

Original article

The challenge of gender equity in coffee cooperatives

El desafío de la equidad de género en cooperativas cafetaleras

O desafio da equidade de gênero nas cooperativas de café

Mindra Arévalo Zurita¹  0000-0002-0414-6221 @ mindraarevalo@gmail.com

Elpidio Expósito García¹  0000-0001-9311-5701 @ elpidioeg@uo.edu.cu

Fredy Manuel García Arroyo¹  0000-0002-2213-2253 @ fredy.garcia@uo.edu.cu

Marino Pineda Vila¹  0000-0003-1327-5698 @ ramonp@uo.edu.cu

¹ University of Oriente. Santiago de Cuba, Cuba.

Received: 23/07/2022

Accepted: 1/08/2022

ABSTRACT

Cooperativism is a movement which ideology is based on principles, values and standards of behavior that regulate and guide the relations of cooperative members. Within this movement in Cuba, it has been witnessing processes that seek to incorporate the gender perspective in its actions, understanding that the approach to gender equity, from cooperatives, is an important link, considering that the values and principles governing cooperativism are aligned with the search for a more egalitarian society for women and men. In the spirit of advancing towards gender equity, the research aims to expose a diagnosis of gender gaps present in the coffee cooperative productive process in the municipality of Tercer Frente, Santiago de Cuba. The research is conducted from the methodological point of view, from the use of quantitative and participatory qualitative techniques that allowed revealing the gender gaps in the meanings of the actions of the coffee cooperative members from the gender roles and, on the other hand, the structuring aspects of the movement in terms of gender equity are extracted, leading to propose a set of good practices that allow achieving



the sustainability of the coffee cooperative sector, placing men and women cooperative members in a unique political, economic, social and cultural context.

Keywords: cooperativism; gender; gender equity.

RESUMEN

El cooperativismo es un movimiento cuya ideología está sustentada en principios, valores y normas de comportamiento que regulan y orientan las relaciones de los cooperativistas. Dentro de este movimiento en Cuba, se ha venido asistiendo a procesos que buscan incorporar la perspectiva de género en su accionar, entendiendo que el abordaje de la equidad de género, desde las cooperativas, es un importante eslabón, al considerar que los valores y principios que rigen el cooperativismo están alineados con la búsqueda de una sociedad más igualitaria para mujeres y hombres. En el ánimo de avanzar hacia la equidad de género, la investigación tiene como objetivo exponer un diagnóstico de brechas de género presentes en el proceso productivo cooperativo cafetalero del municipio Tercer Frente, Santiago de Cuba. La investigación se conduce desde lo metodológico, a partir de la utilización de técnicas cuantitativas y cualitativas participativas que permitieron develar, las brechas de género en los sentidos de las acciones de las y los cooperativistas cafetaleros desde los roles de género y, por otro lado, se extraen aspectos estructurantes del movimiento en materia de equidad de género conducentes a proponer un conjunto de buenas prácticas que permitan lograr la sostenibilidad del sector cooperativo cafetalero, situando a hombres y mujeres cooperativistas en un contexto político, económico, social y cultural único.

Palabras clave: cooperativismo; género; equidad de género.

RESUMO

O cooperativismo é um movimento cuja ideologia está baseada em princípios, valores e normas de comportamento que regulam e orientam as relações dos membros da cooperativa. Dentro deste movimento em Cuba, temos testemunhado processos que buscam incorporar a perspectiva de gênero em suas ações, com o entendimento de que a abordagem da equidade de gênero nas cooperativas é um elo importante, considerando que os valores e princípios que regem o cooperativismo estão alinhados com a busca de uma sociedade mais igualitária para mulheres e

homens. No espírito de avançar em direção à equidade de gênero, a pesquisa visa apresentar um diagnóstico das lacunas de gênero presentes no processo de produção da cooperativa de café no município de Tercer Frente, Santiago de Cuba. A pesquisa é conduzida metodologicamente, utilizando técnicas participativas quantitativas e qualitativas que nos permitem revelar as lacunas de gênero nas ações dos membros da cooperativa de café em termos de papéis de gênero e, por outro lado, extrair aspectos estruturantes do movimento em termos de equidade de gênero, levando à proposta de um conjunto de boas práticas que nos permitem alcançar a sustentabilidade do setor cooperativo de café, colocando homens e mulheres membros da cooperativa em um contexto político, econômico, social e cultural único.

Palavras-chave: cooperativismo; gênero; equidade de gênero.

INTRODUCTION

The cooperative movement is an alternative of social organization that allows the popular sectors to organize themselves without profit and jointly seek development alternatives to satisfy their needs, thus it is a space for women to satisfy their basic needs and seek participation in the public sphere.

In recent years, Social and Solidarity Economy Organizations (Betancourt Abio, 2021) have discussed the need to establish strategies and actions in favor of gender equity based on the current contexts in many Latin American countries, where discrimination against women is manifested in restricted access to participation in different political and decision-making spheres, as well as in different social, cultural and economic spheres, violating rights, generating and reproducing social inequities that undermine the foundations of social justice.

Although the most visible and cruel face is gender violence, there are other intangible aspects that hinder equity and limit the generation of capacities and freedoms for the development of individuals and society as a whole in these peoples. In this sense, the lack of equity in the workplace, even in groups based on self-management, ends up seriously damaging women's basic rights.

The 1995 Declaration of the International Cooperative Alliance incorporates clear objectives related to promoting the rights of women cooperative members, and there should be no gender-based barriers to participation in cooperatives (ECLAC, 2019). Understanding that the approach to gender equity from cooperatives appears as a favorable space with an important potential; the values and

principles governing cooperativism (solidarity, equity, participation, democracy, transparency, honesty, among others) are aligned with the search for a more egalitarian society for women and men.

In the particular case of Cuba, the social system, established more than half a century ago, established and maintains in force laws that have promoted the rights of the population in all sectors and spheres of society, leading to transformations that have a favorable impact, especially on rural women. These goals have been a stimulus to continue improving the situation of women in all spheres of life, which is evidence of the commitment to guarantee equal access of men and women to development processes (UNDP, 2021).

Gender as a social construction

Sex and gender are not synonymous. Sex refers exclusively to physical, biological characteristics, which in themselves do not imply cultural or social differences, nor, of course, situations of subordination, dependence or discrimination of one with respect to the other (de Barbieri, 1993).

The concept of gender leads to a social and cultural construction that refers to the set of practices, symbols, representations, norms, values, and rights that societies elaborate based on sexual differences (Martínez Massip et al., 2021).

According to Espina Prieto (2012), this is a historically constructed dimension that assigns different roles, spaces, characteristics and identities to men and women based on their biological sex, according to the dominant model of relationships.

This sex-gender system, still in force today, produces unequal power relations between men and women and has a strong impact on key social aspects: on models of social protection based on contributory wages to which women have less access and in conditions of greater precariousness; on the possibilities of access to family resources (women's dependence on supposedly "joint" family income); on the unequal distribution of the burden of time, and especially on the relationship and place of women in the economic fabric in general and in the labor market in particular.

After the academic and political discourse flowed towards the feminism of equality and the feminism of difference, as antagonistic positions, the concept of gender equity emerges. This complex and multidimensional concept involves the tension between equality and difference between genders, as

well as the complementarity of social justice with cultural justice. Gender justice has cultural and economic connotations, aspects that require policies of recognition of differences and aspects that have to do with redistribution policies, in the sense of equal sharing of benefits between men and women. This, within the framework of an expanded conception of equity, linked to the consideration of all types of inequalities and differences, not only gender differences, but also incorporating differences of class, ethnicity, race, generation, sexuality, region, location, etc.

Gender equity and equality are central notions in discussions about gender justice and gender-sensitive development planning and intervention. However, it is not always explicit what they refer to and, therefore, what their theoretical and practical implications are.

The discussion began in the 1960s in the field of academic and political feminism with the discussion on equal rights between men and women. The emphasis was placed on men and women being treated equally, having the same rights and opportunities. When the concept of gender was introduced in the 1980s, it recognized the cultural nature of gender differences and considered the recognition of the differences between men and women, but also the differences between women and men, visualizing the interweaving of gender differences with other types of differences.

From here, the discourse follows two opposing trends, which are positioned differently in relation to the differences between men and women, whether biological or cultural. One corresponds to the so-called "feminism of equality", and the other to the "feminism of difference".

To this analysis, Scott (1992) adds that the feminism of equality seeks to reduce and/or eliminate the differences between men and women, in the sense that they participate with equal opportunities in society, especially in the public and economic spheres. This means equality in "access to", be it in the areas of health, education, the labor market, legislation, credit, material resources, political representation, etc. It is expected that, with equal opportunities, women will achieve equal status with men and the same possibilities to fully develop their capabilities.

Following Scott (1992), the feminism of difference, on the other hand, highlights the difference between men and women as something positive, to be valued and rescued. In order to contribute to gender justice, it proposes, among other things, the need to value motherhood and femininity as important elements that contribute to society. In this perspective, women are considered to be truly different from men, but this difference does not imply inferiority.

In the analysis of the concept of equality, Sandoval (2016) states that this is related to others such as equal opportunities, equal treatment and equal rights, considering equal opportunities as, "the situation in which women and men have equal opportunities for intellectual, physical and emotional fulfillment, being able to achieve the goals they set for their lives by developing their capabilities and potentials without distinction of gender, class, sex, age, religion and ethnicity.

Sandoval (2016) defines equal treatment as "the right to the same social conditions of security, remuneration and working conditions for both women and men" and equal rights as "the real equal situation where women and men share equal economic, political, civil, cultural and social rights".

While by *Equity* he considers that the word comes from "balance and is related to the word justice and cooperation"; it is to contribute and give to each one what belongs to him, recognizing the conditions of each person or human group, say, "to each person according to his needs" according to his condition and social position, according to his condition and gender position, according to his condition and position of age, sex, social class, religion, it is the recognition of diversity without this meaning reason for discrimination. It also means equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men" (Sandoval Álvarez, 2016).

This author considers that, "*Equity is not* synonymous with equality understood as similarity, identity or similarity between the sexes, as it does not seek to distribute equally nor does it aspire to equalization between the members of a group in terms of responsibilities, duties and rights" (Sandoval Álvarez, 2016).

From these currents the concept of gender equity arises in the need to go beyond a discourse focused on difference, in the need to build a new debate on equality and difference, oriented to the multiple differences that intersect, being necessary to link the problematic of cultural difference with the problematic of social equality (Mora, 2016). According to this author:

"Gender equity as a comprehensive notion involves the tension between equality and difference, as well as the complementarity of social justice with cultural justice. Where gender justice has cultural and economic connotations, aspects that require policies of recognition of differences and aspects that have to do with redistribution policies, in the sense of equal participation of benefits between men and women. This, within the framework of an expanded conception of equity, linked to the consideration of all types of inequalities and differences, not only gender differences, but also incorporating

differences of class, ethnicity, race, generation, sexuality, region, location in the world order, etc. Gender equity, like equity conceived in a general way, seeks to eliminate social inequality on the one hand and disrespect for difference on the other" (Mora, 2016, p. 62).

Continuing with Mora (2016), it is stated that social inequality in relation to gender refers to the confinement of women to the domestic space and their marginalization from the public space, to the unfair distribution of essential social goods, such as income, employment, property, health, education, physical integrity and personal safety. It includes the unequal distribution of resources, unequal workload, unequal economic compensation received for the same work performed by a man, among others.

The author considers that disrespect for difference, in the field of gender, points to the lack of respect for women for being women. The difference of the feminine is what is not respected. The denial of their autonomy, sexual pleasure, the non-valuation of the qualities, activities and spaces occupied by women. The lack of recognition of their ways of perceiving the world and their different perspective.

The disrespect of difference not only points to cultural differences derived from different cultural traditions, different generational groups, different religions, but also to the lack of recognition of the implications of the sexual difference between men and women, which determines psychic differences and a constituent difference: the reproductive condition of women.

There can be no gender equity "without taking as an initial consideration the reproductive condition of women. This makes them different, places them, as a consequence of the patriarchal gender order, in disadvantageous and inequitable conditions and in subordinate positions; it affects their participation in the private sphere, their workload in this sphere and their participation in the public sphere. Obviously, it has central consequences for her health, her general well-being, the social relations that surround her, the construction of her gender identity and the processes of representation of her person and her reality" (Mora, 2016, p. 71).

Gender equality cannot be restricted to equal participation of men and women in different areas and equal distribution of resources, which are fundamental, but must be extended to equality of results, and this is not possible without considering the reproductive condition of women.

Therefore, there are situations in which it is necessary not only to equalize opportunities, but also to propose different ways of doing things, because the starting point is different. Consequently, it is more appropriate to use a comprehensive notion of gender equity as the ultimate goal. This is what is called "substantive equality". It implies equivalence in life achievements for men and women, recognizing the reproductive condition of women, their different needs and interests, and this entails a redistribution of power and resources.

Gender equity includes the right of women and men to be different. To promote gender equity is to build a society in which women and men can develop equally while contributing to shaping the society to which they aspire.

Why gender-focused cooperatives?

Nowadays, to talk about cooperatives with a gender approach may seem the result of the environmental "pressure" or a certain will to be on "fashion", however, Gómez Arencibia (2021) considers that it is an option that has to do with ethical values, with options of social responsibility, from the relations that are articulated between men and women in the agrarian labor sphere and that deeply condition the space and conditions of women's position in the productive fabric in general and in the labor market in particular. Hence, it is considered that gender equity in cooperatives generates wealth.

Cooperatives are ways of understanding the social economy from a particular approach that emphasizes the importance of collaborative processes, community relations and organization among workers. In Latin America, given the specific conditions of the continent, cooperatives are an important form of community organization, which has allowed them to have a great preponderance in the national economy of some countries.

The role that women have played in these organizations has been relevant, actively participating in their formation since their beginnings; however, this has not been reflected in a real protagonism in decision-making positions throughout history (Alemán Salcedo et al., 2020).

The current context is facing urgencies that demand processes of sensitization, reflection and deconstruction from a gender perspective for the development of more egalitarian societies.

Gender equity and cooperativism

The development of gender equity and equality policies in the social field to facilitate an improvement in the professional conditions of women will surely be unanimously agreed upon. But, why should equity and equality policies be incorporated in cooperatives, and what does this imply? To argue this, it is necessary to use two dimensions which, although initially it may seem so, are not antagonistic, but, on the contrary, can create very positive synergies: the women's perspective and the cooperative's perspective.

It is evident that from the women's perspective there is a clear interest in modifying social relations, a model of roles and functions, which places women in situations of disadvantage and discrimination, both socially, economically and in the workplace.

Although the massive incorporation of women into the world of paid work is one of the characteristic phenomena since the twentieth century, it is also true that it has taken place under conditions of greater precariousness and less recognition of the value of women's professional and personal contributions and experiences (Cabrera & Escobar, 2014).

In this situation, it is obvious that women have a high degree of interest in overcoming these obstacles and getting to be recognized and valued for their abilities, for what they contribute, and not for stereotypes, prejudices and social roles that have been assigned to them.

From the cooperative's perspective, gender equality policies and actions should be developed within the framework of the cooperative's social responsibility, in order to achieve the goals proposed. Cooperatives are ways of understanding the social economy from a particular approach that reveals the importance of collaborative processes, community relations and organization among workers.

In this context, the perception of cooperatives goes far beyond considering them as a mere economic/productive actor, perceiving them as determining social actors in the configuration of fair and satisfactory social relations, from this line, international organizations such as the United Nations Organization, the United Nations Development Program, and the Economic Commission for Latin America have been developing standards and directives that seek to collect and promote practices that establish responsible relationships with their environment, including a responsible management of human resources that not only benefits the cooperative but also society (Caballero Reyes, 2018; Díaz González & Pérez-Rolo González, 2020).

Díaz González and Pérez-Rolo González (2020) recommend adopting different guidelines from a gender perspective, which address the individual, organizational and social dimensions, so as to combine the individual motivations and interests of the cooperative and society and promote changes at these levels.

Cuba is undergoing a process of updating its economic and social model, within which cooperatives are called to play a relevant role. They are defined as "a socialist form of collective property that constitute an economic organization with legal personality and its own assets, integrated by people who associate by contributing goods or work, with the purpose of producing and providing useful services to society and assume all their expenses with their income" (PCC, 2017).

In the exploratory process for this research, it was found that the lack of application of gender equity in the agricultural and livestock coffee cooperatives of the Tercer Frente municipality does not favor the fulfillment of the functions of the members, which is limited by the lack of advice and training, as well as economic resources, to implement a specific program to develop the capacities and abilities of women.

These organizations are directed and administered mostly by men, which has not allowed for the integral development of the organizations and the patriarchal system predominates, characterized by exclusion of the needs and demands of the women who face the problem.

In the spirit of advancing towards gender equity, the objective of this research is to present a diagnosis of gender gaps in the coffee cooperative productive process in the municipality of Tercer Frente, Santiago de Cuba, thus contributing to the conceptual discussion and making it possible to propose a set of good practices of gender equity that will make it possible to achieve sustainability in the coffee cooperative sector.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is carried out in the Agroforestry-Coffee Enterprise of the Tercer Frente municipality. It has a descriptive analytical character and is defined from a case study, it is conducted through a participatory gender diagnosis, and it was carried out from workshops in the different forms of cooperative production; Credit and Service Cooperatives, Agricultural Production Cooperatives and Basic Cooperative Production Units, registering collectively, what was happening and why, around the existing coffee cooperative reality.

The study uses a mixed methodology (quantitative and qualitative), this methodological projection is the combination of different research methods and techniques, such as in-depth interviews and participant observation, from a systemic conception that incorporates the analysis: from the actors of the productive chain, which refers to those who participate directly in production and commercialization (those who produce, process, commercialize to the processing centers and are the owners of the product), also included are the coffee technicians and the maximum representatives of the productive forms (presidents of cooperatives and their boards of directors); and from the leaders and cadres of the municipality, who exert influence on the productive chain.

This analysis made it possible to evaluate the conditions of gender equity in the coffee production process based on three categories: spaces and conditions in which men and women develop; access to strategic resources and participation in decision making. These made it possible to discover potentialities and limitations at each of the levels, and in their own dynamic interaction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the municipality of Tercer Frente, coffee has been the main source of income and employment for 57.5% of the families considered coffee producers. In the review of the balance report at the end of 2021, it is noted that this activity constitutes 86% of the commercial production of the municipality, with a program that advances with new technologies and high coffee prices that improve the quality of life of the mountain people and stop the exodus to the city, ratifying itself as the largest producer of the grain in Cuba.

The improvement of the agricultural system in Tercer Frente, as part of the updating of the economic model, has maintained among its strategic guidelines the development of the cooperative movement, which has advanced under the protection of various measures adopted by the Cuban State to favor food production, the latter is currently made up of a total of 12 Agricultural Production Cooperatives, 18 Credit and Service Cooperatives, and 18 Basic Units of Cooperative Production, whose lands extend over more than 5200 hectares.

This cooperative sector constitutes the largest labor force within the coffee production process, with 1670 members, of which 1107 are men and 563 are women, where women represent 33.7% of the labor force. In this cooperative sector, women have a higher rate of representation compared to other sectors.

Of the cooperative sector, 28 women are middle-level Agronomy Technicians, of which only 7 hold management positions, representing 25%, showing a scarce inclusion of women in management positions, due, among other reasons, to the fact that men are considered to obtain better results for the entities than women. In addition, there is a lack of training actions to promote the holding of management positions, thus revealing the participation gap in the main decision-making spaces.

The study made it possible to confirm through in-depth interviews that women cooperative members have difficulties with access to information; only 25% receive it directly from the cooperative boards through the assemblies that are held; the rest of the percentage of women stated that it is difficult for them to attend the assemblies due to their workload, which is basically unpaid.

In terms of access to resources, i.e., inputs for labor activities, purchasing decisions have weaknesses in their execution. Priority is given to the acquisition of work clothes, boots and other tools for men and no differentiation is made in the sizes for women, showing that 75% of the women do not use work clothes and shoes for agricultural work.

The process of selection and acceptance for the performance of different activities, also exposes difficulties between genders, where stereotyped practices have been identified that masculinize the work from considering the demands of the same, for example, in the work of planting, pruning and weeding, For example, in planting, pruning and weeding, where it is considered that women do not perform well because they have little strength and height to do the work, 25% of the sample is women (this percentage is the result of the fact that women are the owners of the farms, which shows the gap in the selection and hiring of personnel). Gender gaps in salaries are evident. This is evident because a total of 23 women in the sample, representing 46%, work in the least valued professions (for example, in the seedbeds and not in grafting or harvesting, the latter being more highly paid), all as a result of repeated absences from work due to their role as caregivers.

Another aspect is related to the right to credit that women within the coffee family have. From the corresponding analyses carried out between 2018 to 2021 from the Boards of Directors of the Cooperatives, as well as in the branch of the Bank of Credit and Commerce (BANDEC in Spanish) of the municipality, it is exposed, that women possess incapacity to be able to fully comply with the different activities that they plan for the execution of the projects in the coffee farms and subsequent amortization to the bank from the results achieved, This has led to the fact that at the time of making decisions for the granting of loans at the BANDEC branch, they are not delivered, so much so that of

a total of 25 loans requested from BANDEC Tercer Frente, by women in the period studied, only 9 were granted, representing 36% of loans granted.

It can also be seen in this reality that the male owners of the land tend to transfer the knowledge and inheritance of the land to the male who is more involved in its production; this reproduces a sexist division of labor. Out of a total of 32 farms processed in family inheritance during 2018 to 2021, only 8 were inherited by women, even though there were feasible conditions for the number to be higher; of these, in 5 of them women delegated the administration of the land to their husbands and sons. The rest of the farms were inherited by male members of the families, and in 7 of them, other people outside the family are currently working on other tasks.

When the women were asked about the reasons for not granting the inheritance, 40% of the interviewed women stated that their families claimed that they did not have the conditions or the time to take care of the crop. This aspect also signifies inequality of opportunities and, consequently, defines a gap in the possession of assets.

Another of the inequalities in the access of women coffee growers can be seen in the overload of domestic responsibilities and care for dependents (children/elderly adults). When analyzing the inventory of daily tasks, women state that they carry out all household activities, including care for children, the elderly, storage and other responsibilities related to their work in the fields. This reduces their possibility of participating full time in the work of the cooperatives, accessing technical training opportunities and moving to positions of greater responsibility within the productive bases.

In Tercer Frente, as a tendency, there are few institutions for the care of children and the elderly, only two Children's Circles and two homes for the care of the elderly, with the responsibility generally falling on women, as it is traditionally considered a "feminine" task, making it difficult for them to pass on the work to others in order to be able to join the paid work.

In the review of documents, mainly balance sheet reports at the end of the year (2018 to 2021), as well as reports in figures from the statistics department of the Coffee Enterprise (2018 to 2021), it is evident that there is a 10% of places for men over women, in the control of training it is evident that of a total of 52 cooperative members who have attended training provided by the municipal company and in a centralized manner, only 18 women participated.

At the institutional level, there is a deficient linkage between public bodies and the different coffee stakeholders involved in the territory, which is evidenced by poor coordination between the various agencies and entities responsible for conducting actions to respond to the gender equity strategy designed by the Ministry of Agriculture since 2015; this explains the reason for the gaps exposed, because they are promoted from the top down (descending) and do not reflect the real needs and/or concerns from the social dynamics of the territories.

This is summarized in the existence of anomalies that demonstrate the inequalities between men and women in the distribution of roles, training, salary, distribution of jobs, positioning in management positions, access to land; which leads to notable differences in behavior and actions in reproductive, productive and community roles, lack of participation in policy and decision making, lack of equal access to training and recognition and, therefore, lack of empowerment. All these problems or gender gaps highlight the inequalities, both in the condition and in the gender position of rural women in Tercer Frente, as a result of the inadequate process of social relations that are established.

These inequity gaps give rise to many inequalities that are visible in the coffee production processes and that hinder the development of coffee production in particular, of the coffee sector and of the rural territory in general of the municipality. Therefore, the need to introduce a new analysis that leads to the construction of gender equity from a participatory perspective that analyzes the specificity of the needs, social functions, responsibilities, aspirations, capacities and symbolic systems that society traditionally assigns to women and men from the company is evident.

Good practices to promote gender equity in the cooperative

Sensitization: The key to achieving gender equity is to sensitize the entire membership of the cooperative and although sensitization is a good first step, the important thing is to carry out concrete measures so that there can be true equity between men and women.

Recruitment and selection: Traditionally, women have had more difficulty accessing employment than men, despite having a similar level of training and experience. In order to conduct this process with quality, it is necessary:

- Job Description. Inclusive or neutral language should be used in job descriptions. Focus on the objective criteria required in the job, such as technical skills, functions and responsibilities

without mentioning specific needs in terms of gender, age or family situation of the candidate. If the cooperative decides to put its values in the job offer, it should highlight its commitment to equal opportunities and, in particular, to gender equity. In this way, women interested in the job offer can get to know what the cooperative identity is like and feel identified with the values it conveys

- Impartiality in the selection process. This must be transparent and there must be no distinction between candidates and it must be based on demonstrable criteria that do not give rise to ambiguities
- Promote a balanced membership. If the cooperative is highly committed to equality, the work areas should be balanced whenever possible. In this sense, it is important to stress the importance of having women in positions of responsibility

Formation and training: Equal opportunities in training, likewise, entails that the cooperative sees increased efficiency and that women feel valued, promoted and at ease in their workplace. In order for training to reach both men and women, the following best practices are recommended:

- Formation planning. The cooperative must think about the formation needs of both men and women and take into consideration their interests, motivations and availability. In this sense, it is especially important to take into account the availability of schedules, since it is still mostly women who are in charge of childcare and housework
- Contents. The contents of the formation should allow for professional development, regardless of who the recipients of the training are. This is a good opportunity to make cooperative members aware of occupational segregation, since the ideal would be to promote training in any area, for both men and women. It is important to promote leadership and management skills courses that motivate male and female workers to improve their professional development
- Dissemination and evaluation of formation. Dissemination of courses should be non-sexist, as is the case with job offers. At the end of the training, the board of directors should analyze the participation of the cooperative members and, in particular, whether both women and men have found it easy to access the courses

Promotion to management positions: To improve the process of promoting women to management positions within a cooperative, some good practices include:

- Approach to selection for promotion. If the information is disseminated to all the people involved, it is likely to arouse the interest of all employees. Good communication is essential to disseminate the aptitudes/attitudes, skills and achievements of potential candidates for promotion so that, by means of objective criteria, the cooperative member to be promoted can be better chosen
- Performance evaluations. A system of review and assessment criteria must be established. At this point it is important to take into account those skills that have traditionally been attributed to the female gender (such as the capacity for dialogue, teamwork, etc.) and not only values that have historically been attributed to men (such as competitiveness and individualism)

The most important of these practices is that the board of the cooperative should be aware of gender diversity and the importance of equal opportunities that should exist between men and women. Not only because it means a better treatment of all the people that make up the cooperative, but also because it is a reflection of the cooperative values and the contribution they make to the achievement of the cooperatives' sustainability.

Equity and equality policies constitute a tool that facilitates the personal and social change necessary for men and women to advance together towards gender relations that guarantee equal opportunities in access to employment, in working conditions and in the development of professional careers. Recognizing and valuing that the diverse contributions of men and women are enriching components that increase the capital of knowledge and the vitality of society in general and of the cooperative in particular.

Advancing along this path requires, of course, incorporating changes in the culture, values and strategies of cooperatives, with special emphasis on key elements such as the commitment of management to a new cooperative culture, to change and excellence, to the generation of new leadership styles, to the conduct of diagnoses adjusted to reality, based on the analysis of weak points and the assessment of needs, possibilities and impact.

Working towards this objective is a task in which the entire cooperative fabric must be involved, hence the importance of generalizing the practices provided, from diverse but complementary perspectives, considering that it is an effort towards a common goal: a cooperative framework and a more equitable society in which men and women are equal before the law, diverse in their identities and complementary in the distribution of tasks, responsibilities and power.

REFERENCES

- Alemán Salcedo, E., Páez Cuba, L. D., & Zuloaga Lojo, L. (2020). El cooperativismo en España y Cuba: Ideas convergentes sobre la participación de las mujeres. *Cooperativismo y Desarrollo*, 8(2), 296-314. <https://coodes.upr.edu.cu/index.php/coodes/article/view/325>
- Betancourt Abio, R. (2021). Más que nunca es necesaria la Economía Social y Solidaria para construir socialismo en Cuba. En R. Betancourt Abio & J. Gómez Arencibia, *La Economía Social y Solidaria en Cuba: Fundamentos y prácticas para el desarrollo socialista* (pp. 1-25). Publicaciones Acuario.
- Caballero Reyes, C. M. (2018). Mujeres y cooperativismo en Cuba hoy. Un estudio de redes sociales. *Revista Interdisciplinaria de Estudios de Género de El Colegio de México*, 4, 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.24201/eg.v4i0.218>
- Cabrera, M., & Escobar, L. (2014). Equidad de género y economía social y solidaria: Aportes de la economía feminista. En Y. Jubeto Ruiz, L. Guridi Aldanondo, & M. Fernández Villa (Eds.), *Diálogos sobre economía social y solidaria en Ecuador: Encuentros y desencuentros con las propuestas para otra economía* (pp. 211-278). Universidad del País Vasco.
- ECLAC. (2019). *Panorama Social de América Latina 2018*. Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe. <https://repositorio.cepal.org/handle/11362/44395>
- de Barbieri, T. (1993). Sobre la categoría género. Una introducción teórico-metodológica. *Debates En Sociología*, (18), 145-169. <https://revistas.pucp.edu.pe/index.php/debatesensociologia/article/view/6680>
- Díaz González, E., & Pérez-Rolo González, M. (2020). Valores de dirección y género en cooperativas cubanas: Tema revisitado. *Estudios del Desarrollo Social: Cuba y América Latina*, 8(3), 178-190. <http://www.revflacso.uh.cu/index.php/EDS/article/view/464>
- Espina Prieto, M. (2012). Retos y cambios en la política social. En P. Vidal Alejandro & O. E. Pérez Villanueva (Eds.), *Miradas a la economía cubana: El proceso de actualización* (Tercera edición, pp. 160-175). Editorial Caminos.

- Gómez Arencibia, J. (2021). Tras los pasos de las mujeres cooperativistas cubanas. En C. Marcuello Servós, M. del C. Barragán Mendoza, E. Navarro Rosandiski, & J. F. Álvarez Rodríguez, *Mujeres, cooperativismo y economía social y solidaria en Iberoamérica* (pp. 153-172). CIRIEC-España.
- Martínez Massip, A., García Pedraza, L., Llanes Guerra, O., Zenea Montejo, M., Leiva Hoyo, L. J., Pérez Rodríguez, A., & Zorio González, E. de la C. (2021). Perspectiva de género desde el modelo de balance social en cooperativas agropecuarias villaclareñas. En R. Betancourt Abio & J. Gómez Arencibia, *La Economía Social y Solidaria en Cuba: Fundamentos y prácticas para el desarrollo socialista* (pp. 270-282). Publicaciones Acuario.
- Mora, L. (2016). *Gestión logística integral: Las mejores prácticas en la cadena de abastecimiento*. ECOE Ediciones.
https://books.google.com.cu/books/about/GESTION_LOGISTICA_INTEGRAL.html?id=jXs5DwAAQBAJ&redir_esc=y
- PCC. (2017). *Conceptualización del Modelo Económico y Social Cubano de Desarrollo Socialista*. UEB Gráfica. Empresa de periódicos.
<http://www.granma.cu/file/pdf/gaceta/%C3%BAltimo%20PDF%2032.pdf>
- PNUD. (2021). *Ascenso a la raíz. La perspectiva local del Desarrollo Humano en Cuba 2019* [IV Informe Nacional de Desarrollo Humano]. Programa de la Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo. <https://www.undp.org/es/cuba/news/iv-informe-nacional-de-desarrollo-humano-cuba-ascenso-la-ra%C3%ADz-la-perspectiva-local-del-dh-en-cuba>
- Sandoval Álvarez, B. (2016). ¿Inclusión en qué? Conceptualizando la inclusión social. *EHQUIDAD. Revista Internacional de Políticas de Bienestar y Trabajo Social*, (5), 71-108.
<https://doi.org/10.15257/ehquidad.2016.0003>
- Scott, J. W. (1992). Igualdad versus diferencia: Los usos de la teoría postestructuralista (M. Lamas, Trad.). *Debate Feminista*, 5. <https://doi.org/10.22201/cieg.2594066xe.1992.5.1556>

Conflict of interest:

Authors declare not to have any conflict of interest.

Authors' contribution:

Mindra Arévalo Zurita, Fredy Manuel García Arroyo and Marino Pineda Vila designed the study, were involved in data collection, analysis and interpretation, and prepared the draft.

Elpidio Expósito García provided methodological advice on the study and proposed the drafting of the report.

All the authors reviewed the writing of the manuscript and approve the version finally submitted.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License

Copyright (c) Mindra Arévalo Zurita; Elpidio Expósito García; Fredy Manuel García Arroyo; Marino Pineda Vila