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Artículos Científicos

Organizaciones en el desarrollo de una comunidad: el caso de Sitalá, Chiapas

*Organizations in the Development of a Community: The Case of Sitalá,
Chiapas*

*Organizações no desenvolvimento de uma comunidade: o caso de Sitalá,
Chiapas*

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Resumen

El objetivo del presente trabajo fue describir el vínculo que se estableció entre la Alianza Crecer Juntos Sitalá (ACJS) y las personas indígenas del municipio de Sitalá, Chiapas. Se utilizó una metodología participativa que contempló a los habitantes de seis comunidades de Sitalá y a los representantes de las organizaciones sociales que forman parte de esta red. Los instrumentos para la recolección de la información fueron una entrevista y talleres participativos. Dentro de los principales resultados, se encontró que la ACJS es una red de organizaciones que desarrolla acciones conjuntas a través de las cuales logra la participación de la población indígena, así como genera confianza para adoptar nuevas prácticas junto con las ya establecidas en la cultura indígena. Se encontró, además, que la ACJS en Sitalá ha ayudado a mejorar la calidad de vida de la población tanto en lo económico, al generar nuevos ingresos, como en el aspecto social, al propiciar redes de colaboración. Las organizaciones sociales en este contexto son consideradas elementos clave para el desarrollo local de las comunidades rurales en el municipio de Sitalá, ya que aportan beneficios para sus pobladores y proyectos que detonan las capacidades de las personas.

Palabras clave: bienestar social, participación comunitaria, redes.

Abstract

The objective of this work was to describe the link that was established between the Alianza Crecer Juntos Sitalá (ACJS) and the indigenous people of the municipality of Sitalá, Chiapas. A participatory methodology was used that included the inhabitants of six Sitalá communities and the representatives of the social organizations that are part of this network. The instruments for collecting the information were an interview and participatory workshops. Among the main results, it was found that the ACJS is a network of organizations that develops joint actions through which it achieves the participation of the indigenous population, as well as generates confidence to adopt new practices along with those already established in the indigenous culture. It was also found that the ACJS in Sitalá has helped to improve the quality of life of the population both economically, by generating new income, and socially, by fostering collaboration networks. Social organizations in this context are considered key elements for the local development of rural



communities in the municipality of Sitalá, since they provide benefits for its inhabitants and projects that trigger people's capacities.

Keywords: social welfare, community participation, networks.

Resumo

O objetivo deste trabalho foi descrever o vínculo que se estabeleceu entre a Alianza Crecer Juntos Sitalá (ACJS) e os indígenas do município de Sitalá, Chiapas. Foi utilizada uma metodologia participativa que incluiu moradores de seis comunidades do Sitalá e representantes das organizações sociais que fazem parte dessa rede. Os instrumentos de coleta de informações foram entrevista e oficinas participativas. Dentre os principais resultados, constatou-se que a ACJS é uma rede de organizações que desenvolve ações conjuntas por meio das quais consegue a participação da população indígena, bem como gera confiança para adoção de novas práticas junto às já consagradas na cultura indígena. Constatou-se também que o ACJS de Sitalá tem contribuído para a melhoria da qualidade de vida da população, tanto economicamente, por meio da geração de novas receitas, quanto socialmente, por meio do fomento a redes de colaboração. As organizações sociais, neste contexto, são consideradas elementos fundamentais para o desenvolvimento local das comunidades rurais do município de Sitalá, uma vez que proporcionam benefícios para seus habitantes e projetos que potencializam as capacidades das pessoas.

Palavras-chave: bem-estar social, participação comunitária, redes.

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Introduction

Social organizations, conceived as real forms of social structuring, have been the object of historical research and constant conceptual revision. For Ruiz (2000), "organizations are a kind of social systems aimed at achieving an end or ends" (p. 18-20). And for Escobar (2010), it is "about groups of individuals whose interests or motivations become convergence factors from which they define and develop cooperation or collaboration strategies" (p. 122).



Social groups differ from organizations. "Groups lack a formal structure and are the product of circumstances, organizations have a structure and are the product not only of circumstances but of the will of the individual" (Escobar, 2010, p.124). The purposes and objectives of organizations derive from the needs of people. And due to their structural nature, they are capable of transforming these needs into joint actions to solve a common good.

Given the role that they have been given as an essential element in development, "it would seem that the existence of organizations in a territory implies an impact on the improvement of community conditions" (Pérez, Figueroa, Díaz and Almeraya, 2011, p. 518). The advantages that social organizations can offer are that they are an instrument for people's participation. Through these, greater social cohesion, cooperation and trust can be achieved among its members, so that they can more easily access the benefits of local development. However, this is not always the case, as there may be social, economic, political, cultural and environmental factors that hinder development, as is the case in many rural and marginalized communities in Mexico.

One of the serious deficiencies that our country has for rural development is social capital, unlike what happens with other capitals (natural, physical, financial and human). Organizations are called to play a significant role in offering a base for the development of that capital (Machado, 2000, p. 11). This is because, if social capital can be strengthened, specifically the fluid interaction between people, it will be possible to combine the rest of the capitals.

According to the results of the poverty measurement in Chiapas in 2018, 76.4% of the population of the entity lived in poverty, that is, 4,174,600 people, approximately (National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy [Coneval], 2020). Of this universe, 46.7% (about 2,551,300 people) were in a situation of moderate poverty, while 29.7% of the population was in a situation of extreme poverty (around 1,623,300 people) (Coneval, 2020, p. 14). The percentage of poverty in Chiapas is 34.5 percentage points higher than the national percentage (41.9%).

Sitalá is a town in Chiapas that has 96.5% poverty among its inhabitants (Coneval, 2020, p. 20). That is why different social organizations such as Comprehensive Consultancies for Sustainable Rural Development (Conider), Cántaro Azul Foundation, Competitive Women at the Service for Integral Development (Mucosdi), Global Pediatric Alliance (GPA),



University Agency for Development from the Autonomous University of Chiapas (Audes-Unach), Creative Learning Aid to Artisans (ATA) and Design and Training for Development and Microfinance (Dicadem) decided to collaborate in an alliance to work with the people of the communities and achieve improvements in the field of production, health, food, water care, empowerment of women and indigenous leaders.

The Alianza Crecer Juntos Sitalá (ACJS) was born as a collaboration agreement between the organizations present in the territory so as not to duplicate actions where they worked together. During the first three years of its existence, joint works were established in 15 communities of Sitalá to attend priority areas in terms of health, nutrition, knowledge development and agricultural production. Each organization contributed funds from the projects that they usually implemented in the municipality, as well as personnel to attend collaborative actions, although the strategic part of coordination was financed financially with funds from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF).

In the case of Salinas, San Luis Potosí, Pérez et al. (2011, p. 523) found that the organizations established there have not promoted the development of the region due to the limited participation of the inhabitants in the projects of the various organizations. On the other hand, Quispe, Ayaviri and Maldonado (2018, p. 71) found that the permanent participation of local actors within the organizations settled in a given territory generated both economic and social benefits and advances within their communities. Thus, the local development of a community depends to a great extent on the degree of participation of its inhabitants. As Iglesias and Jiménez (2017) put it: "Participation is the prerequisite for local development, its presence is crucial in all stages of the process" (p. 73).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify the participation of the ACJS in the municipality of Sitalá, Chiapas, in addition to knowing how the collaboration networks were established between the residents and the members of the organizations. With this, it is intended to understand the perception that the inhabitants have regarding the various actions that the ACJS carries out and that are aimed precisely at establishing ties of participation and promoting rural development.



Method

Study area

The present work was carried out in six of the communities where the ACJS participates within the municipality of Sitalá, Chiapas (figure 1). Sitalá is located in the mountains of northern Chiapas, bordered to the north and east by Chilón, to the south by San Juan Cancuc and to the west by Pantelhó.

Figura 1. Mapa de Sitalá



Fuente: Instituto para el Desarrollo Sustentable en Mesoamérica [Idesmac] (s. f.)

The six selected communities were: Guadalupe Mazanil, Guadalupe Shucail, Nuevo Porvenir, Pomiltic, San Francisco la Unión and Santa Cruz la Reforma. The selection was made in a directed and convenient manner, taking into account the communities with active representatives in the ACJS. All of these are indigenous communities (table 1). It was necessary to know the participation of the ACJS and its members in the development of the Sitalá communities, therefore, of the six selected communities, four were chosen to carry out structured interviews and two to carry out participation workshops. The selection criterion was the degree of willingness of the communities to participate in the research process.

Tabla 1. Comunidades seleccionadas para las entrevistas

Entrevistas personales	Taller
Nuevo Porvenir	Guadalupe Mazanil
Santa Cruz la Reforma	
Guadalupe Shucail	San Francisco la Unión
Pomiltic	

Fuente: Elaboración propia

Within the ACJS, two types of organizations were considered. On the one hand, those that have been there since training, internal calls, and on the other, external organizations, which are those that have collaborated on certain occasions with the ACJS or have been linked only with some of its organizations (table 2).

Tabla 2. Organizaciones que colaboran con la ACJS

Internas	Externas
Conider	Escuela Misión Bachajón
Dicadem	Presidencia municipal de Sitalá
GPA	SPR Scapel Xitalha (organización de café)
ATA	Jlumaltik (organización social de Bachajón)
Mucosdi	Heifer International
Audes Unach	Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir (ILSB)
Fundación Cántaro Azul	

Fuente: elaboración propia

Type of study

The present investigation was descriptive, since it was in charge of describing only the interaction or degree of participation of the ACJS and the inhabitants of the different communities, without investigating in depth the causes of the phenomenon or explaining them. In addition, it had a qualitative approach, because the perception of people was studied from what they say and do in their social and cultural setting. The inductive method was applied by going from the particular way of perceiving each person to the general.

Study population

The participants in the study were as follows:

- Representatives and local leaders of the organizations that are part of the ACJS.
- Members of the organizations, made up of residents of the various communities in which the ACJS is present.

Instruments for data collection

The instruments used were the following:

a) Structured interviews, which were divided into two sections: one that contemplated personal aspects of the interviewee and another that consisted of nine questions, validated by experts in the area, where it was evaluated how much the organization was identified, the benefits and changes that he perceived at the community level and his personal experience about the performance of this.

To demonstrate the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was previously applied to randomly selected participants, and subsequently the correction was made. The objective of the interview was to recover experiences and perceptions from both ACJS members and local representatives and leaders.

A total of 20 interviews were conducted, five per community, taking into account the rural agent, representatives, local leaders who participate with ACJS organizations, coffee promoters and midwives or health agents.

b) Participatory workshops: the workshops were open to the general public in the two selected communities in order for them to express observations, ideas and points of view on this ACJS. A format was used to record attendance. The first activity was a quick count of how many of the attendees identified the ACJS; Later, work teams were formed, separating men and women, since they sought to create greater trust in the groups and ensure the independent participation of the female gender. Each team had a question guide, from which it was evaluated how much they know about the alliance, what changes they have seen and how it has benefited them. The questions were discussed inside to create a single answer and put it on a flip chart. Each team chose a representative to present their knowledge and perspectives on the ACJS at the end.

The data analysis was carried out by preparing, reviewing and transcribing the data from the interviews and workshops to text. Subsequently, the data were organized according to the chronological order of application of the interview, they were categorized and the conclusions were established. A discourse analysis was carried out based on the syntax, narrative form and lexicon of the participants.

Results

Perception of community residents about cooperative relationships with organizations

Sitalá is an indigenous town governed by customs and customs and with many social conflicts. One of the main difficulties that the organizations face is “communication”, since the native language of the inhabitants is Tzeltal, and although some understand the Spanish language, very few speak it.

Despite the fact that the ACJS has technicians who master the indigenous language to establish a more productive dialogue and a bridge between the actions established by the inhabitants with the elements of social organizations, the points of view of the population are divided. Some are influenced by dependence on political leaders and government programs. Many of the people are very accustomed to paternalism and tend to be manipulated, which further complicates the work of organizations, since they do not recognize the workshops or courses that they offer as support, because they will not give them anything tangible in return, and they believe that it is just a waste of time to be attending.

The technicians come to organize us and some have given us projects, others only come to take time away. The ACJS is not helping, just an organization that is managing support. They are pure talks, they do not manage any project (pobladores de San Francisco la Unión, taller participativo, 22 de agosto de 2017).

This is one of the reasons why the Strategic Food Security Project (PESA) - Dicadem working relationship has become one of the most recognized, as it has promoted tangible projects such as agricultural inputs and construction works. PESA is a government project that has been working in Sitalá with two different teams. In the first period he was



collaborating with Conider and later, due to operational rules, there was a relocation and he continued working with the Dicadem team.

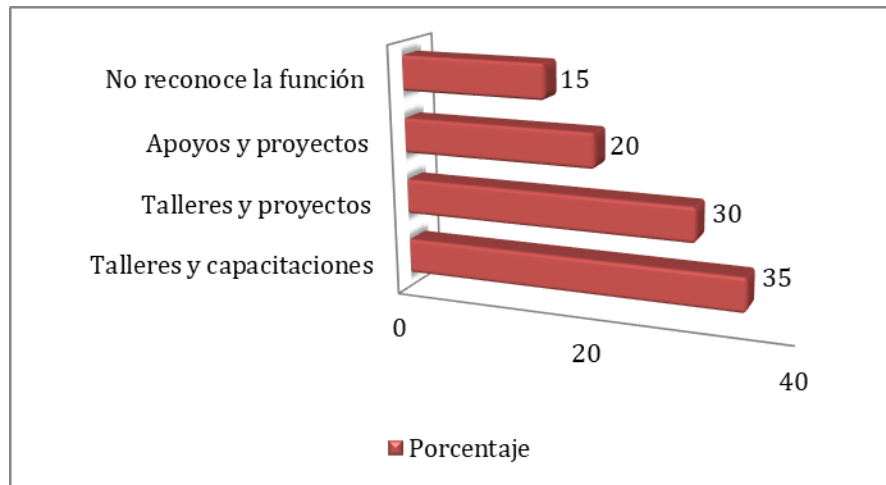
On the other hand, from a point of view contrary to the previous one, there are those who appreciate the joint work of the ACJS organizations and the impact that the various practices that have been used in the municipality of Sitalá are having, since, in their opinion, They have contributed to the well-being of the people, and without asking for anything in return other than attending the workshops and putting into practice everything they learn there.

Now you can see the benefit in the coffee plantations; in cultivation, how to sow and how to use the land. To continue acquiring more knowledge, more training and more support are needed so that the quality of life in the community continues to grow (M. Sánchez Cruz, poblador, entrevista personal, 15 de agosto de 2017).

Figure 2 shows that, of the 20 producers chosen for personal interviews, 35% recognize workshops and trainings as a primary function of the ACJS, since all the organizations that compose it make use of this methodological tool for the three axes of work: production, dialogue of knowledge, health and nutrition, since it allows them to better explain their knowledge, interact with the inhabitants and make teaching more practical.

By doing the practices that the technician recommends us when they advise us on coffee, we take advantage of what the ACJS provides (J. Méndez Cruz, poblador, entrevista personal, 28 de agosto de 2017).

Figura 2. Función de las organizaciones según los pobladores

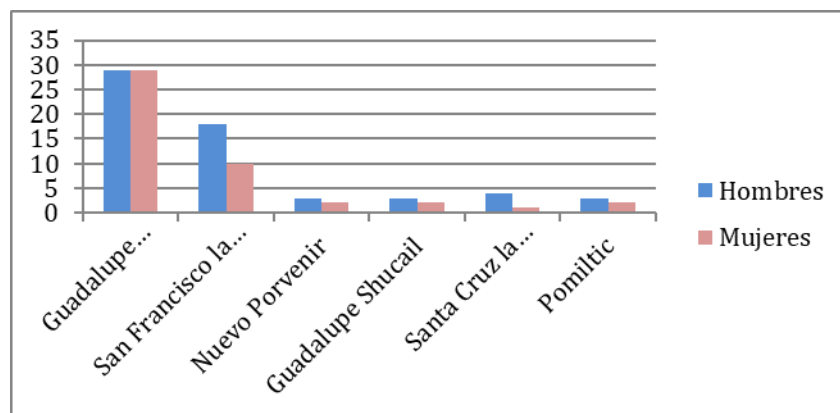


Fuente: Elaboración propia

One of the objectives pursued by the ACJS is the development of capacities with the training of local leaders. Through these workshops, the community has been able to realize how important it is to work as a team for the betterment of their communities and that without depending on someone outside they can also succeed.

The participation of various organizations has made it easier for us to learn about different ways of working the land better and new techniques in order to make better use of the little area of land. With this, also the sowing of nescafé beans (*Mucuna pruriens*) that helps to fertilize the soil and no longer put fertilizers on the corn plants (R. Martínez Pérez, poblador, entrevista personal, 28 de agosto de 2017).

Figura 3. Participación de hombres y mujeres en el estudio



Fuente: Elaboración propia

In figure 3 it can be seen that the programs presented by the ACJS are working properly, since the comments of the residents are positive, there is much more acceptance and participation by women in the workshops or events that are held, the population agrees that the guidance they give them is beneficial both for the development of their personal capacities and for that of their communities. The marked participation of women in these workshops denotes that rural or indigenous women set the guidelines for the generation of empowerment, since the work of women is valued, spaces for participation and group cohesion are opened (Robinson, Díaz y Cruz, 2019, p. 99).

They have given us more capacity with the orientations and it is a gain that here in the house they get to see you and say how you can work and the way that works best (A. López Méndez, poblador, entrevista personal, 15 de agosto de 2017).

You can take better advantage of what they teach if we organize ourselves better all of the community (L. Méndez López, poblador, entrevista personal, 28 de agosto de 2017).

Benefits of organizations in communities

Three axes were created with the technical team of the various organizations that make up the ACJS in order to better serve the needs of the communities of the municipality, namely: health and nutrition, food systems and dialogue of knowledge.

Health and nutrition

This axis is made up of nutrition staff from the Audes-Unach, Dicadem, Conider organizations, the GPA health staff and the Cántaro Azul team. They care for children under five years of age with malnutrition problems and carry out activities such as weight and height measurement, give courses on nutrition, train midwives in the region on prepartum and postpartum care for mothers, they also focus on teach them the prenatal care of the infant to ensure their well-being. They train the villagers to treat the most frequent health problems, stomach infections and respiratory conditions, teach them to give injections, take a pulse and apply serums. For its part, Cántaro Azul accompanies this health process by providing techniques and equipment for water purification, such as the blue tables, and establishes piped water networks.



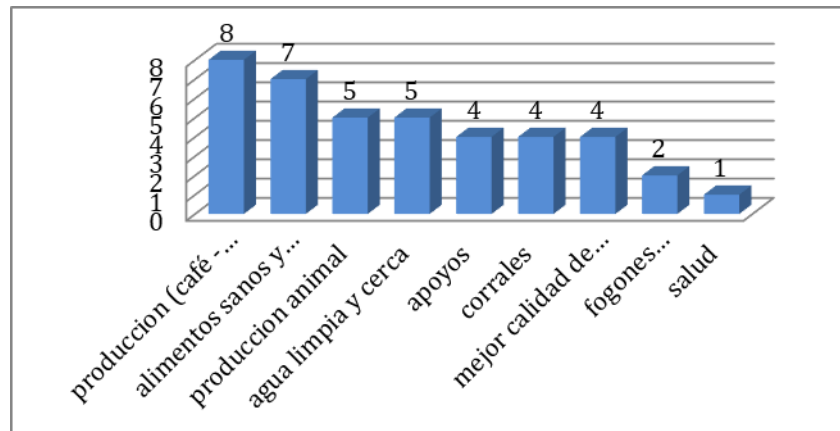
Our contribution was to position or put maternal health on the table and now we are using women's health as a way to achieve, not development, but to see that there are better lives in the communities. There has been a very active participation and the health axis has also been seen (equipo GPA, técnicos, entrevista grupal, 3 de octubre de 2017).

Food systems

Composed of the technical agronomist staff of Conider and Dicadem, this axis has the objective of evaluating new cultivation techniques through the establishment of demonstration plots of corn, establishment of vegetables, the creation of specialized work groups in the production of honey and a cooperative. of coffee with organic process. Soil conservation techniques, organic fertilizers, control and prevention of pests and diseases are also taught. Through the participation of Heifer International, the Integral Community Development team in Sitalá (Decis), belonging to Conider, and Dicadem staff, the production and health of backyard poultry and pigs have been promoted in the localities served.

Since the ACJS began to participate in Sitalá, it had a high incidence in production, since the methods they have taught have been adopted for their effectiveness. The cultivation of vegetables is carried out in backyards, thus producing healthier food; in the case of the cornfields, the chaya mansa (*Cnidocolus aconitifolius*) has been used to form living barriers and vegetables; Coffee has benefited from the contribution of rust resistant seeds, nursery bags, shade maya, tools for plant management and constant training to reestablish new coffee plantations with better management in the short term.

Figura 4. Cambios que los pobladores identifican



Fuente: Elaboración propia

Figure 4 shows part of the changes in the way of life that the population identifies. In the production of animals there were changes from the form of rearing in pens to the control of health; diseases are prevented through vaccination campaigns for poultry and swine. Another of the changes that have been noticed has been in the management of water, since now they already have ferrocement tanks and use purification techniques for their consumption.

We have given trainings or workshops to producers to learn new techniques for sowing corn and increasing the production of the crop. (A. Cruz López, técnico, entrevista personal, 29 de agosto de 2017).

Knowledge dialogue

For this axis, Decis, Mucosdi and ATTA focus on giving courses on gender equality, empowering indigenous women, training local leaders, promoting artisan and gastronomic work groups for income generation and savings bank management. One of the biggest challenges this team has faced is working with women, as they do not have as many social freedoms as men and their participation is limited.

We have grown up in the community, we have gone to prepare, but we return and meet our people because we have lived with them and above all we retain our mother tongue and do not use translators or interpreters to communicate (M. Guzmán Silvano, técnico, entrevista personal, 27 de agosto de 2017).

The purpose is to support women to generate their own income and have more freedom to participate (M. Silvano Guzmán, técnico, entrevista personal, 29 de agosto de 2017).

Perspectives from external organizations

As part of the impact that the ACJS is having, temporary collaborations have been established with other external organizations interested in establishing a link with the Sitalá communities. One of them is the Simone de Beauvoir Leadership Institute (ILSB), with whom a reciprocal relationship was established. They were able to document experiences in Sitalá and, in return, they supported the ACJS technical team with trainings to integrate the gender perspective and reflect on human rights.

The ILSB served us because we are an organization that is in Mexico City. One of the transversal axes is interculturality and sometimes to understand it you have to live it: come, know it and see it. We began to seek alliances with organizations that work on maternal health or women's rights and many had no possibilities on the ground and it happens that organizations that focus on productive development have the capacity to be there. The alliance gave us that opportunity to get to know this region of Chiapas, it gave us contacts and various things so that the doors would be opened to us, otherwise we would not have been able to get to the municipality and do our job. (A. Marina Coapan, consultora externa, entrevista personal, 3 de octubre del 2017).

Another organization is Heifer International, which, in conjunction with the ACJS, has developed projects such as "The field school", where producers are trained and good practices are shared for the production and use of coffee plantations; also the project "Chain Pass", which grants families a domestic species for their breeding and reproduction for a time, and at the end of the period the owner must give the same number of animals that they received at the beginning to a new family to repeat The procedure. This project has been carried out with birds and pigs, mainly.



Heifer opened a call to local organizations. So Conider, as a local organization, proposed real actions and they are as part of the alliance and as part of the cooperative of coffee producers: that is how we are collaborating. Thanks to this indirect participation, our coverage has been much broader. Here, for example, there are 42 communities associated with coffee, it is difficult to reach all of them, but we provide a technician and Conider provides two more. In that the alliance helps us (J. C. Velázquez Hernández, coordinador, entrevista personal, 30 de agosto del 2017).

In some activities that may involve a larger territorial field than the ACJS communities, we have had the collaboration of local social organizations, such as Jlumaltic, which is typical of Bachajón and is made up of citizens interested in the development of their town. . Another case was Devlyn's visual campaign.

Jlumaltic first worked with ACJS on the Devlyn Foundation's visual campaign. He made himself the invitation in the case of Sitalá and Bachajón. We were supporting logistics. There has always been very good communication, coordination, a good atmosphere, trust and there is always mutual support. (J. A. Moreno Díaz, facilitador, entrevista personal, 19 de agosto del 2017).

The ACJS has strived to promote self-management, economic development and leadership in producers, as well as responsibility and well-being with the environment, which is why a local coffee cooperative was created. The organization is in charge of collecting, selecting, roasting, grinding, packaging and marketing the product. Currently, they are being evaluated to make the transition to organic coffee.

The ACJS has supported us to start the coffee organization. We learned to plant coffee in a better way, they gave us workshops for the selection of seeds and wet processing. As part of the work of the organic process, they train us in the elaboration of CBB traps, organic fertilizers, individual terraces, live barriers, rust control, Bordeaux mixture. We already went to the Mexican Certifier of Ecological Products and Processes (Certimex) (P. Espinosa Girón, secretario de la organización, entrevista personal, 11 de agosto del 2017).



Expectations and perspectives of partner organizations

Forming an alliance is a very demanding process, as you have to learn to work together, setting aside differences to successfully face challenges and new responsibilities. Despite the experience generated and the various actions that the organization has taken to increase its strengths, it has not been easy to minimize its weaknesses, it has been a whole process of transformation both on a personal and collective level.

There were some disagreements in the implementation of the project, due to arguments from colleagues that people in an organization do things wrong or go there and are not very professional. Surely on the other side it must have been the same and being able to remove that way of seeing the alliance was one of the things we were working on every 15 days or a month (R. A. Paniagua Guzmán, coordinador, entrevista personal, 11 de septiembre de 2017).

It was difficult at the beginning because the organizations were not used to working in alliance. Each was very jealous of their activities, they did not share information. In a certain way, this disagreement has been resolved through dialogue in the monthly meetings (M. B. Gómez Demeza, technician, personal interview, August 20, 2017).

Yes, there have been some disagreements in the way each organization works or in the way we present ourselves in the community or the comments that are often made; there is certain jealousy and therefore also disagreements. We always look for a way to make certain agreements in a peaceful way, talking about any details (M. Guzmán Silvano, técnico, entrevista personal, 27 de agosto de 2017).

During the process of evolution that the ACJS has undergone and based on the work that has been carried out in these past three years, various learnings and experiences have been generated among the organizations that make up this coalition.

We have learned to walk together in the communities despite our differences, our knowledge complements each other. We are learning to better understand the communities and to incorporate the gender perspective into the work we are doing (C. M. Velázquez Hernández, coordinator, personal interview, October 5, 2018).



It strengthened us as partners. In the field, we were able to meet all the organizations, the activities carried out in the communities, we found a way to relate as a team and work together (O. Hernández Gómez, technician, personal interview, October 3, 2017).

We know more about the organizations that are in Sitalá, we have an idea of who wants to participate or be part of the alliance and who does not. Being in the alliance allowed us a global view of Sitalá, the support with the technical teams, which are the ones that are moving, has allowed us to enrich in particular things of the organization, has allowed mutual help in a sense of collectivity and the to be able to present ourselves in the municipality as an alliance (equipo GPA, técnicos, entrevista grupal, 3 de octubre de 2017).

The ACJS is aware that this is a long-term process, so they have generated different expectations regarding the way in which they would like to work the next stage of the project and how they hope to see their work reflected in the future.

It would be good to invite more organizations to continue strengthening the ACJS. Right now we are starting with around 15 towns, in ten years I hope to see the whole municipality, with a different mentality and wanting to improve itself, to improve various aspects in terms of nutrition, health and production (A. Cruz López, technician, personal interview , August 29, 2017).

Communication must be improved, mainly between field facilitators, because, although there are agreements among coordinators, it is we as facilitators who are more in communities and sometimes there is not good communication (M. B. Gómez Demeza, técnico, entrevista personal, 20 de agosto de 2017).

Discussion

Collaborative work for the development of rural communities is of vital importance both for the inhabitants of the communities and for the state and federal government. The presence of social organizations that claim to be part of this development, on many occasions, cause diverse situations that may include disagreements and successes.



Currently there are no longer as many facilities as before to approach the indigenous population. For example, from the perspective of some indigenous communities, the National Indigenous Institute (INI) was a communication channel with the federal government that provided greater justice, greater communication with the outside world, and partially improved public services (health, housing, education). . However, at the same time, the INI would have served as the federal government's political control body in indigenous regions (Esquer, 2012).

From this perspective, “participation becomes important, becoming the key instrument for economic and social development” (Gómez, 1997, p. 163). Such is the case of Sitalá, a municipality that, due to its location and poverty, requires additional support capable of generating positive impacts on the quality of life of its inhabitants.

Garcés and Díaz (2015) point out that “local development cannot do without community capacities such as those related to the variety of knowledge that different actors have about their environment, their abilities to provide essential criteria in decision-making” (p. 221).

In the late 1970s, the number of organizations and societies has increased dramatically not only in number but also in scope. "Strategic alliances are an important alternative to the option of mergers and acquisitions, an alternative that can avoid many problems" (González, 2008).

Thus, the collaboration networks established by the residents and the members of the organizations that are part of the ACJS can activate social capital, which implies putting the set of resources and the network of relationships that compose it to work in order to obtain benefits. that, individually or in isolation, people or social groups could not achieve. Espinoza (2001) points out that through social capital it is possible to establish an associative organization where the community keeps health and education jobs and projects very well organized, in such a way that all its members have access to these services.

These benefits have an impact on economic, social and political life. According to Durston (2000, cited in López 2006), they can be of three types:

- A reduction in transaction costs.
- The production of public goods.
- Facilities for the constitution of effective grassroots management organizations, social actors and healthy civil societies (p. 173).



In this way, the community participation that Sánchez (1991) calls as community intervention is created and which is characterized "by the active and leading role that community members take in social action." The intentional processes of change through participatory mechanisms aimed at the development of the population's resources, the development of autonomous community organizations, the modification of the representations of their role in society and on the value of their own actions to be active in the conditions that marginalize and exclude (Lapalma, 2001, p. 62).

"Community participation is the result of a process where community agents go through various increasing levels of autonomy and collaboration until they reach decision-making" (De la Riva, 2001, cited by Andrade, 2013, p. 58). The environmental issue has opened the community to new relationships and to build organizations with neighboring communities.

Among the effects on the lives of women, the fact that in many cases they become the sole providers of the family stands out, since men dedicate themselves to the conflict or leave the population to avoid getting involved, hence they have to adopt the role of providers, although there are no conditions that allow them to carry out any activity outside the home. In addition, for the exercise of this new role, many times they do not have the formal recognition of their communities (Briseño and Bautista, 2016, p. 20).

However, there is also political participation in the communities in traditional forms of organization, where patterns of exclusion predominate. "As differentiated replicas of what happens in national society, we also observe the prevalence of misogyny, in such a way that rural and indigenous women are devalued as "second-class citizens" (Olivares, April 29, 2007).

Thus, according to Contreras (2000, cited in Pérez et al., 2011, p. 517), social organization can be an instrument to participate in the benefits of development, in addition to being a means to create power in local communities through the involvement of people (Vargas, 2006) and a mechanism for learning and developing knowledge (Chiriboga, 2003).

Conclusions

The ACJS is a network of organizations that has undergone various changes since its founding to date. One of its characteristics is that it is made up of organizations with different purposes, and although for others it could mean a disadvantage to form an alliance and establish joint actions, they have managed to find a point of equilibrium where the



differences complement each other to encompass and solve a greater number of needs, including aspects ranging from production, health and environment to social issues and sources of income, among others.

There have been many challenges, but all of these have been vitally important in achieving greater unity, trust, and operability among participating organizations and staff. Currently you can see the camaraderie that exists in the body of work and their responsibility with the project, because on many occasions, where resources are limited, they have managed to organize to provide or get the necessary materials and get the activities afloat.

Although the time that the ACJS has been working in Sitalá has been short, the hard work that its staff has done in the communities has been enough for the residents to identify them, recognize their effort and work in each of the areas where they work. . Thus, they have achieved the participation of the population and confidence to adopt new practices, however, they still do not feel capable of walking alone, because they consider that they lack more training and alternatives to put aside habits and practices that do not contribute to development. of the community.

The contribution and the work that the ACJS has carried out in Sitalá has helped to improve the quality of life of the population both economically - by saving expenses and generating new income - and socially - because now they have a culture of greater collaboration and community and environmental integration; because they are more conscientious in the use of the land, and take care of their water sources and practice an agriculture with an organic approach—. However, in order for the localities present in the ACJS to achieve community development, it is necessary to implement more rural empowerment techniques and explore new alternatives so that the inhabitants appropriate the knowledge and tools that the facilitators of each organization provide them. Some producers are already walking focused on self-management and are considered leaders in their communities, but there is still a long way to go to achieve change in a greater number of people.

This stage represents the opportunity to improve in many ways the unilateral relationship between allies, at all hierarchical levels of the structure, from coordinators to field technicians and community leaders; It is necessary to get rid of their individualistic egoisms and centralized ideas in order to build a broader vision focused on the development of communities. Priority actions must be defined according to the time, investment, costs and



other resources available in this phase in order to successfully meet the new objectives and continue promoting change and awareness in the population.

Future lines of research

With this research, future lines of research have been established that include the following aspects:

- The role that social organizations play in the rural development of indigenous communities in the highlands of Chiapas.
- Characterization of indigenous participants in the local development process of the communities of Los Altos de Chiapas.
- Collaborative work and the establishment of networks that enable synergy between people who do not always share customs and uses but do share common interests.
- Identify interaction processes between indigenous actors, social organizations, state institutions and society in general, and their impact on the quality of life.

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