate more committees.
- Have more confidence in associates and give them more information.
- Encourage more women members to participate in training.
- Ask the women associated responsibilities.
- Teach courses in group and individual improvement.
- Improve dialogue and communication between women associated.
- Understand and value the rights of women in the cooperative partner.
- Learn more about coffee growing and become more involved in making decisions to support family level higher yields in the production of coffee.
- Train women in various subjects.
- Demonstrate that women are capable of doing any work and that we can do well with more training and guidance.
- Find more training for us to get more knowledge, good advice and professional help to so provide better ideas.
- Having more workshops for women in the management of the plantation.
- Get help from the cooperative for the rights of women as cooperative.
- Assistance from the cooperative projects such as exhibitions of works of art associated women produce.
- Raise awareness to men that women are able to meet the needs of better assistance in the production of coffee.
- Training and workshops on gender equity, health coffee, among others.
- Taking into account our skills as women.
- That there is more willingness to participate in activities by women associated with the cooperative.
- Organize workshops about topics like values.
- "Have more confidence in one same,

asserting our rights and grow as people. This is accomplished with safety in our abilities and skills, reflecting what we are and we are worth”.

- They have more training on how to handle coffee.
- That there direction and advice to women specifically.
- Strengthen the empowerment of our abilities.
- Breaking down barriers of a psychological nature.
- Improve communication channels to the associated cooperative and have them more confidence.
- May be taken more into account women cooperative partner, being told more and promote increased trust and communication between the committees.
- Change our way of being and thinking as women.
- Create awareness to men that our opinion and our work have much value.
- Remove the idea that only men acquire their proper knowledge regarding the cultivation, management and production of coffee.
- We need more training in many fields to succeed.
- Form committees of women producers of coffee.
- Involve young generations of women in the activities of the cooperative.
- Engage new projects for women.

- Provide training to women members and daughters.
- Organize training lectures and workshops aimed at men and women improve communication partners.
- Involve young associates (men and women).
- Promote opportunities for exchange of experiences between partners.
- Organize a committee of women members.
- Invite potential partners that they are prepared for when they are formally associated.
- Topics to consider for training:
 - Coffee management in general.
 - Psychology, motivation and self esteem.
 - Decision making.
 - Financial analysis.



Fig.5. Women working in a presentation to present solutions and strategies to improve their participation at the cooperative.



Fig.6. Women members of the cooperative at the end of the workshop.

Workshop with Women Employees of Coopedota R.L.

The final workshop was held on July 26th, 2013. In total 4 women employees of the cooperative participated at the workshop. They represented all the departments of the cooperative: Administration, Coffee Mill, Finances, Coffee Shop and Roasting Plant. For all of them also it was the first workshop related to gender equality and focused on women.



Fig.7. Discussions about solutions and strategies to implement with women inside the cooperative.

Results

Women's employees of Coopedota R.L. perceptions

Obstacles

- Lack of flexibility to participate in various training events inside and outside the cooperative.
- There is a strong maleness community within the cooperative.
- Women tend to be submissive.
- Women are overloaded with homework.
- There is a difference of time available in the departments of the cooperative.
- Lack of time and motivation to participate in different activities.

- Lack of space and contact meetings between partners.

Solutions and strategies from women employees of Coopedota R.L.

- Increase and improve communication partner and collaborating women of the cooperative.
- Improve the communication network inside and outside the cooperative.
- Having an updated list of women partners and associates.
- Organize exchanges between collaborating departments of the cooperative.
- Improving communication between partners.
- Organize events that enhance strategic communication, fellowship, fairness, sense of belonging and moral values among partners.
- Design a program with mandatory training modules aimed at collaborating.
- Search and defining opportunities for exchange between collaborating departments.
- Organize internal internships between departments: "My contribution as a woman collaborator of Coopedota R.L. between departments"

Topics for training:

- Coffee production.
- Comprehensive training.
- Leadership.
- Occupational health
- Labor rights of women partners.
- Interpersonal relations.
- Identity cooperative.
- Cooperativism.
- Talks to improve the sense of ownership by the partners.
- Languages.
- Effective communication.
- Childbirth preparation courses.
- Nutrition, eating and preparing healthy meals.
- Courses subsistence agriculture, home gardens, farming techniques, organic farming and bio-intensive.

Topics required by department:

Financial: Customer service.

Administrative: Strategic communication (internally and externally).

Coffee Shop: Strengthening human relationships with a sense of belonging.

Roasting plant: Exchange of experience among workers of other toasters and cooperatives.

Coffee mill: Exchange between coffee specialists.



Fig.8.Coopedota's employees representing the departments of the cooperative.



Fig.9.Coopedota's employees representing the departments of the cooperative.

Future activities

For the future, program partners plan to deliver more workshops to further gather information for these gender baselines, engaging key men and women in the community and the cooperative, to ensure active and equal participation of all

stakeholders in the development and delivery of Coopedota R.L.'s Gender Plan of Action, set to start implementation in 2014.

Acknowledgement

The project initiators would like to thank the U.S. Department of State for support of partners participation in the multi-year, 2-way educational exchange program entitled: "**Empowering Women through Social Entrepreneurship**," where twenty young professionals from Costa Rica and the United States (including Natalia Ureña Retana of Earthwatch and Bridget Burns of WEDO) undertook fellowships to increase their knowledge about how to become effective social change agents using a social entrepreneurship model.

The program also supported ten follow-up social change projects in local indigenous and Afro-descendant communities across Costa Rica, and allows for ongoing networking and collaboration between the foreign exchange program participants and their counterparts in the U.S.

The project initiators would like to acknowledge the support of the following partners in the further development and implementation of this initiative:

- Earthwatch Institute
- Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)
- Coopedota R.L.
- University of Connecticut
- University for Peace

Finally we would like to thank the women members and employees of Coopedota R.L. for their interest in participating at the workshops and for all the information they shared to develop the Gender Plan of the cooperative.

The next phase of this project will start in Jan. 2014, for further information before then, please contact:

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