



Canada 

**COLECTIVA JOVEN (YOUTHS DO COLLECTIVE):**  
**a research and action project aimed at supporting production-oriented youth groups in the outskirts of São Paulo and Buenos Aires**

**Final Narrative Report**

**Executive summary**

**Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, September 29, 2021**

## Presentation

The Colectiva Joven Project was developed in order to participate in the competition jointly organized by the FAPESP (São Paulo Research Foundation - Brazil) and IDRC (Canada's International Development Research Centre), under the *Innovation for the economic inclusion of marginalized youth* call for proposals. The presentation was made through a consortium that included the Federal University of San Carlos and the Organization *Acción Educativa* with activities in the city of Sao Paulo (Brazil) and the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO Argentina) and the Federation of Neighborhood Centers *Familia Grande Hogar de Cristo* (FGHC) with activities in Greater Buenos Aires.

The project set out to implement a scalable, evidence-based initiative to support the economic inclusion and the de-stigmatization of youth with problematic drug use in vulnerable communities. The implementation period was contractually set at two years, from March 1, 2019 to February 28, 2021. In response to the first case of COVID-19 in March 2020, the country established a strict quarantine (ASPO), followed by a regional relaxation (DISPO) with social distancing protocols. These circumstances led to a request for a six-month extension in February of this year, which was granted without difficulty. It should be noted that seventeen of the thirty months of implementation -almost 60%- had to be carried out in the context of the COVID pandemic.

In Argentina, Colectiva Joven was endorsed by the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET), which recognized it as a Technological and Social Development Project (PDTS). At the regional level, it joined the Vidas Sitiadas Alliance— through the efforts of IDRC and with the support of FLACSO Costa Rica— and this allowed for a series of learning experiences associated with public communication and audiovisual production that marked the initiative's path during the two and a half years of work.

Colectiva Joven involved 169 Neighborhood Centers throughout the country, which assist an estimated 11,000 young people with problematic drug use, 80 community enterprises managed by some 1,300 people, operating within the structure of 40 of the Centers. From all of these, a sample of 11 Centers were selected, which are located in Greater Buenos Aires with 16 enterprises operating. 7 young people, including two women, made up the team of peer researchers, who, among other tasks, interviewed 87 young people.

Their results were disclosed in various publications: one book, one book chapter, and four journal articles. They also appeared in five reports, working papers, six audiovisual materials, and five training resources. The project and/or its materials were presented at eleven events, six of which were congresses.

## Primary results

The Colectiva Joven Project influenced the **economic empowerment of women and young people** with different strategies. First, through the production of evidence on living conditions, educational and career paths, and the situation faced by vulnerable groups during the COVID 19 Pandemic. Second, through the production of audiovisual material on community enterprises, which were developed through participatory techniques and that integrated the voice of young women and men into the narrative of

productive experiences. Finally, it considered the gender perspective and attention given to caretaking activities in the workshops and technical assistance activities carried out within the framework of the Support Center's Virtual Workshops, which were then made available to the FGHC and other organizations in order to be replicated in other workshops.

The Project worked on the **integration of an inclusive business approach**, interacting with socially engaged entrepreneurs and companies with a social vocation. Thus, between the months of October and December 2019, a Textile Design Workshop was developed in the Gaucho Gil Neighborhood Center in the town of José León Suarez (Province of Buenos Aires). The results of the workshop generated technical and organizational proficiency, and at the same time made it possible to devise the strengthening activities scheduled for the second year of the project.

The project was **referenced in national policies** aimed at sustaining community production strategies. Officials from the National Institute of Associativism and Social Economy (INAES) were in attendance at the presentation of the Social Cooperatives Manual. This presentation has had 1,181 views on Youtube as of 9/17/2021<sup>1</sup>.

The results of Colectiva Joven's research were **debated with various institutions** within the framework of the different events held: the Institute of Social Sciences and Administration of the National University Arturo Jauretche (UNAJ), the National University Tres de Febrero (UNTREF), the Federation Familia Grande Hogar de Cristo (FGHC), the National Institute of Associativism and Social Economy (INAES); the Federal University of San Carlos, the National University of San Martín (UNSAM); FLACSO Costa Rica, and others.

### **Increase in Research Capabilities**

The Colectiva Joven Project, as well as the working relationship with IDRC, contributed to the conceptualization of the scientific approach to solving social problems and to the consolidation of **the recognition of the team's work** in this area. The conceptualization was developed during the implementation of the project, in dialogue with the environment fostered by the IDRC in Latin America and thanks to the permanent contact with the regional headquarters, which facilitated the bibliography and the consultation experiences.

The project has contributed to the **recognition of young researchers and the consolidation of trained researchers** as expert opinion leaders, thanks to the creation of working papers, articles, and audiovisual material. In this respect, the contributions of FLACSO Costa Rica's coordination in the elaboration of communications for different audiences were central, generating a highly effective positioning in the dissemination of scientific production and social technologies geared towards problem solving.

The Colectiva Joven project has allowed the **leveraging of external funds**, giving impetus to new projects with which the FLACSO team applied to various calls for proposals. During 2020, and in conjunction with

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<sup>1</sup> The preparation of the Social Cooperatives Manual: 10 steps to set up a cooperative was an important contribution to the **development or implementation of innovative business tools, strategies, and financial products to facilitate access to economic opportunities**. The main contribution is the instructions on how to set up a cooperative in 10 steps. In a clear and simple way, it explains and simplifies how to carry out the procedures and paperwork, which presents a certain complexity, while including examples of forms, minutes, and notes, so that these materials can be used as a base to be completed with the data of each particular case.

the FFGHC, a presentation was sent to the "COVID-19 Y VULNERABILIDAD SOCIAL 2020" the competition of the Bunge & Born Foundation. Likewise, in 2021, a presentation was sent to the Call for "Innovative Projects to Strengthen Education and Work" organized by the Secretariat of Strategic Affairs within the framework of the Economic and Social Council (CES), on line 2: "Generation of skills in digital technology to minimize the technological gap and improve employment and income opportunities for vulnerable sectors".

## **Achievements and Recommendations**

The activities, objectives and results of the project must be considered amply fulfilled, together with the methodological strategy, the proposal for connection and production in transfer, the creation of networks, and the preparation of communications aimed at different audiences. The results underlie the quality and quantity of activities and products achieved during the implementation of the project.

In the first place, the application of the methodological strategy of peer research proved to be successful, on the one hand, by generating confidence with the interviewees coming from an often unseen population, and on the other hand, by enabling the participation of young people in the planning, implementation and analysis of the results, which contributed to their training.

As a result of this participatory work, which allowed the training of peer researchers, the project managed to maintain its activity even during the ASPO and DiSPO periods, as can be seen in the extensive audiovisual production. It highlights the visibility of young people as positive agents of change and main actors of community care, in the harshest moments of the health crisis.

The new knowledge produced and spread by the project was thus of great interest to the academic community, those responsible for public policies on education, employment and youth and social organizations, and in particular, to the FGHC's Neighborhood Centers.

The spread of the knowledge produced was carried out through different strategies, which were associated with working with different audiences. Throughout the project, the results were presented at scientific events, expert forums, and to the general public through social networks. In the final stage of the project, the publication of the book *Sobre esquinas y puentes* (On Corners and Bridges) enabled its consolidation and circulation.

In terms of ability training, the project enhanced the research skills of the project team and of each of its participants by strengthening the focus on sciences oriented towards the resolution of social problems and towards the consolidation of the working group in this area. In this regard, integration into a regional strategy provided a great deal of support in theoretical, methodological, and public communication terms.

Concerning the findings of the project, the actions of neighborhood organizations prove to be very important for the development of life projects for these young people, since they contribute to providing alternative paths to violence and exclusion, based on the (re)generation of personal and community ties and the formation of personal and institutional networks.

Neighborhoods with very different characteristics coexist on the outskirts of Buenos Aires and living in them as a young person has strong implications for life pathways and on the possibilities of autonomy and the construction of their own homes. Thus, generational experiences are highly differentiated among the

various social groups<sup>2</sup>. In the case of the young people in question, and as mentioned above, they face all kinds of difficulties, which are heightened by the use of psychoactive substances.

Added to their difficulties of insertion into the labor market, there is the fact that active employment and vocational training policies are still mostly designed on the basis of linear paths, without paying greater attention to the situations of disadvantage that affect, for example, the target group, and in particular young women (Miranda and Carcar, 2019, ob. cit.). The difficulty of training for the "labor market" should also be highlighted, which is mostly mentioned by those attending the Support Center activities, and they consider that it is increasingly linked to the possibility of performing operations, handling machines and complex tools, which implies attitudes and customs that are increasingly distant from the realities of these young people.

The project has offered evidence for the solidity of the work of the social sciences oriented to the resolution of public problems carried out on the basis of partnerships with social organizations with territorial roots. For this reason, **it is recommended to support associated work between scientific groups and public and social organizations, through a non-asymmetrical collaboration.**

The research has generated documentation to support situational intervention approaches that take into account the social and economic context in which people live their lives, the performance of the institutions and organizations that accompany them, and the importance and the need to involve and hold each other accountable through community work in their most direct environments<sup>3</sup>. It has documented the advantages of community strategies and the insufficiency of public and social policies focused on individual employability among young people in vulnerable situations. From which **it is recommended to support the development of territorially located interventions involving community strategies among these populations.**

Finally, from the research emerges the relevance of incorporating the gender perspective from an intersectional perspective, which addresses the plurality of expectations and family groups of young people, while developing caregiving policies based on the notion of interdependence<sup>4</sup>. Based on this, **it is recommended to support research and gender policies aimed at sustaining women's career paths and care systems as a basis for their economic inclusion.**

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<sup>2</sup> Carcar, F.; Vázquez, M; Arancibia, M.; Fainstein, C; y Miranda, A. (2020) Trayectorias rotas: resultados de la investigación entre jóvenes pares en centros barriales del Gran Buenos Aires. Documento de trabajo n° 3. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO).

<sup>3</sup> Miranda A. y Carcar F. (2020): Políticas de Juventudes: tensiones entre la desigualdad, lo individual y lo comunitario. Jóvenes: revista de Estudios sobre juventud N° 34, 4º Época. Imjuve. México. (pp 73-103).

<sup>4</sup> Miranda, Ana; Arancibia, Milena; Fainstein, Carla (2021). División sexual del trabajo, desempleo y mercado de drogas en las juventudes de barrios informales en Argentina.