



Youth inclusion and participation in SOCODEVI Co-ops and projects



Young people make up a large proportion of the population in the countries where SOCODEVI is active. Importantly, although young people go through similar life stages at different ages, they are not a monolithic block. They can be marginalized or elevated on the basis of their age, but also of their ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation, level of education, access to land, parenthood, etc. SOCODEVI is determined to ensure the inclusion of young people between the ages of 18 and 35 in the co-op movement of the countries where it is active, in order to help reduce poverty at an intergenerational level as well as to support Sustainable Development Goals. To this end, SOCODEVI hereby presents its approach to young people's inclusion and participation in co-ops and SOCODEVI projects.

ACTIONS

In a diagnostic phase, SOCODEVI conducted participatory consultations within its teams and with young people involved in its projects in Guatemala and Mozambique to pinpoint drivers and barriers to their inclusion and participation. The results of these consultations have informed the choice of actions to be implemented in order to ensure the genuine inclusion of young people:

1. Planning initiatives to support youth inclusion and participation:

The projects that SOCODEVI prioritizes for young people's participation and inclusion must be planned specifically with this goal in mind. This planning is incorporated starting from the project proposal to the funder or in the implementation plan, as these are critical and foundational steps for the allocation of funds that can support the youth inclusion strategy. The planning must cover a minimum of three years, be simple, and include fast-action components in order to be able to rally stakeholders.

2. Promoting young people's access to co-operative membership and co-op training:

The difficulty of accessing membership has been raised, in particular, in agricultural and forestry contexts. This may be because access to co-ops is linked to young people's access to productive resources, including land, and membership is often not open to co-op employees, who are often young. The *commodat*¹ has been identified by SOCODEVI as a useful mechanism that would be worth considering in various development projects; indeed, it offers a potential pathway toward official land ownership for women, young people, and anyone in a vulnerable situation.

¹ A *commodat* is a contract in which the right to use land (usually for income) is given or acquired without payment of a rental fee and without interest; however, instead of acquiring the land, the individual must return it at the end of the contract. It is important to check the legal context of each country where this type of initiative may be implemented.



3. Striking a balance between creating and strengthening leadership:

For each project that plans for and prioritizes young people's participation and inclusion, action should be taken to: networks, and intergenerational work.

- 1) Spark greater youth engagement
- 2) Recruit more young people
- 3) Support the emergence of co-op leaders

These young leaders can, in turn, pass on leadership qualities to other young people. For example, the effective practices identified include reserved seats for young people, co-op and complementary training, the creation or use of youth networks, and intergenerational work.

4. Ensuring the differentiated participation of young people, young parents and young mothers:

When conducting the diagnosis and planning for a project or co-operative, the components of gender identity, age group and parenthood are analyzed from an intersectional perspective. This is to ensure optimal participation for everyone and to avoid reinforcing factors of exclusion.

5. Improving young people's living conditions through socio-economic development:

In several countries where SOCODEV is active, a large segment of the youth population is neither employed nor in school. Providing employment and training opportunities for young people is one of the keys to engaging them in activities that will improve their living conditions. Advocacy is done to show the socio-economic potential and results of agriculture and agroforestry, value-chain consolidation, and the co-op advantage. Connecting young people with other youth networks—an idea inspired by SOCODEV's missions geared toward women—is also under consideration.



IMPLEMENTATION PRINCIPLES

To promote the inclusion and participation of young people ages 18–35 in supported co-ops and in SOCODEV projects, SOCODEV proposes the principles below to guide the choice of actions or the way they are implemented

1. Adopting an intersectional vision:

Realizing that young people are not equal, in terms of sex, gender, sexual orientation, belonging to an ethnic or linguistic minority group, disability, parenthood, education, age of marriage, etc.

2. Conducting participatory community consultations:

Consulting with young people and their communities in a participatory manner, because development efforts can only be sustainable when they stem from a deep desire for change on the part of the people who will embody that change.

3. Analyzing needs in connection with participation according to Glasser² :

In our actions, we must consider young people's needs in terms of freedom, enjoyment, sense of belonging and power in order to foster their engagement in collective processes. Educating the board of directors or other members of the co-op about these needs can lead to greater acceptance and inclusion of the young people that one wishes to involve, since the focus is on their needs rather than on the needs of the co-op or project.

4. Using the Quick Wins method:

Young people's inclusion and participation entails a transformation of co-op organizations. This may take time. In a planned context, celebrate small victories to highlight progress.

5. Applying Arnstein's ladder of participation:

The ladder makes it possible to analyze the place that organizations can choose to assign to young people. It is not enough to have a young person be part of an organizational body; they need to have a certain level of participation and must be able to truly have an influence on the project or the co-op. This sometimes means creating spaces of participation that did not exist before, i.e., spaces involving mandates and powers that did not exist previously.

SOCODEVI disaggregates data and uses new indicators to better measure youth participation and inclusion in co-ops and its projects. Following are a few examples:

- Presence of a youth committee in the co-operative
- Number of youth members in the co-operative
- Number of young people sitting on significant bodies of the supported co-ops
- Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) for 18-to-35-year-olds
- SOCODEVI well-being index for 18-to-35-year-olds
- Women's Empowerment Index for 18-to-35-year-olds



² This is a model inspired by that of psychotherapist and educator W. Glasser (1983). Among other things, the framework has been adapted and taken up in the guide *Cap sur les jeunes bénévoles* (RABQ, 2011)(RABQ, 2011) and in the *Guide de formation des administrateurs de forums jeunesse régionaux* (TCFJRQ, 2014).

ACHIEVEMENTS ON THE PATH TO YOUTH INCLUSION

At SOCODEV, we plan in a participatory manner and using an intersectional approach to action in order to promote young people's access to our projects, co-operative membership and training, while also striking a balance between creating and strengthening their leadership. We ensure differentiated participation for young people, young parents and young mothers in income-generating activities in order to improve their living conditions in a sustainable way.

Young people's access to savings

In Honduras, thanks to the financial inclusion component implemented by SOCODEV in the PROLEMPA project, 300 young people under the age of 30 now have access to a savings incentive fund or capital to start up a business. The program was designed for women of all ages and men under 30, with a view to fostering entrepreneurship. Coaching was provided to write a business plan for an enterprise that had to be more than 50% owned by women or young people. No fewer than 43 inclusive businesses were created through this project!

Training that elevates

In Africa, as in all the countries where SOCODEV is active, SOCODEV training in gender equity, leadership and positive masculinity is essential to encourage the participation of women and young women, and especially young mothers, in co-op bodies. The burden of domestic and caregiving duties, as well as safety and reputation issues, often prevent women with young families from attending meetings, depending on their time and location. The training provided by the SOCODEV Field Schools and the women's leadership program are proving effective in increasing the participation and inclusion of women in co-ops, in youth or women's committees and in decision-making positions.

The young women who took part in SOCODEV's activities, including leadership, management and political impact training, are now more confident and involved in decision-making on agricultural production within their family businesses. Women cooperators report greater control over money in their household, are empowered to lead, and are able to hold positions in the management bodies of associative enterprises.



Support for parents during training

SOCODEVI has an activity guide for use with school-age and preschool children while their mothers (or parents) are taking part in SOCODEVI's Field School training. In their activities, young people are gradually introduced to co-op principles and learn about co-ops and their parents' work, in a fun and playful way. Keeping the children busy allows parents to fully concentrate on their activities and gives the children positive simulation.

Honduras



«A muchas personas aún les cuesta creer que una mujer esté a cargo de este aserradero. Yo pude superar este “techo de cristal” gracias a las formaciones de SOCODEVI, sobre todo a las de liderazgo».

– Jenny Sofia Rivas, joven miembro de la cooperativa Fronteras de Oriente y gerente del aserradero.

Maroc

«Durante la primera sesión de las formaciones, me sentía muy intimidada: no podía hablar ni participar. Gracias al enfoque activo que adopté, pude participar y compartir mi experiencia en el grupo sin dificultades. Las Escuelas de Campo SOCODEVI realmente cambiaron mi vida para bien».

– Fatima Kizziz, joven miembro de la cooperativa Timray



Access to land and youth co-op committees

SOCODEVI has succeeded in ensuring that two-thirds of the approximately 6,000 people participating in the CAHOVA project in Honduras are women and young people. This is due in particular to the 640 commodats that have been signed to promote access to land for women and young people, 42% of which have involved young people. Some even obtained ownership transfers! The young people also noted the importance of various training in eight agroforestry value chains (cocoa, coffee, honey, palm heart, tilapia, tropical wood, furniture and pine resin) for improving their living conditions. In addition, youth action plans have been developed for all 42 co-ops supported by the project and have allowed for setting up youth co-op committees in the field. However, these initiatives take time and may be implemented beyond the lifespan of the project. To ensure the sustainability of its youth activities in Honduras, SOCODEVI has partnered with the National Youth Council of Honduras (CONAJOVEN) and although the CAHOVA project has ended, these activities are still ongoing.



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