

PROMOTING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN



DECISION-MAKING IN FARMER ORGANIZATIONS

THE ORGANIZATION

A multi-services cooperative organization committed to more effectively engaging women.

Cooperativa de Servicios Múltiples 20 de Abril R.L. is a membership organization located in Quilali, Nueva Segovia, Nicaragua which provides a range of opportunities to assist their 5,721 members in activities such as coffee collection, processing, and commercialization, financing, support for small traders, public employees, as well as facilitating training programs and other services that enable them to enhance their quality of life.

20 de Abril has participated in sustainability work for the last seven years through its certification with Fairtrade and engaging with Equal Origins, through a project funded by Starbucks Foundation, had never given serious priority to gender equity until now.

THE CHALLENGES

Rethinking membership structures and programs to address the needs of women equally to those of men.

Thinking how to evolve the organization to be gender equitable requires collaboration with gender expertise, key staff and buyers. Engaging women equitably must not only involve improved programs and policies but also commitment to the issue at all levels of organizational leadership from the board of directors to technical staff.

At a Glance

Challenges

- * Low participation of women throughout the organization.
- * Lack of prioritization of board of directors and members on gender equity issues.
- * Minimal information about the importance of the issue.
- * No policy to guide engagement on gender equity

Solutions

- * Virtual Better Together Workshop
- * In-person Training of Trainers (ToT)

Impacts

- * Creation of the first Gender Policy.
- * Establishment of the first Gender Commission.
- * Increase in women's participation in decision-making.





THE SOLUTIONS

To support Cooperativa 20 de Abril to identify and reach their gender equity goals, Equal Origins guided them through an online learning program. During five virtual sessions, coop leaders acquired key gender competencies which allowed them to introduce the issue to its management and members in an impactful way. A second, more in-depth virtual training guided the cooperative in the design of its first gender policy. A training of trainers supported wider replication of gender themes and tools among the board of directors, associate members, and employees of the organization.

THE IMPACT

Through the collaboration with Equal Origins, Cooperativa 20 de Abril R.L. embraced gender equity, empowered by workshops that sparked organizational interest. This led to their first Gender Policy, a pivotal step achieved by amending statutes to enhance women's role in decision-making. Subsequently, they formed a Gender Commission (4 women, 2 men) to drive policy implementation and promote a Gender-based Theory of Change. The cooperative has also successfully trained 108 women and 71 men, becoming a testimony of progress and agents of change who are upholding the cooperative principle of equality and creating conditions for more equitable service outreach. This empowered the participants, strengthened their capacities, and had an impact on mainstreaming towards gender equity, creating new opportunities and projects for women within the organization.

THE HIGHLIGHTS

The Cooperative began implementing their GEDP after the first virtual training to create a solid, gender-equality-based organizational vision. The plan's objectives include enforcing the gender policy, continuous training for awareness, closing gender gaps, and promoting women's leadership and governance.

They are committed to training change agents, educating future generations on gender equality, and partnering with governmental and non-governmental entities to ensure rural women's access to health, education, and support against gender-based violence. They also aim to establish a financing service for vulnerable women, ensuring fair credit access. Their goal is to gradually eliminate gender gaps, starting within each cooperative family.

Our cooperative leadership and broader membership has highly valued our collaboration with Equal Origins. The resulting shift in attitudes about gender equity thanks to the program, allowed us to establish the first Gender Policy and Gender Commission in the organization. These advances mean that women's contributions are more visible and valued throughout the communities.

-Vilma López Sevilla



Women's empowerment and increased women's participation



New projects and opportunities for women

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