



School of Social Entrepreneurship

Rosario

PROMOTING THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY



Summary

As a result of the global socio-economic crisis and its effects in Argentina in particular, the city of Rosario has observed a growing number of people who are excluded from the formal labour market and who try to generate income on their own through self-employment, based on their knowledge and skills. Against this backdrop, in 2015, the Sub-Directorate of Social Economy, under the Ministry of Human Development and Habitat, carried out an assessment to better understand this reality, and identified the need to design a strategy that offers support to entrepreneurs in the creation and strengthening of their projects.

Within the framework of this strategy called '*Rosario Emprende*' ['Rosario Ventures'], the School of Social Entrepreneurship was created,

with the aim of offering training and mentoring to personal, family and associative entrepreneurial projects in the six districts of the city, with an approach based on popular education. In particular, it focuses on profiles with certain levels of vulnerability and social exclusion, as well as low capitalisation, who need support and guidance to enable greater economic, social and environmental sustainability. Among these are productive sectors linked to food production and traditional crafts; services related to care for people and environmental sustainability (recycling, urban waste collectors, etc.); and trades in demand within neighbourhoods (electricians, blacksmiths, plumbers, etc.).

The programme consists of two phases: a first phase of technical training and a second phase of support and guidance for these endeavours. Additional training spaces adapted to specific needs are also offered (entrepreneurship with a feminist perspective, and support for cooperatives and self-managed neighbourhood fairs/markets).

City:

Rosario

Country:

Argentina

Inhabitants:

948.312

Topics:

Job stimulus, Work placement, Gender Equality, Community development

The city of Rosario has been a member of the IAEC since 1996 and is coordinating the Latin American Delegation

Goals

- ▶ Foster socio-economic inclusion through the self-managed employment of people and groups in vulnerable situations, by way of training and support for their entrepreneurial projects.
- ▶ Strengthen the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the entrepreneurial projects participating in the programme.
- ▶ Promote personal and community development, making use of their own knowledge and skills, based on a pedagogic approach of popular education, empowerment, and the values of the social and solidarity economy.
- ▶ Strengthen the community fabric and the links among entrepreneurial initiatives by productive sector, in order to address common challenges and critical issues through the promotion of exchanges, inter-cooperation and mutual support.

- ▶ Reinforce the subjectivity and economic rights of women by way of a cross-cutting educational approach that incorporates a gender perspective and feminist economics.



Context

According to the latest available census (2010), Rosario has 948,312 inhabitants. The city is located in an urbanised area of 107.98 km² within a total municipal area of 178.69 km², and has a population density of 5,089 inhabitants/km².

The production structure of Rosario and its metropolitan area is made up of a multiplicity of activities that bring together traditional agro-industrial branches and information and communication technologies, the service sector, and a highly competitive food industry. Rosario is an industrial and service centre that counts on permanent developments within its productive, tourist, recreational and scientific sectors.

The majority of the participants in the School of Social Entrepreneurship are women (75% of the total). Many of them have dependent

children and are the sole providers in the household. For the most part, they undertake subsistence economic activities, diversified across various sectors. In addition to the care work they carry out in the home, they also make use of their skills and abilities (mainly in cooking and handicrafts) in enterprises that allow them to maintain and/or complement their family economies from their homes and neighbourhoods.

Most of the School's male participants opt for various trades and services (blacksmithing, carpentry, construction, home maintenance/repair services, etc.). They participate in the programme either because they have chosen self-employment or as a consequence of their expulsion from the formal labour market and the difficulties of reintegration.

Methodology

Access to the programme is granted through an in-depth interview as an assessment. The participants interviewed are referred to the most appropriate phase of the programme according to their needs, in a process that takes place continuously throughout the year.

The School of Social Entrepreneurship implements its programme through a methodology based on popular education, which is delivered in two phases:

1. Training programme 'The ABC of my entrepreneurship'. This consists of five theoretical-practical modules, where simple and practical tools for the management of a family, individual and/or collective enterprise are developed. Participants learn to design the key components of their project's business model, using their own knowledge and skills, and based on exchanges with other participants. Prominence is given to matters such as: designing products or services to make them attractive in the market, assigning a fair price to cover production costs, and key elements of the marketing strategy. Participants must integrate all they have learnt into a clear, understandable and attractive business proposal. Those who complete the programme receive an initial support grant, which can be used for a first purchase of materials, or an initial basic allocation to strengthen their working capital.

2. Rounds of technical tutorials and collaborative work. The projects designed in the first phase are grouped by categories (food, design, services, etc.), so that participants may take part in rounds of collective tutorials, called 'comunidades de emprendizaje' ['entrepreneurial learning communities'], in a bid to delve deeper into the course content, resolve technical queries with the help of specialised advisors, and present a final proposal bringing together the content learnt. If they complete the rounds of tutorials in this second phase, the projects receive a complementary incentive to contribute to capacity building.

In addition, the School organises additional spaces and tools aiming to respond to other needs identified, such as:

► **'Juntas Hacemos Economía' ['Let's Create an Economy Together']** workshops. Training cycle on topics related to feminist economics, aimed at reinforcing the subjectivity and economic autonomy of women who lead family businesses. The group dimension and the strengthening of sustainable community processes are fostered (community banking, associative marketing, cooperative professionalisation of care tasks, among others).

► **Business incubation days for cooperative fairs or markets.** Cycle of three theoretical-practical workshops aimed at pre-cooperative groups that express the will to organise a collective and self-managed commercialisation process in the format of a neighbourhood fair or market. Throughout the sessions, a pedagogic approach is used to enable the group to articulate its own working rules, and establish its governing bodies and operational agreements. The process culminates with the signing of an agreement with the Municipality of Rosario that enables them to set up the fair or market, in a self-managed manner, in the square of their choice and with the agreed regularity.

The School of Social Entrepreneurship works in coordination with other local actors such as the National University of Rosario, the Food Institute (dependent on Public Health), and the Ministry of Gender and Human Rights.



★ Evaluation

Since it was set up in 2016, more than 6,000 individual and family entrepreneurs have participated in the School's educational programmes. These participants have designed over 600 enterprises. The project has also fostered the creation of 12 self-managed cooperative fairs and markets in the different districts of the city.

In a qualitative dimension, participants point out that their time at the School has boosted their confidence in their own capacities and their entrepreneurial projects, resulting in higher levels of autonomy and professionalisation of their activities. Further, positive dynamics of peer-to-peer connections have been identified that go beyond the training cycle, taking the form of inter-cooperation initiatives among projects in the same district, with a high community impact and transformative potential (for example, women who participate in the initial training and decide to set up a cooperative market in their neighbourhood, while continuing to participate in training actions with a feminist perspective).

The School also contributes to raising awareness about the added value of the social and solidarity economy among the general public by bringing

producers and consumers closer together, demonstrating the quality of their products and services, and the dignified work it generates. Along the same lines, in 2021, the School has begun to implement a training course on Social, Solidarity, Popular and Community Economy (124 hours in duration) for the technical team of the Sub-Directorate of Social Economy, in order to encourage reflection on new debates and emerging concepts.

The main difficulties encountered are related to the volume of people and projects attended to and the complexity of the Argentine socio-economic context, coupled with the serious scenario generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has made it necessary to offer training in virtual format. This has highlighted the "digital divide" that exists within the groups served by the programme. In a bid to overcome these challenges, the School is attempting to strengthen inter-cooperation processes among entrepreneurs, and offer training adapted to their needs (digital marketing strategies, electronic means of payment, etc.).

➔ Future proposals

The strengthening of an innovative line of work introduced in 2021 is foreseen: the 'Rosario Emprende' Microcredit Revolving Fund; which aims to bolster and consolidate enterprises with a certain level of capitalisation, through the granting of solidarity microcredits at a subsidised rate, across three segmented lines of credit (food, textile/design, and services and trades). This instrument, financed with funds from the National Ministry of Social Development, will be managed by the School's team drawing on a specific strategy (credit cycle).



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