

A woman with dark skin, wearing a vibrant blue and orange patterned headscarf and a black shirt with white and yellow patterns, is reaching up with her right arm towards a green leafy plant. She is looking upwards with a focused expression. The background is a soft-focus green field with trees under a bright sky.

spark

SPARK
Cooperative
Support Manual

Introduction to Cooperative Support Manual

By supporting farmers with skills training and access to information and markets, agricultural cooperatives significantly contribute to economic growth and job creation in many developing countries. Cooperatives are independent, membership organisations that aim to achieve commonly defined goals through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. Through their support, individual farmers can achieve goals that would otherwise be beyond their reach, for instance when it comes to bargaining power on bulk buying of farming inputs and transaction costs for loans. Unfortunately, many cooperatives in developing countries still lack clear organisational structures, a planned approach and knowledge of the market.

From subsistence farming to commercial farming

SPARK's Cooperative Support programmes (so far, implemented in Rwanda, Yemen, Burundi and South Sudan) focus on providing assistance to cooperatives in order to help them transform from regular farmers' associations to sustainable business income generators. This is done by offering cooperatives specific and growth-relevant knowledge, skills trainings on effective governance and operation, support in access to finance, as well as assistance in putting theory into practice. Our starting premise is that cooperatives can only be viable if they are based on economic and business foundations and can cope with market forces and competition. As this approach has reaped significant results in recent years, we wish to share our lessons learned to enable others to establish similar programmes. For this purpose, we produced a Cooperative Support Manual that can serve as a useful guide.



SPARK
Rwanda Potato Farming

1. See: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::R12100_ILO_CODE:R193

2. See: Motiram, S, & Vakulabharanam, V-2007/Corporate and Cooperative Solutions for the Agrarian Crisis in Developing Countries, Review of Radical Political Economics, vol. 39, No. 3, pp. 360-467.

3. For more on the importance of this, see: <http://www.fao.org/3/ap431e/ap431e.pdf>

Manual

The manual focuses particularly on offering as much practical advice and concrete guidance as possible (in different forms) in order to reduce time, effort and resources, and thus motivate and advance the much-needed assistance to cooperatives. Highlighting the main elements of setting-up a Cooperative Support programme, the manual is divided into the following sections:

Preparing the programme:

- Performing a value chain assessment;
- Selecting product value chains;
- Selecting cooperatives;
- Selecting the type of capacity building and trainings.

Designing and implementing the programme:

- Identifying the learning needs of cooperatives;
- Providing tailor-made trainings;
- Proximity coaching: from theory to practice;
- Institutionalizing essential tools and practices.

Sustaining the impact:

- Strengthening the cooperative market;
- Creating a favourable environment and conditions;
- Capacity building trainings for other relevant actors.

Who is this manual for

The SPARK Cooperative Support manual is written as a 'how-to' document that can guide practitioners in providing support to cooperatives in order to make them effective and sustainable. The possible users are those practitioners who work at governments, non-profit organizations and business associations.

Key results:



Through the 100 cooperatives that we supported with our programmes, 1,834 jobs were created;



The cooperatives that we supported showed a 27,78% increase of marketable surplus. In this way, our programmes significantly contributed to the national- and cooperative community's food security;



Over 40% of the cooperatives from our programmes already meet operations costs without having to rely on external grants and this percentage is rising.

SPARK

Nancy AlZaghal, 20, PPU, HES EEP
winner, hydroponics, Hebron, Palestine

About SPARK

SPARK is an independent, non-profit international development organization, with over 100 staff members working in fourteen offices in thirteen countries. Established in 1994, SPARK has over 25 years of experience in working in post-conflict regions of Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

spark

Other Manuals:

You can also contact us about our manuals on:

- Business Support Centres;
- Internship programmes for work experience;
- Entrepreneurship Summer Courses;
- Higher Education Scholarships;
- SME Coaching.

Haarlemmer Houttuinen 15H

1013 GL Amsterdam

Email: spark@spark-online.org

Phone: +31 (0)20 753 0311

www.spark.ngo



sparkorg



sparkorg



sparkorg



sparkignites



SPARK