

Rojas Herrera, Juan José; Cañedo Villarreal, Roberto

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Policies to promote social and solidarity economy: A case study of Mexico City

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Working Paper 2020-7

Policies to Promote Social and Solidarity Economy

A Case Study of Mexico City

*Juan José Rojas Herrera, Universidad Autónoma Chapingo
Roberto Cañedo Villarreal, Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero*

Prepared for the UNRISD project on
Promoting SSE through Public Policies:
Guidelines for Local Governments

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UNRISD, Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Tel: +41 (0)22 9173020
info.unrisd@un.org
www.unrisd.org



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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CCFC	Consejo Consultivo de Fomento Cooperativo (Advisory Council for Cooperative Development)
CCFCDF	Consejo Consultivo de Fomento Cooperativo del Distrito Federal (Advisory Council for Cooperative Development of the Federal District)
CDMX	Ciudad de México (Mexico City)
EC	Evaluation Committee
CPEUM	Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos (Political Constitution of the United Mexican States)
DAC	Dirección de Atención a Cooperativas (Directorate for Assistance to Cooperatives)
DFC	Dirección de Fomento al Cooperativismo (Directorate for the Promotion of Cooperatives)
DGECyFC	Dirección General de Empleo, Capacitación y Fomento Cooperativo (Directorate General for Employment, Training and Cooperative Development)
DGESS	Dirección General de Economía Social y Solidaria (Directorate General for the Social and Solidarity Economy)
DIF	Dirección de Integración Familiar (Directorate for Family Integration)
DPE	Dirección de Promoción al Empleo (Directorate for the Promotion of Employment)
TAS	Technical Assistance Specialist
SSE	Social and Solidarity Economy
FOCOFESS	Programa Fomento, Constitución y Fortalecimiento de las Empresas Sociales y Solidarias (Programme for the Promotion, Establishment and Strengthening of Social and Solidarity Enterprises)
GCDMX	Gobierno de la Ciudad de México (Government of Mexico City)
GDF	Gobierno del Distrito Federal (Government of the Federal District)
GOCM	Gaceta Oficial de la Ciudad de México (Official Gazette of Mexico City)
GODF	Gaceta Oficial del Distrito Federal (Official Gazette of the Federal District)
ICAT	Instituto de Capacitación para el Trabajo (Institute of Occupational Training)
IPN	Instituto Politécnico Nacional (National Polytechnic Institute)
LESS	Ley de Economía Social y Solidaria (Law on the Social and Solidarity Economy)
LFCDF	Ley de Fomento Cooperativo del Distrito Federal (Law on Cooperative Development of the Federal District)
PPFIC	Programa de Promoción, Fortalecimiento e Integración Cooperativa (Programme for the Promotion, Strengthening and Integration of Cooperatives)
ROP	Rules of Operation
SEDECO	Secretaría de Desarrollo Económico (Ministry of Economic Development)
SF	Secretaría de Finanzas (Ministry of Finance)
SPI	Subprograma de Impulso (Promotion Subprogramme)
SPF	Subprograma de Fortalecimiento (Strengthening Subprogramme)
STyFE	Secretaría del Trabajo y Fomento del Empleo (Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion)

Summary

The aim of this paper is to deepen understanding of the design and implementation processes of public policies to promote the social and solidarity economy (SSE) in Mexico City (CDMX) during the period 2016-2019, and to propose general guidelines to improve and refine them. The research was conducted in three phases: review of printed materials, field research, and preparation of the report.

The main findings include the following: (a) policies to promote SSE are maintained largely because of legal and institutional inertia and the pressure of social demands to combat unemployment; (b) owing to serious budgetary and staffing constraints, the Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion (STyFE), which is responsible for implementing the provisions of the Law on the Social and Solidarity Economy (LESS), only serves the cooperative sector and not the whole range of associations recognized as an integral part of the social sector of the economy; (c) little is being done to implement or refine the legal framework; (d) between 2015 and 2018, modest results were achieved, which were marred by the mismanagement (by officials and beneficiaries) of resources and programmes intended to support SSE; (e) in 2019, within the framework of the self-styled “republican austerity”, there was a major administrative centralization of the programmes, accompanied by mass layoffs of employees and instructors, the inexperience of the new authorities and the establishment of bogus new cooperatives; and (f) the failure of government efforts to guide and channel the transformative and innovative potential of SSE was evident throughout the period under review.

Recommendations: (a) immediately align the legislation applicable to SSE enterprises with the Local Constitution and the comprehensive reform of the Law on Cooperative Development of the Federal District (LFCDF); (b) prepare a reliable and updated directory of cooperatives; (c) make all administrative processes simple, flexible and transparent; (d) establish a georeferencing procedure for each cooperative that provides real-time status updates; (e) develop multi-year programmes to achieve long-term goals; (f) tackle intergroup conflicts in the management of institutional spaces; (g) coordinate the public bodies involved in the implementation of public policies – the Government of Mexico City (GCDMX) and the municipalities; (h) set lower quantitative targets than in 2019, giving priority to qualitative aspects (capacity-building and technical support for cooperatives) over quantitative aspects (number of cooperatives formed or strengthened); (i) adopt a standardized training methodology for the formation and strengthening of cooperatives; (j) ongoing evaluation of programmes by institutions that are external to GCDMX; (k) revive the Advisory Council for Cooperative Development of the Federal District (CCFCDF) as an institutional space for dialogue and decision-making with the cooperative movement; (l) encourage research and diagnostic assessments on the conditions in which cooperatives operate and consider, in the light of evidence-based research, the possibility of extending public policy beyond the cooperative sector.

Introduction

This study is part of the project *Promoting Social and Solidarity Economy through Public Policies: Guidelines for Local Governments*, coordinated by UNRISD, which aims to deepen understanding of the development of public policies and ecosystems for the Social and Solidarity economy (SSE) and to propose general guidelines that policymakers may use to design and implement public policies that promote SSE, based on six case studies, including Mexico City (CDMX).

In CDMX, the design and implementation of public policies to promote SSE, especially in the form of cooperatives, is not new. Their origins date back to 2000, although it was not until 2007 that policy was translated into action, when the Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion (STyFE) began to implement various programmes to promote and strengthen cooperatives, drawing on indirect budgets from various departments of the Government of the Federal District (GDF), now Government of Mexico City (GCDMX).

Between 2012 and 2014, now with a dedicated budget, the Programme for the Promotion, Strengthening and Integration of Cooperatives (PPFIC) was established. This programme provided financial support to cooperatives with the aim of boosting their production capacity. During this period, a total of 157 cooperatives were supported, comprising 2,442 people, of whom 1,392 were women and 1,050 men.

In 2015, the Support Programme for the Development of Cooperatives in Mexico City was launched; the programme ran for the next three years. In 2019, with the intention of extending the programme's coverage beyond the scope of the cooperative sector – in which it had hitherto operated – STyFE launched the Programme for the Promotion, Establishment and Strengthening of Social and Solidarity Enterprises (FOCOFESS).

In addition to the above-mentioned programmes to promote SSE, various special programmes, managed by other GCDMX secretariats or by one of the 16 municipalities of Mexico City, have been launched. However, in this paper we have limited ourselves to reviewing the programmes implemented by STyFE during the period between 2016 and 2019.

With regard to the methodological aspect, the study was carried out in three stages. In the first stage, an exhaustive review was conducted of a range of relevant resources, including books, articles, documents, laws, regulations, journals of legislative debates and, in particular, the rules of operation (ROP) of the different programmes, along with their calls and evaluations, published in the Official Gazette of the Federal District (GODF) in 2016 and, from 2017, in the Official Gazette of Mexico City (GOCM).

The second stage involved the gathering of information in the field, through 13 interviews with key informants, including officials and former employees of various local government departments, managers and members of the beneficiary cooperatives, STyFE-accredited instructors, and scholars on the subject, whose opinions, comments, and recommendations are taken up in various parts of this paper.

During the third and final stage, the gathered information was organized and analysed, and the final report was drafted. The results are presented in seven sections, which address the following themes: (1) the legal framework of SSE and cooperative enterprises at the national and local levels; (2) programmes to promote SSE implemented over the last four

years; (3) organizational training methodologies used to strengthen and consolidate the associational and entrepreneurial capacities of cooperatives; (4) financial support and market access policies; (5) forms of participation and impact of cooperatives and their integration organizations on the processes of designing, implementing and evaluating public policies to promote SSE; (6) mechanisms for gathering and organizing statistical information related to the work of cooperatives, and instruments for communicating and disseminating their entrepreneurial achievements to the general population; and (7) main findings and recommendations.

1. Legal framework of SSE at federal, state, and municipal level

The legal framework applicable to SSE in CDMX, which is normally used as the legal basis for public policies to promote and foster SSE that are enacted by GCDMX, takes as its starting point the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States (CPEUM), Article 25, seventh paragraph, which states that:

The law shall establish the mechanisms that facilitate the organization and expansion of the economic activity of the social sector: of the ejidos [communal landholdings], workers' organizations, cooperatives, communities, enterprises that belong mainly or exclusively to the workers and, in general, all forms of social organization that produce, distribute and consume socially necessary goods and services.

On these grounds, specific laws were drawn up and adapted for each of the association types recognized as being part of SSE. Consequently, the ejidos and communities were regulated by the Agrarian Law, the last reform of which dates to 1992. The General Law on Cooperative Societies was last amended in 2018, and in the case of workers' organizations and enterprises, the regulations were amended several times and incorporated into the Federal Labour Law.

Other legal instruments at the federal level that regulate SSE organizations in a complementary or supplementary manner are the Law on Social Solidarity Enterprises, the General Law on Mutual Insurance Institutions and Companies, the Federal Law on the Promotion of Activities carried out by Civil Society Organizations, the General Law on Social Development and the General Law on Corporations.

However, in order for there to be a general framework law for all SSE organizations, 29 years had to elapse before, in May 2012, the Law on the Social and Solidarity Economy (LESS) was enacted, regulating the aforementioned seventh paragraph of Article 25 of CPEUM with regard to the social sector of the economy.

This law, pursuant to the provisions of Article 1 thereof, is a matter of public policy and social interest and is applicable throughout the country and shall be enforced without prejudice to other provisions issued by the Federal Executive and Legislative Branches and the federal or municipal authorities, within the scope of their respective powers.

In line with the above, Article 2 states that the purpose of LESS is to set out the rules for organizing, promoting, fostering and strengthening the social sector of the economy, along with the State's responsibility for fostering and promoting it. Consequently, Article 44 recognizes the right of organizations in this sector to be promoted and supported in their economic activities and, therefore, to receive advice, technical assistance, and training from the relevant authorities.

Another milestone in establishing the regulatory framework of SSE was the approval, by both Chambers of the Congress of the Union, of the addition of Section XXIX-N to Article 73 of CPEUM, which established the concurrent powers of the Congress of the Union and the Local Congresses to enact laws to promote cooperatives in the 32 states that make up the Mexican Republic. However, to date, only six states, including CDMX, have issued their respective cooperative promotion laws. Only CDMX has specific regulations for this law.

The Law on Cooperative Development of the Federal District (LFCDF), enacted on 20 January 2006, stipulates that the authorities responsible for its administration shall be the Head of Government of the Federal District, STyFE, the Ministry of Economic Development (SEDECO), the Ministry of Social Development (today the Ministry of Welfare), the Ministry of Finance (SF) and the Heads of Municipalities. STyFE was in charge of its implementation.

Moreover, Article 9(A)(II), establishes that it is the responsibility of STyFE to promote cooperative development activities in the Federal District and to provide – by itself or through individuals or corporations under its supervision – advice, training and education for the establishment, consolidation, administration and development of cooperatives, as well as for the production, marketing and consumption of the goods and services necessary for the purposes established in the aforementioned law.

Because public policy on cooperative development is considered an integral part of the social development policy of GCDMX, Articles 32 and 33 of the Social Development Law for the Federal District clearly specify that all social programmes to be implemented must be in line with the principles of said law and the specific ROPs must be subject to its provisions.

Since 17 September 2017, CDMX has its own Political Constitution. It is worth noting that Articles 3, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17 and 59 directly mention the role of SSE in the economic and social development of the city, and the need to support its promotion and development through the various institutional structures of GCDMX.

On the basis of the above, the other legal systems at state level related to the promotion and development of SSE are the Law for the Promotion of Economic Development of the Federal District, the Law for Social Assistance and Integration for the Federal District, the Law for Cultural Promotion of the Federal District, the Law for the Prevention and Eradication of Discrimination in the Federal District and the Law on Education of the Federal District.

Finally, it should be noted that at the municipal level, in accordance with Article 53 of the Political Constitution of CDMX, the municipalities have exclusive powers in matters of economic and social development within their territorial jurisdiction. Therefore, the Municipal Council can approve the proclamation of general provisions in this matter, at the proposal of the Head of the Municipality. However, to date there has been no known regulatory provision issued in relation to SSE at this level.

2. Programmes to promote SSE implemented in the period 2016-2019

In fiscal year 2016, the ROPs of the Support Programme for the Development of Cooperatives in Mexico City (CDMX Cooperatives 2016), were published in GODF, on 29 January. Two months later, the respective call for applications was published. The Programme was implemented by STyFE, through the Directorate General for Employment, Training and Cooperative Development (DGE CyFC).

The general objective was to promote the formation of new cooperatives, providing them with financial support once they were established, and to strengthen the capacities of those that were already in operation through specialized technical assistance services and the granting of financial support that would contribute to an effective and gradual entrance into the market.

To meet these objectives, the programme was divided into two subprogrammes: one to promote the formation of cooperatives (cooperative promotion) and the other to strengthen and develop cooperatives (cooperative strengthening).

The social organizations seeking to benefit from the Promotion Subprogramme (SPI) had to meet the following requirements: (i) demonstrate their readiness to engage in a productive activity as a collective; (ii) have no financial debts or outstanding paperwork with STyFE; and (iii) have the majority of their members residing in the Federal District.

For their part, the cooperatives seeking to benefit from the Strengthening Subprogramme (SPF) had to: (i) be legally constituted; (ii) have management and supervisory bodies in place; (iii) have their registered office in the Federal District; (iv) have a minimum of 80 per cent of their members residing in the Federal District; and (v) not have been disqualified from selection processes carried out in other programmes operated by STyFE.

The evaluation and opinion on applications for access to both subprogrammes was carried out by an Evaluation Committee (EC), composed of ten people representing the following institutions: STyFE's DGE CyFC, STyFE's Directorate for the Promotion of Employment (DPE), the Ministry of Social Development, SEDECO, SF, an expert in the production sector, an academic expert in cooperatives and SSE, the Advisory Council for Cooperative Development of the Federal District (CCFCDF), STyFE's Internal Comptroller's Office, and Citizen's Comptroller. The EC was chaired by DGE CyFC and DPE served as the executive secretariat. The rest of the committee served as members.

In practical terms, the SPI was implemented in two stages. During the first stage, members of social organizations interested in setting up cooperatives had to go to the STyFE offices to receive general information and, if interested, fill out the training request form, which provided them with basic elements for understanding the features and functioning of a cooperative.

In the following weeks, courses on cooperativism were organized and given. Those who successfully completed the courses could then express their willingness to set up a cooperative and could form a promotion group of at least five people and subsequently submit the corresponding application for financial support.

The EC, in line with the criteria set out in its operational guidelines, selected the groups that were to receive the financial support to cover the advisory and support services required for their legal formation.

In keeping with this logic, if the social organization completed all the formalities required for it to be legally established as a cooperative, it could then be eligible to benefit from the subprogramme in its second stage of operation. Once again, the EC selected the beneficiary cooperatives, which were then granted financial support for a second time to purchase equipment, machinery and other services aimed at strengthening production, marketing, and distribution processes.

The SPF was also implemented in two stages. In the first stage, the cooperatives submitted a request for financial support, accompanied by an organizational strengthening project that was evaluated by technical assistance specialists (TAS), who were empowered to decide which projects would be submitted to the EC. The latter then selected the cooperatives to benefit from the technical assistance service also offered by the TAS, which was aimed at designing a management tool that would enable the cooperatives to consolidate their organizational and entrepreneurial capacities. Only those cooperatives capable of generating this tool could qualify as beneficiaries in the second stage of operation of the subprogramme.

In this second stage, the EC received applications for financial support from the cooperatives, together with the management tool that they had developed, and selected the beneficiary cooperatives, allocating the amount to be used by them for the purchase of equipment, machinery and/or services aimed at strengthening production, marketing and/or promotion processes.

It should be noted that members of social organizations or cooperatives that were not selected, either in the first or second stage, could be placed on waiting lists for either of the two subprogrammes, and could be beneficiaries during fiscal year 2016, if resources were available for their allocation.

As a monitoring and control mechanism, DPE officials could make home visits to members of social organizations or cooperatives to confirm that the information provided during the document submission stage was truthful, or to check any other aspect expressly requested by the EC. This could be done at any stage of the implementation of the subprogrammes.

On the other hand, applicants or cooperatives that met the requirements and considered that they had not been treated fairly in the selection and evaluation process could file a complaint or bring an appeal under the terms set forth in the Administrative Procedure Law of the Federal District.

The year-end figures for 2016 show that 1,187 people from 222 social organizations were assisted through the SPI, and 129 applications were approved by the EC. The SPF, in turn, provided assistance to 186 cooperatives, of which 137 were approved by the EC in the two stages. In both subprogrammes, the original targets – 60 promotion applications and 120 strengthening applications – were exceeded. The total budget was 36 million pesos.¹

¹ For the period under study, the average exchange rate was 20 pesos to the dollar.

For fiscal year 2017, the ROPs of the CDMX Cooperatives Programme were published in GOCM on 31 January. The call for applications was launched on 22 May. No changes were made to the objectives, eligibility requirements, selection procedure or other operational aspects of programme implementation in any of these documents with respect to the previous year.

During implementation of the SPI, 555 applications were received, of which 443 met the eligibility requirements and procedures and were issued with a registration form. Of these, 94 social organizations were approved by the EC in July. The rest remained on the waiting list. In November, a new group of 150 social organizations joined the beneficiary pool. Within the SPF, 219 applications from cooperatives were processed, 195 were issued with registration forms and 120 were approved by the EC. The budget was 45 million pesos.

For fiscal year 2018, the ROPs of the CDMX Cooperatives Programme were published on 31 January. The respective call for applications was announced on 26 March. No significant changes were found in the conditions for participation in the programme with respect to the previous two years.

That year a total of 1,690 people were assisted, 531 registration forms were issued, 266 corresponding to the SPI and 255 to the SPF. Within the Promotion Subprogramme, 210 social organizations were supported, of which 110 registered in 2018 and 100 were on the waiting list. The number of cooperatives to benefit from the Strengthening Subprogramme was 150. The total investment was 47,531,000 pesos.

The overall results of the CDMX Cooperatives Programme during the period 2016-2018 are summarized in the table below.

Table 1: Results of the CDMX Cooperatives Programme in fiscal years 2016, 2017 and 2018

Fiscal year	Executed budget (million pesos)	Applications submitted under both subprogrammes	Target set (number of cooperatives)	Target achieved (number of cooperatives)	Percentage variation (%)
2016	36	408	180	266	+ 47.7
2017	45	774	230	364	+ 58.2
2018	47.5	521	360	360	0
Total	128.5	1 703	770	990	+ 28.5

Source: Rules of Operation for the CDMX Cooperatives Programme in fiscal years 2016, 2017 and 2018.

In 2019, with the arrival of the National Regeneration Movement (MORENA) at the head of GCDMX, a third stage in the programme to promote SSE was announced. This new stage – Programme for the Promotion, Establishment and Strengthening of Social and Solidarity Enterprises (FOCOFESS) – was envisaged, on the one hand, as the result of the experience accumulated during the implementation of the two previous programmes (PPFIC (2012-2014) and CDMX Cooperatives (2015-2018)) and, on the other hand, as a commitment to improve upon them in all areas, particularly with regard to the fight against corruption.

To achieve this, on 18 January, the FOCOFESS ROPs were published, to be implemented by STyFE, through the new Directorate General for the Social and Solidarity Economy (DGESE), which was to act as the administrative unit responsible for implementation of expenditure and which was to be supported by two newly created directorates: the

Directorate for the Promotion of Cooperatives (DFC) and the Directorate for Assistance to Cooperatives (DAC).

As in the previous years (2015-2018), FOCOFESS was implemented through two subprogrammes: promotion and strengthening. The general objective was to support 2,200 social and solidarity enterprises – and no longer only cooperatives – as follows: to promote the establishment of 1,400 new social enterprises and to strengthen 800 more, legally established and domiciled in CDMX. The FOCOFESS budget was set at 200 million pesos, a figure higher than that spent in the previous three years and four times higher than that invested in 2018.

Moreover, under a spatial criterion, the decision was taken to incorporate the municipalities and the Points of Innovation, Freedom, Art, Education and Knowledge (PILARES) as coordinating bodies for the programme. To this end, collaboration agreements were signed establishing guidelines for joint work. Thus, the municipalities and the PILARES, in coordination with DGESS, participate in the process of registering applicants, as well as in the follow-up, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the beneficiaries.

Among the criteria for eligibility and retention in the programme, in addition to those already established in the CDMX Cooperatives Programme, it was established that social groups or cooperatives must demonstrate that they have attended a minimum number of meetings of the Advisory Council for Cooperative Development (CCFC) established in their respective municipality. Another restriction was that applicant organizations could not participate simultaneously in two or more social programmes of STyFE or of any other public agency of GCDMX during the same fiscal year.

The EC continued to carry out the functions of evaluating, selecting, and deciding on beneficiaries. However, it is important to note that its composition was changed, and all its members renewed. The total number of members was increased from 10 to 11, by including the head of DAC as a member. The director of DGESS served as the EC chairperson and the head of DFC as the executive secretary. In addition, a representative of the PILARES was given a seat as a member, replacing the Citizens' Comptroller from the previous composition of the committee.

DGESS was responsible for signing collaboration agreements with various institutions related to the processes of formation and registration of cooperatives in CDMX, including the Association of Notaries and Public Brokers, commercial banking institutions and the Public Property Register.

With this set of measures, the programme was implemented over the course of the year through four calls. The dates of each of these, as well as the targets set in each of the subprogrammes, are shown in the table below.

Table 2. Calls and targets of FOCOFESS 2019

	First Call: 26 February	Second Call: 11 June	Third Call: 2 September	Fourth Call: 30 September	Total
SPI	350	525	165	---	1 040
SPF	150	350	469	500	1 469
Total	500	875	634	500	2 509

Sources: first, second, third and fourth calls for FOCOFESS 2019, published in GOCM on 26 February, 11 June, 2 September, and 30 September 2019 respectively

In terms of results, in its press release issued on 9 November 2019, STyFE stated that, up to that date, GCDMX had “supported 1,835 social and solidarity enterprises through the FOCOFESS 2019 programme, 1,400 projects in the promotion and establishment of social and solidarity enterprises subprogramme and 435 in the strengthening subprogramme”. However, by mid-December of the same year, STyFE officials acknowledged in interviews that the targets achieved in both subprogrammes had declined significantly. The SPI reported a variable number of between 1,200 and 1,300 social organizations supported, while the SPF only registered 370 cooperatives. In practice, dozens of social organizations and cooperatives had to drop out due to various problems related to non-attendance at training courses, inconsistencies in the data provided, or last-minute changes in their legal representatives.

3. Training and technical consulting services for cooperatives in CDMX

A first aspect that is worth highlighting in relation to training and technical consulting services is that in the glossary of ROP terms of the CDMX 2016 Cooperatives Programme, TAS are defined as

professionals from preferably public Higher Education Institutions..., with whom the Secretariat will undertake collaborative actions with a view to providing technical assistance services to the cooperatives benefiting from the Strengthening and Development of Cooperatives Subprogramme.

It was also established that the programme would consist of money transfers and the provision of services. These services include the following: advice and support for the formation of cooperatives, training on their functioning and operation, and specialized technical assistance on how to develop the appropriate management tool to facilitate their entry into the production sector.

Recruitment of TAS was conducted in two ways. The first was the signing of collaboration agreements between STyFE and the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN), which are shown in the table below.

Table 3. Collaboration agreements signed between STyFE and IPN between 2015 and 2018

Date of agreement	Purpose: number of social organizations and cooperatives to receive training and technical assistance services	Deliverables	Duration	Financial contribution (VAT included)
28/10/2015	134	For both subprogrammes: 1) diagnosis of training needs; 2) 200 hours of consulting and technical assistance per cooperative; 3) one SWOT analysis per cooperative; 4) 20 additional hours of specialized technical consulting – 10 in legal matters and 10 in tax matters.	From 28/10/2015 to 31/03/2016	10,720,000 pesos
14/10/2016 and its amendment 30/11/2016	270	For both subprogrammes: 1) draft articles of association; 2) attendance records; 3) production projects; 4) applications for financial support.	From 14/10/2016 to 30/12/2016	10,125,000 pesos

01/06/2017 and its amendment 10/10/2017	214	SPI: 1) diagnosis of training needs; 2) results of home visits; 3) training programme and teaching materials; 4) training schedule; 5) training staff; 6) data handling confidentiality letter; 7) attendance records; 8) request for financial support; 9) technical opinions on the use of the granted resource; 10) business plan of the new cooperative. *	From 01/06/2017 to 29/12/2017	7,490,000 pesos
14/04/2018	260	The same as in 2017 for both subprogrammes.	From 14/04/2018 to 04/12/2018	9,100,000 pesos

* The same for the SPF, except that instead of a business plan, a management tool would be provided for each cooperative.
 Source: Clauses of each of the indicated collaboration agreements.

According to the information in Table 3 and assuming that IPN achieved 100 percent of the target set in each of the signed agreements, between the end of 2015 and the end of 2018, a total of 878 social organizations and cooperatives would have been served, at a total cost of 37,435,000 pesos, which means that the investment made for each association was an average of 42,636 pesos. If we consider that the total number of organizations served in the indicated period (see Table 2) was 990, we can conclude that IPN served 88.6 percent of the organizations that participated in the CDMX Cooperatives Programme.

The courses given during this period lasted between 80 and 200 hours and were organized in modules that covered the following topics: administration, logistics, marketing, production, accounting, design and presentation of products, services, packaging, and tax aspects. Generally, two face-to-face sessions were held each week, lasting between two and five hours, at different IPN sites, for which working groups were formed with representatives from between 10 and 25 cooperatives.²

The second channel for the recruitment of TAS was through the issuance of an open call for applications and the selection of candidates by a committee made up of officials attached to STyFE, who took into account the applicant's academic profile and level of experience. Thus, working with this group of instructors, hired directly by STyFE, the remaining 12 percent of the participating entities were served, mainly through the SPI, during the study period.

According to information provided by some of the instructors hired at the time, these courses lasted 15 days, with six hours of instruction per day. The topics covered, as listed in a course description, were the drafting of the articles of association and the process of legal formation of a cooperative, organizational theory, and the design and evaluation of production projects.

The number of instructors hired during the period was as follows: 14 in 2016, 15 in 2017, and 13 in 2018. Instructor remuneration was variable. In 2016, the rate was 10,000 pesos per month, in 2017 it rose to 13,000 and one year later it increased to 15,000.

However, in 2019 the entire landscape changed. To begin with, the agreement with IPN was terminated and a new one was signed with the Institute of Occupational Training (ICAT), which is attached to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, to provide

² Further details on the participation of the National Polytechnic Institute in CDMX's cooperative promotion programmes can be found in the book published in 2017 *Cooperativas CDMX, una mirada a sus realidades*, published in 2017.

training for the instructors assigned to the cooperatives. This means that STyFE officials determined that all instructors, if they wanted to continue giving courses within the framework of FOCOFESS 2019, would have to re-accredit themselves as authorized trainers through the appropriate bodies.

Faced with this unilateral and arbitrary measure, in February 2019, 12 of the former instructors submitted a letter complaining about their treatment. However, the position of the new authorities remained unchanged, and in the end only eight instructors were re-accredited. According to the former instructors interviewed, the new instructors who joined the programme, about two thirds of the total, had no experience in the field.

The remuneration of the instructors was also modified, with the introduction of an hourly pay system and a general rate of 400 pesos per hour. For each hour spent training a group, another hour was paid for administrative work.

Another aspect that has changed in the training courses given over the last year is the number of participants. In the first call, given that 60 percent of the cooperative's members were required to attend, the number of trainees was as high as 50 to 100 per class. Fortunately for the process of positive interdependence and personal interaction that is required in any training course in cooperative values, in the third call this indicator decreased significantly and was between 15 and 25 people per course.

But perhaps the most critical aspect was the excessive reduction in the length of the courses, which was disproportionate to the targets proposed for the formation of new cooperatives within the SPI. Thus, during the first call, the course was reduced to two days, with eight hours of class time per day. In the second and third calls, the time was reduced to 50 per cent of the first call, and only eight hours of training were given in a single day.

With such short courses given during the four calls, it was not really possible to properly train cooperative members, since the training given was not only lacking in terms of topics covered and collective tasks carried out, but also rushed through the process of setting up cooperatives. It was therefore not possible to generate the necessary confidence and sense of ownership that would correspond to adequate training in the subject. An example of the above may be seen in the fact that the articles of association of the new cooperatives were drawn up by the Notary Public's offices and the future members merely signed them.³

As far as the SPF is concerned, technical assistance to already formed cooperatives was reduced to a few visits by the trainers, who were overloaded with work, as they were required to visit up to five cooperatives in a single day. This made the visits very short and superficial and did not allow them to go into any detail or to detect any serious problems. As a rule, the cooperatives visited were authorized to purchase any machinery or equipment they requested.

³ Information confirmed by STyFE officials interviewed in December 2019.

4. Financial support and market access policies

The financial targets established in the cooperative development and SSE programmes in CDMX, during the period 2016-2019, are shown in the table below.

Table 4. CDMX 2016-2018 and FOCOFESS 2019 financial targets (pesos)

Year	Consulting and training (SPI)	Acquisition of equipment, machinery and/or services (SPI)	Technical assistance (SPF)	Acquisition of equipment, machinery and/or services (SPF)	Operational expenditure	Total
2016	3 000 000	6 000 000	6 000 000	18 000 000	3 000 000	38 000 000
2017	4 210 000	14 890 000	4 200 000	18 000 000	3 700 000	45 000 000
2018	7 891 485	8 800 000	5 250 000	22 500 000	3 089 515	47 531 000
2019	70 000 000	----	----	120 000 000	10 000 000	200 000 000
Total	85 101 485	29 690 000	15 450 000	178 500 000	19 789 515	328 531 000

Source: GOCM, number 270, 29 January 2016; GOCM, number 255, 31 January 2017; GOCM, number 252, 31 January 2018 and GOCM, number 13, 18 January 2019.

As can be seen, most of the funding was allocated to the two SPF line items, totalling 193,950,000 pesos, while the two SPI budget items totalled 114,791,485 pesos. This leads to the conclusion that more financial support was given to established cooperatives than to social groups in the process of becoming cooperatives. At the level of individual items, it is worth noting that the item that received the greatest amount of funding was the acquisition of equipment, machinery and/or services under the SPF, with a total amount of 178,500,000 pesos, followed by the SPI's consulting and training item, with a total investment of 85,101,485 pesos.

On the face of it, both figures are consistent with the general aim of promoting the formation of new cooperatives, on the one hand, and strengthening existing ones, on the other. In addition, the maximum support per cooperative and social organization in these two items has remained stable throughout the study period, at 150,000 pesos in the first case and 50,000 pesos in the second. However, the other two items have undergone significant variations in their maximum limits and, in 2019, this figure was no longer specified because it was subject to what had been provided in indirect support. However, in general terms, the overall investment made to promote cooperatives and SSE is insufficient and the same can be said for each of the items in which such investment has been made. This is particularly true when compared with existing demand and with what is usually spent on other GCDMX social programmes (for example, in 2019, the Mi Beca programme implemented a total budget of 4.5 billion pesos; Alimentos Escolares, 2.2 billion pesos; and Mejor Escuela, 300 million pesos (Hernández, 2019)).

To complete this overview of the funding of SSE enterprises, it is important to note that, according to Calderón (2014), such enterprises have minimal access to financing from development banks, particularly from the Mexico City Social Development Fund (FONDESO), and practically none from commercial banks.

It should also be recalled that, in accordance with Articles 22, 23 and 24 of LFCDF, cooperatives are exempt from taxes, contributions and duties during their first two years of existence, provided that their capital does not exceed 10,000 to 15,000 pesos, depending on their economic activity.

Moreover, with regard to policies to support the marketing processes of cooperative products and services, it is imperative to recognize that there is no clear and consistent policy. There are only scattered measures that are applied from one year to the next in different and disjointed form. These measures include: opening up to cooperatives as suppliers to GCDMX, establishing digital microsites where the products and services offered by cooperatives are displayed, holding fairs at the level of municipalities and of the city as a whole, and establishing agreements and arrangements with various private sector bodies. Let us now briefly look at the way in which each of these initiatives is implemented and the general results obtained from their implementation.

The possibility for cooperatives to be authorized suppliers of GCDMX is established in LFCDF (Article 3) and in the Procurement Law for the Federal District (Article 1, Section XXXIV). In the latter case, as a social food supplier. In practice, however, the requirements and control mechanisms imposed by the respective authorities are restrictive for cooperatives, to such an extent that the measure is no more than an aspiration.

With regard to digital microsites, since 2016 the “Electronic Catalogue of Cooperatives” has been available on the STyFE website, where it is possible to consult the products and services offered by more than 100 cooperatives that have benefited from the Ministry’s support programmes from 2012 to date. However, there is a lack of objective data to determine the impact of the catalogue and the microsites.

With regard to the organization of cooperative exhibitions and fairs, this is probably the most widely used marketing support activity, due to its potential for greater exposure to the general public and the possibility of obtaining tangible and immediate results in terms of sales and dissemination. These events are usually used to present financial support, awards, and recognition of various kinds, and therefore usually involve high-level public officials, at least in the opening and closing ceremonies. It is no exaggeration to say that practically all CDMX’s municipalities hold this type of event with varying frequency and duration. At the central government level, STyFE is also responsible for holding them every three or four months in popular areas such as the Monument to the Revolution, the Paseo de la Reforma and the Palacio de los Deportes, inter alia. Such fairs usually last a minimum of two or three days and a maximum of one week. Depending on the organizers, the number of participating cooperatives and SSE organizations varies between 200 and 250.

Finally, the signing of agreements with private sector organizations – such as the National Chamber of Commerce of CDMX – to establish business relations to broaden the possibilities to position products and services offered by cooperatives is a very recent initiative that began to be implemented in mid-2019. It is still too early to evaluate its results.

5. Impact of the cooperative movement on the design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies

With regard to the capacity of the cooperative movement to influence public policies to promote SSE, in general terms, we agree with Rojas and Rojas (2016), in that the existence of these policies is largely the result of the leading role played by the CDMX

cooperative movement, at least during the first stage of their implementation, which covers the long period between 2000 and 2015.

Indeed, during the period between 2000 and 2006, the dialogue between GDF and the bodies representing local cooperatives was carried out through the signing of institutional collaboration agreements. The first of these was signed on 11 February 2000, followed by the Agreement for the Promotion of Cooperatives in the Federal District, signed on 11 September 2002 for an indefinite term. In this way, it was possible to coordinate actions between the cooperative movement and officials from the then Undersecretariat of Labour and Social Security, to work towards two major strategic projects: the enactment of LFCDF and its regulations, and the design and implementation of cooperative development programmes for the city.

These milestones were achieved between 2006 and 2008. Based on this successful experience of co-construction of the legal framework and of public policies to promote cooperatives, the call for applications to the first CCFCDF was published on 26 January 2007. This council held office until 28 July 2011, when the second council was appointed. The council was due for renewal on 28 July 2014 but, owing to various problems in interpreting LFCDF and its regulations with regard to the processes of election, renewal, organization and operation, its term was extended until 16 June 2015.

To be able to better understand this situation, as well as what has transpired since that date, it is important to bear in mind that CCFCDF, in accordance with Article 21 of LFCDF, is a public body that advises the city's cooperative movement on actions and policies to promote cooperatives. The regulations of LFCDF specify that CCFCDF must be composed, at the invitation of the Head of Government, of representatives of the cooperative movement, academia, and other social and economic stakeholders with links to the work of cooperative enterprises. It also states that the council members shall remain in office for three years with the right to be immediately re-elected for an equal period. Consequently, at the end of this period, a call for renewal of CCFCDF must be issued. However, since 16 June 2015, when its last ordinary meeting took place, this provision has been systematically infringed, due to the refusal of the STyFE authorities to issue the call for the restructuring and re-launching of the council. The justification for this omission, according to the STyFE officials interviewed, lies in the fact that this consultative body – the Council – had degenerated into a space for confrontation between different interest groups that only eroded and undermined the work of the government.

Under the provisions of LFCDF, Advisory Councils must also be set up at the level of the municipalities. However, throughout the period 2016-2019, these have shown varying degrees of permanence and regularity in their functions, and three groups may be identified. In the first group, there are the municipalities in which the Advisory Council has functioned with greater regularity, as is the case in Azcapotzalco, Iztacalco, Xochimilco, Tláhuac, Tlalpan and Cuauhtémoc. In the second group, comprising the municipalities of Magdalena Contreras, Coyoacán, Iztapalapa and Gustavo A. Madero, the Advisory Councils have functioned intermittently with ups and downs in the frequency of their meetings and in the fulfilment of their agreements. In the third group, which contains the six remaining municipalities (Milpa Alta, Álvaro Obregón, Benito Juárez, Venustiano Carranza, Cuajimalpa and Miguel Hidalgo), the Advisory Council has shown little or no activity.

Other distinctive features of the functioning of the Advisory Councils that have been set up in the municipalities relate, on the one hand, to their heavy dependence on the

initiatives of the mayors and, on the other, to the limited relevance of their agenda items, which focus on immediate and material aspects, such as the discussion of measures to support the sale of cooperative products, when the content and direction of the public policies to be implemented or the mechanisms that would facilitate the expansion of a strong and consolidated cooperative movement, among other fundamental issues, should be discussed as a matter of priority.

In spite of the above, during the period under study, according to information provided by both public officials and leaders of the local cooperative movement, the latter has put in place various processes of union organization, among which the following stand out: the formation, in 2017, of the Union of Cooperatives Development and Social and Solidarity Economy Networks in the Cuauhtémoc Municipality, and the creation, in 2018, of the Cultural Cooperatives Network, in which 35 organizations participated. However, the impact of these organizations is limited at the level of the municipalities or in relation to their sector or economic activity. In fact, they are recently created bodies, without much experience or resources to have a permanent or professional impact.

In short, given the scenario described above, the cooperative movement has a minimal, symbolic impact on the design of public policies to promote SSE. For this reason, as other authors have already pointed out (Izquierdo 2009; Reygadas, Pozzio and Medina 2015), public policies in this area are developed and implemented in a vertical, top-down manner, which means that grassroots cooperatives and their integration organizations do not participate in the design, implementation, and evaluation processes of these programmes.

6. Collection and management of statistical data and communication and dissemination tools

One of the problems that most affects the design of public policies to promote SSE in CDMX has to do with serious shortcomings in the collection and management of statistical data (Conde 2016). Certainly, neither in CDMX nor at the national level are there reliable statistics that reflect the number of existing enterprises, their membership numbers, and their economic activity and registered address, much less their contribution to employment, income generation or the public purse (Luvían, Rosas and Ramírez 2019).

All existing statistical data are tentative or limited attempts to address certain aspects or specific problems, such as pinpointing the education, training and information needs of cooperatives (Rojas 2003) or identifying those that operate with regional development hubs (Domínguez 2007). This generates confusion and uncertainty among those who seek to benefit from the city's public policies to promote cooperatives. In this regard, the STyFE officials that were interviewed said that they had a directory of cooperatives that had benefited from the promotion programmes implemented in recent years, a directory which, in August 2017, had recorded a total of 408 cooperatives with registered offices in CDMX. Unfortunately, only three items of information are recorded in this directory: the name of the cooperative, the name of the legal representative, and the year in which it received support.

The National Statistical Directory of Economic Units of the National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Information (DENUE-INEGI 2018) also has a register of

cooperatives at the national level and by state. This register lists 604 cooperatives in CDMX.

Thus, in practice, public policy to promote SSE is defined and implemented within a framework of uncertainty and imprecision, without accurate diagnoses or hard and reliable data on the reality in which cooperatives develop their social action (Marañón 2016). As a result, the design of such public policies is marked by improvisation and spontaneity (Santiago 2017). These problems are compounded by the lack of regular and reliable evaluations conducted by institutions external to GCDMX. So far, only internal evaluations have been performed following the Logical Framework Approach, applied by the Evalúa DF agency. The most recent evaluations that have been presented are those of 2017 and 2018, which correspond to the support programmes of the Directorate for Family Integration (DIF) for cooperatives that sell bottles of purified water and for sewing and dressmaking cooperatives.

Given these circumstances, it is safe to say that GCDMX does not systematically monitor the city's cooperative sector, which means that there is no clear data or precise knowledge of how many cooperatives have benefited over the years and how many of them are still operating. At the municipality level, where there is excessive complexity and bureaucracy in the cooperative registration processes, the lack of transparency and the uncertainty and spontaneity are even greater. For all these reasons, false representation of cooperatives is often encouraged, not only in GCDMX but also within the beneficiaries themselves, to the extent that many cooperatives tend to apply with the same project both to central government programmes (STyFE) and to the programmes implemented by the municipalities.

Moreover, when it comes to disseminating the associational and entrepreneurial achievements of cooperatives among the general population, efforts are equally scattered, discontinuous, and insufficient. Among the few actions carried out is the STyFE-CDMX portal,⁴ where basic and general information can be accessed. The cooperative movement also lacks effective means of disseminating information on the situation of SSE in CDMX. However, there are some digital platforms that disseminate news related to SSE at local, national, and international levels.⁵

This study found no evidence of strategic or collaborative links with traditional mass media (radio, television, and press), which contributes to the invisibility of government and societal efforts to build a strong and integrated cooperative and SSE sector.

Lastly, it should be noted that, unlike in previous years, in this most recent stage (2016-2019) the city hosted only a small number of public discussion and analysis events, such as fora, congresses or seminars of a local, national or international scope. The last recorded event of relative importance in this study was the International Seminar on Cooperativism and Social Economy, organized by STyFE, in coordination with the Commission for Cooperative Promotion and Social Economy of the Federal Chamber of Deputies.

⁴ <https://www.trabajo.cdmx.gob.mx/cooperativas>

⁵ For example <https://lacoperacha.org.mx/>

7. Main findings and recommendations

Throughout the period under study, it is clear that public policy to promote SSE in CDMX is maintained, to a large extent, by the forces of legal and institutional inertia and as a result of the pressure of existing social demand. In terms of programming, it continues to exist as a subsidiary, complementary and dependent element of the general social policy of GCDMX to combat unemployment.

Between 2015 and 2018, modest results were achieved, but they were tempered by the muddled management (by officials and beneficiaries) of SSE support resources and programmes.

From 2019, with the implementation of FOCOFESS, public policy underwent a significant shift by introducing highly centralized administrative procedures aimed at eradicating corruption. However, the implementation of these procedures resulted in excesses, such as the mass dismissal of personnel and the failure to rehire trained instructors and to renew the positive aspects of the previous programmes. In addition, as part of the republican austerity policy in force at the national and state level, only 16 staff members were hired, which was insufficient for the scale of the targets to be achieved. As a result, the institutional structure was practically overwhelmed by the magnitude of the demand.

Under these conditions, the SPI quickly achieved its target, but the way in which the cooperatives were set up was clearly defective, which suggests that very few will survive even in the short term. For the SPF, no matter how much effort was put in, the target was not reached.

But beyond an assessment of whether or not targets have been achieved, the most serious issue is that, as before, FOCOFESS lacked precision or strategic clarity regarding what was ultimately intended to be achieved through the implementation of such public policy. To date, those responsible for its implementation have not been able to assess or measure, let alone guide or channel, the transformative and innovative potential of SSE. In practice, instead of implementing a vital and organic public policy, in an ongoing and constructive dialogue with its beneficiaries, they have only implemented it in an instrumental sense. In other words, they have limited themselves to complying with the formality of administrative processes – with greater or lesser rigour and efficiency in terms of the fulfilment of quantitative goals – but without any concern for its direction or management in a strategic or overarching sense.

It is this lack of strategic vision that explains why the current legal framework is, in essence, not implemented, nor is it refined or enhanced through accumulated experience, and why it is so out of step with advances in the constitutional text of the city and why it is at odds with other legal systems such as the Procurement Law or the Social Development Law, to cite two examples. Consequently, there is a pressing need to align all legislation applicable to SSE enterprises with the Local Constitution, and to undertake a comprehensive reform of LFCDF which, among other things, will enable the regulations to “bed down” in the municipalities, given that this is the first level of government and is thus closest to the citizenry.

Also, as a result of the points outlined above, this study found that the way in which the programmes are implemented is not adequate. To start with, there is no objective

diagnosis of the conditions in which cooperatives pursue their organizational and entrepreneurial activities. There is clearly a lack of studies and research on this subject, just as there is no directory to provide clear data on the work of the implementing institution, showing how many and which cooperatives have been supported and what the tangible results of that work have been. Therefore, the preparation of an updated directory of existing cooperatives in CDMX and of those supported by STyFE is a task that cannot be delayed any longer, since more objective and therefore more effective planning processes will depend on it. In short, the aim should be to create an updated and reliable register or census of cooperatives, available in physical and digital form and freely accessible to the general public.

Another problem to be solved is the excessive inflexibility in the operation of the programmes and their short duration. It follows that all administrative processes need to be streamlined and made more flexible so as to make them less complex and bureaucratic. To this end, a commitment must be made to digitalizing procedures, including the delivery of documents. By speeding up the process in this way, it will even be possible to publish the (positive or negative) responses to the cooperatives' applications online, which will contribute to transparency in the allocation of public funds. This study also recommends reducing the number of home visits, for which it will be essential to establish a procedure for the georeferencing of each of the beneficiary cooperatives, which will ensure real-time status updates. Finally, it will only be possible to overcome institutional short-termism through the development of multi-year programmes that allow for the achievement of more far-reaching goals. In this way, in a period of between 5 and 10 years, a hard, consolidated core of several dozens of cooperatives could be created. This could act as a guiding force that supports the social action of the rest of the cooperatives, whether newly created or in the process of consolidation, among other qualitative aspects that aim to achieve the self-sustainability of the local cooperative movement.

However, none of the above will be possible unless limits are placed on intergroup conflicts in the management of institutional spaces. The constant turnover of senior officials and the inability to form cohesive working teams between middle and operational management must be overcome to ensure continuity and the proper completion of all programmes. In the same vein, it is essential to put an end to the lack of coordination between the various public bodies involved in the implementation of this type of public policy, particularly at the level of GCDMX and of the governments of the 16 municipalities.

Furthermore, in order to ensure that SSE promotion programmes avoid the clientelist apportionment of quotas among power groups, which is often encouraged by the setting of such massive targets, it would be advisable in the coming years to emphasize the qualitative aspects (training and technical support to cooperatives) rather than the quantitative aspects (number of cooperatives formed or strengthened). The FOCOFESS targets should therefore be significantly rethought in relation to the targets set for fiscal year 2019.

Finally, it would be beneficial to subject SSE promotion programmes to permanent evaluation by institutions external to GCDMX. This would allow for feedback and improvements in key aspects such as training, technical assistance, financial support, access to markets, dialogue with the cooperative movement and dissemination of the programmes and their achievements.

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