**Re-Application to CISU for a Citizen Participation Intervention**

**Building Cooperativism in Rural Ecuador**

***Mobilising citizens to foster regional development and reduce inequality***



**Reasons for rejection**

Re. **Intervention**:

1. As the number of people benefitting is not clear, the assessment is hampered. If e.g., only 10 entrepreneurs are included, the size of the target group is assessed as low compared to the set-up of the marketplace and the related activities.
2. The gender composition is not clear, and the criteria for selecting the target group of entrepreneurs are not reflected.”

*Variation:*

* Section 3.1, page 10: Clarification of people benefitting from the project and complementation of gender composition and target group selection criteria. UBU members visited the project area to carry out their research for their final thesis, which gave a chance to detail the actual circumstances within the project area and derived from that, the gender composition and target group selection criteria could be defined.
1. The proposed intervention includes three objectives, including a detailed list of indicators and activities. The indicators are assessed as weak. They are both complicated to monitor due to being not tangible, and no targets are set.

*Variation:*

* Section 3.3, page 11-13: Every project indicator underwent a reassessment using the SMART-technique. To make them easier to monitor and more tangible, the indicators were rewritten to be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound. This enables project managers and evaluators to assess certain project characteristics at a specific point in time. This way, project developments can be measured and necessary adjustments identified.
1. The strategy of the intervention, i.e., consistency between its activities, expected outputs, and objectives is assessed as comprehensive, but it is not clear if a more detailed implementation plan will be prepared, specifying the sequence of the activities, which will be beneficial for the assessment.

*Variation:*

* Section 3.3, page 11-13. Activities have been specified to make a more consistent project framework. It has also been clearly written (as the second indicator) that a more detailed project plan will be elaborated with all participating parties after fund allocation. UBUs project management experience is reflected, by designing it together with the local partner, as the implementation plan will depend on coordination with the local resources.

Re. **Cost level**:

1. The relation between the activities and expected outputs of the intervention and the cost level cannot be assessed as budget lines do not reflect expected outputs and activities in the application.

*Variation:*

* The Budget has been revised and now reflects the activities from the application.
1. The budget includes DKK 32.450 for an external evaluation, which is not explained in the application. Please confer the the budget guidelines “*For grants of DKK 2 million and below, it may also be useful to plan for the project to include an external assessment, say, a midterm review or a final evaluation. The intention to conduct an evaluation must be justified in the application, and the cost is expected to be commensurate with the size of the project”*.

*Variation:*

* Section 3.4, page 10: After reconsidering the limited budget frame, we have decided to drop external input in the evaluation. We will use the internal evaluation travel to finalise planning of a next project phase.
1. Description of tasks for Danish staff in the worksheet Danish workhours is very general.

*Variation:*

* Danish payroll workhours have been removed.

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**1. Objective and relevance**

**1.1 Objective of the intervention**

In the end 2019, UBU and Corporación Futuro Valdivia (CFV) were in the process of kickstarting an environmental project that aimed towards improving sanitary conditions in the Valdivia area, located in a rural area in the province of Santa Elena, Ecuador. The project was frozen due to the outbreak of Covid pandemic which consequently led to a major decline of tourism and economic activity. Since then, talks between the two partners never ceased. Meanwhile, CFV's strong local identity and consideration within the community, allowed them to be what could be defined as a reception point for locals' needs and worries. More and more often, local farmers and artisans shared their difficulties in selling their products or obtaining enough income to maintain entire families. Hit by the global pandemic, worsened economic conditions exacerbated inequalities and nourished a pervasive feeling of lack of opportunities. Further, the existing local institutions create an environment of missing trust, personal gain and marginalisation of rural areas. As an organisation with a mission to improve living conditions of the weakest part of our society, we could not ignore the urgency of an intervention requested by the target group itself. Therefore, UBU and CFV jointly decided to shift the project focus towards cooperativism and market development. The overall goal of the project is to set up a cooperative, consisting of local farmers, artisans, entrepreneurs, and CFV members. The cooperative has the objective of connecting actors from different backgrounds and occupations who, as a collective, manage and organise a periodic marketplace. It further aims to promote values such as self-help, self-responsibility, equality, equity, and solidarity. CFV owns a piece of land that has a beneficial position at the main highway, ideal for the marketplace purpose.

The reason behind the identified solution stands from the acknowledgement of how often the capabilities or skills of the local producers end up enriching a third party due to reliance on misleading guidance and incapacity to judge the value of their products. Large wholesalers come to the small villages and buy the products in big stocks, paying a large amount upfront, however for a ridiculous price per unit compared to market price. Due to lack of transportation means to get to the closer markets, local producers do not really see alternatives than adapting to the buyers’ requests. We aim at improving producers’ capabilities, fair market practices and interactions, and further strengthen local communities through increased market access. These empowerments, with organisational support from UBU and CFV, build up civic society engagement through the participating members. Thereby, we aspire for personal and organisational development of all project stakeholders. Finally, this project aims to strengthen trust within the local community and empower them in their own decision-making.

The proposed intervention is to an extent of an experimental nature, as this project is a new endeavour for UBU in a country in which we have not been operating yet. However, the central actors from both NGOs believe that their personal and the organisation’s capabilities and knowledge are key for making such a project possible. The high degree of rootedness and recognition of CFV within the local community, their engagement for several years and their network with locals provides a strong basis for trust and involvement. The previously established relationship between CFV and UBU created mutual trust in each other and reassured their common mission of improving life conditions for disadvantaged individuals. UBU has a strong history in setting up initiatives, bringing people with common goals together and organising them. Furthermore, Carlos Arregui UBU’s member since 2017, who originates from the region where the intervention takes place, possesses knowledge about the local culture and especially the local institutions, as his education as a lawyer with working experience in the Ecuadorian cooperativism sector and development projects equips him with the necessary knowledge to navigate the specific local context. To support such a market-based approach with the goal of income generation, two master students with background in business and development studies are deeply involved in all project phases. Through the involvement of people with knowledge in building cooperatives and experience with the local context, our long-term development objective is to empower the local communities incorporating cooperation and profit-sharing values within a successful “business model”, promoting trust and fair practises. This project seeks to work under the umbrella of many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The aim is to foster entrepreneurship towards poverty alleviation (SDG1), ensure promotion of sustainable communities (SDG11) and build solid partnerships between the stakeholders involved (SDG17).

**1.2 Context of the intervention**

Geographical and Economic Conditions

Ecuador is one of the few megadiverse countries in the world, due to its location in the neotropics, the presence of the Andes mountains, and the influence of the ocean’s currents on its coasts. It is divided into 4 well-defined natural geographical zones: coast, mountain range, the Amazon, and the Galapagos Islands. The province of Santa Elena has a population of 308,700 inhabitants. Despite water scarcity, the whole region is historically dependent on agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing, and forestry, which employ 20% of the population. Wholesales and trade employ another 20% of the population, followed by manufacturing (10%) and construction (10%). Meanwhile, the construction of a road along the coast, from North to South (i.e former “ruta del sol” now “ruta del spondylus”) opened the region to national and international tourism, involving several small villages along the coast, previously excluded from any touristic route. Consequently, tourism developed from being seasonal to a whole year industry.

Commercial activities mostly take place in the economic hubs of the region such as La Libertad or Manta. In these bigger cities, which are at approximately one hour driving-distance, similar marketplaces exist like the one proposed in this project. However, vendors have to pay a fee to the organisers and are not supported with services such as capability-training, stand construction and transport of the products.

The San Pedro-Valdivia Comunas are in the north of the Santa Elena province, and it is a densely populated flat area between the Pacific Ocean and steep coastal hills, cut through by a small river, dry during the main part of the year, apart from the rainy season January - April. The area of the intervention is particularly well known to produce lemons, whose oversupply is currently an issue. The Valdivia River area also produces cucumber, watermelon, and giant granadilla (“badea”). The area also includes crops of platano, cacao and maracuya, but also handicraft products such as paja toquilla, sapán and tagua. The region used to be well known for shoemakers, whose number however decreased by over 90% in the last 20 years.

Social & Political Conditions

The Valdivia *Comuna* belongs to the *parroquia rural* de Manglar Alto, in the *Cantòn* Santa Elena, located in the Santa Elena province. Rural communities are organised in *Comunas* divided in different settlements, called *Recintos*, each of them comprising several households. *Comuneros* --those who are members of a Comuna-- take decisions regarding their territory by vote in Comuna assemblies. The *Comunas* could be deemed a fractured socio-cultural unit unable to carry out its “civic duties”. Recinto-level associations in fact, end up bypassing locally elected governing bodies, for example in terms of support of candidates running to become *Alcalde*, majoring on the Cantòn level. This fragmentation constitutes indeed a challenge in terms of long-term planning, generating high instability as the elections of the local governing body happen every year.

The commune of Valdivia, the cradle of the oldest ceramic civilization in America, was declared a Cultural Heritage in 1997. The descendants of the Valdivian people are in great majority composed of coastal indigenous. Systematic marginalisation and discriminatory practices led to an impoverishment of the rural communities. According to the last national census (2010) more than 67% of the province of Santa Elena population lives in poverty, compared to 32,4% at national level. Furthermore, Santa Elena inhabitants face severe problems such as child malnutrition, domestic violence, drug abuse and adolescent pregnancy, the latter one being the highest rate in the whole South America, as 49.3 of every 100 live births in the country involve adolescent mothers (INEC). In Valdivia, widespread job instability leads men to drinking problems and poor attention to family life, with a long-lasting culture of “solving issues within the family sphere”. Overall, instability and income inequality have created an underlying atmosphere of mistrust in each other. Therefore, the environment is non-conducive for business, coupled with weak transparency and poor accountability in the country’s institutions. For example, when in 2008 our local partner, CFV, bought the piece of land mentioned in section 1.1, a tax of 77,5% on donations from abroad was still in place, hindering foreign investments in the country. The removal of the tax and the collaborative attitude of the new government elected in 2020 made the environment finally welcoming for NGOs interventions.

**1.3 Strengthening of the civil society**

This project contributes to sustainable development by focusing on strengthening the civil society's organisation, promoting active citizen participation. The intervention is meant to be carried out and managed by our local partner CFV. UBU strongly believes in the necessity of the project to be led locally and in the need to strengthen the capabilities of the partner. The creation of a social cooperative managing the marketplace with mainly local members promotes cooperation of different actors, encourages democratic decision-making, and facilitates the peers to share their needs and experiences in a coherent and effective manner. Through the persistent work of NGO members (UBU and CFV) who support the local initiative, the aim of the process is to foster long-term sustainable changes in the social and economic structures. Through the strong cooperative networks between a variety of actors, it allows all members to share their learnings and best practises with each other, but also to have a stronger voice in the global supply chain. Moreover, through and after the 18 months of project duration, the local project member will be ready to take ownership of the project itself, managing the cooperative and its activities. The project addresses the most vulnerable groups within the society, victims of social injustice whose economic conditions have even worsened after the pandemic. In our interviews with the locals, the lack of trust was identified as one of the main challenges to tackle, coupled with the need for income generation. Hence, through UBU’s guidance, CFV will have a fundamental role as facilitator and guarantor for the project deployment and equal treatment of each stakeholder. The project has been designed to be community-oriented with different forms of involvement, relying on local volunteers and planning to root itself within the local community on a long-term basis. The high degree of rootedness of the members builds the project on a solid basis for understanding the project’s social, political, and cultural operating environment. Therefore, the cooperative can tailor its objectives according to the operating context. The members will develop and pass on the know-how and expertise gained in the making.

There are several successful role models such as the Agricultural Production Cooperative "El Salinerito" in the highlands of Ecuador, which has grown to become one of the most successful cheesemakers in Ecuador. In addition to that, being a member of a cooperative increases the chances to get affordable financing in specialized cooperatives, like credit unions, which offer to finance people who are usually excluded from the traditional banking system. In Ecuador, there is an extensive network of financial cooperatives and credit unions that can be approached when needed. As well as governmental organisations like the National Corporation for Popular and Solidarity Finance (CONAFIPS by its acronyms in Spanish) that provide free training and advice for small cooperatives and organisations aiming to increase capabilities to reach the minimum requirements for being financial subjects.

**1.4 Climate and environmental conditions**

The climate in the province of Santa Elena is strongly influenced by ocean currents, especially El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO), occurring roughly every two to seven years. The aftermath includes floods, due to heavy rain, leading to loss of human life, damage to property, deterioration of health conditions due to waterborne diseases and damage to key transportation infrastructure, exacerbating crops and livestock losses. Short-term downturns in regional tourism are also experienced, however sometimes due to water scarcity floods can also lead to long-term benefits to agriculture, rejuvenating soil fertility.

Due to the uncertainty of current climate models’ projections, expectations are that events linked to El Niño in the future will be more unstable and unpredictable, meaning e.g., that one-year extreme rainfall can be expected, followed by several years of drought. The Ecuadorian Red Cross created an Early Action Protocol (EAC) to grant humanitarian assistance to targeted communities, and Santa Elena is among those. Local organisations such as our partner would then follow the guidelines, provide support, and appoint specialised groups. UBU strongly believes in environmentally conscious interventions and will ensure every local stakeholder or target group member is aware of the severity of climate-related consequences. This can for example include workshops or activities for local producers in cases in which awareness is lacking and guidance is identified as needed.

**2. The partnership/collaborators**

**2.1 Experiences, Capacities and Resources of Participant partners**

The Danish organization

UBU, Danish Association for Sustainable Development, was founded in 1998. The mission of the organisation is to collaborate with civil societies in developing countries to improve living conditions for poor people through the promotion of practises that are socially, culturally, environmentally, and economically sustainable. UBU has around 60 members from a wide variety of professions, with a strong dominance of engineers, combined with Business and Humanities students, and professionals from a wide variety of fields. The management structure is based on the board (elected annually at the general assembly) with chairman, vice-chairman and treasurer having 6 annual meetings, project groups (India and Ecuador) and a PR group with participation from interested members.

UBU has managed development projects in Tanzania in 2005-2010, Guatemala in 2008-2009, and India, since 2004, focusing on Environmental issues. Currently, UBU is managing the project Sustainable Water Resources Management in West Bengal, India, aiming to improve agricultural use of water. UBU is responsible for the design and management of the project, while the responsibility of the implementation lies in its local partner Joygopalpur Gram Vikash Kendra, (JGVK) in India. Furthermore, several UBU members have professional experience from development jobs, in both Danish and international development organisations. The work experience of UBU members reaches the academia by teaching environmental engineering and management and capacity development in developing countries at Danish universities, which highlights UBU's experience in the field of capacity development and knowledge sharing among stakeholders. In this project, we will contribute with inputs to trust building among partners and basic go-to-market strategies.

UBU Project Team & Qualifications of staff members

**Carlos Arregui**, the *designated UBU Project leader,* is MSc. Environmental Management and Development, background in law. Work experience in law, cooperativism, and development projects. Ecuadorian mother tongue Spanish. **Mike Mönig** and **Francesco Antoldi** study MSc. Business and Development studies, with background in industrial engineering, and economics & management. Experience with Latin America, project management, NGO-related projects, community work and commercial strategy. Their master thesis is about the Ecuador Project, and they are fluent in Spanish. *The financial project monitor is* **Henrik Bregnhøj***,* MSc. in Env. Eng., PhD, specialist in socio-technical aspects of environmental management and water engineering in developing countries. Working experience from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Worked on UBU projects in India since 2003. Fluent in Spanish. **Diego Sánchez** and **Vinia Hatzidak** arepart of the Appraisal Team. They studied MSc. in Environmental Engineering and have work experience in NGO-projects focused on civic engagement. He is Ecuadorian, with mother tongue Spanish.

The local partner

CFV is an Ecuadorian non-profit organisation registered with Ministerio de Inclusión Económica y Social (MIES) in December 2007. CFV has a wide range of contacts in the area where they established their presence, opening the Futuro Valdivia Health Center in March of 2009, attending some 8000 patients per year. CFV firmly believes that group activities with both genders will create better relations and less violence in the society. CFV is managed by a Board of Directors with four members, elected on 4 years terms (Executive Director and Legal Representative, Financial Director, a secretary and a vocal) and is registered in Barrio Unión y Progreso, Comuna San Pedro, Santa Elena, Provincia Santa Elena. At the Health Center, the staff on payroll is composed of two Doctors in General Medicine, One Laboratory Staff, and Six Specialist Doctors. The Health Center services are financed by patient fees and the sales of medicine. CFV has active contacts within the civil society, from villagers, farmers, children, and youth, to local, regional including national authorities. The presence of the treasurer, Monika Steffel, gives a strong local identity to CFV, since she is widely respected and was named Person of the Year 2020 in the Canton of Santa Elena (the largest Canton in Ecuador with 170.000 inhabitants). Monika is the head of the CFV Health Centre, which has provided surgery and essentially laparoscopic operations in collaboration with Fundación Cinterandes from the city of Cuenca. Furthermore, CFV has a partnership with an NGO based in Quito to support people living with diabetes, and currently runs a program for people with HIV / AIDS together with another NGO in the province. These collaborations show previous experience in successful partnerships. CFV has a strong bond with the handicraft communities, to which CFV has helped by providing export contacts, for products like tagua, toquilla, and other natural fibres; with women groups that make products from recycled paper; as well as with the ecological promoters and organic farmers.

CFV Project Team & Qualifications of staff members

*Potential local project leader*:**Carlos Torres Caiche**, Agricultural Engineer from University of Santa Elena with work experience in agricultural projects, developing projects, and project management or **Belén Proaño**, Psychologist, studies at University SEK of Ecuador and University of Santiago de Chile with work experience in coaching, human talent, and developing educational programmes.

*Project team member:* **Ramiro Tobar**, MSc. Evn. Education at University SEK of Ecuador and University of Barcelona, Spain. Work experience in agriculture, tourism, developing projects, and project management. **Pablo García**, Diver Instructor and Tourism entrepreneur. Work experience in tourism activities in the area for more than 20 years. **Tanner Johnson** who came to Ecuador in 2005 for field studies in his anthropology degree. He is a part time farmer and part time woodworker, really well connected to the local farmers community. *CFV member and volunteers:* **Jan Smedmyr**, holding a degree from Stockholm School of Economics. Management of international business in some 50 countries on five continents 1971 - 2000. Started and upgraded industries in Swaziland and Tanzania with financing from SIDA and the World Bank. **Monika Steffel** who has lived in Ecuador since 1991, founding and managing the health center of Ecuadorian foundation Santa Maria del Fiat until 2008, when she resigned to co-found CFV and open the health center in a populated area. **Paola Santos**, an Ecuadorian psychologist, and a volunteer with CFV since 2018, coaching a group of volunteers working on a CFV-program to inspire children through activities based on Montessori pedagogics. Together with **Cristhian Ramos** (Agricultural engineering education), they run one of the socially focused projects of CFV.

**2.2 Previous acquaintance between the partners**

The connection between the two partners goes back in time since Carlos Arregui is originally from the region where the project is set to be implemented. In terms of collaboration, Carlos participated as a translator for a research project led by a Copenhagen University Master Student at CFV Health Center in 2015, where the basis for the partnership started. In 2019 Carlos and several CFV members began to plan a project intervention in the CFV area of incidence. The same year, the legal representative of CFV, visited Copenhagen and met with the UBU's Ecuador project team. The idea of the intervention was within the WASH area, building on UBU’s experience in the sector. UBU designated two of its members to go to Ecuador for an exploratory field trip to gather data; they bought the plane tickets and made the hotel reservation, as everything was planned to start for april 2020, before COVID-19 forced the plans to be halted. Since then, the conversations between UBU and CFV never stopped, and the locally raised information led to a shared switch in the project scope, towards cooperativism and market development.

**2.3 Overview of contributions, roles and responsibilities**

**UBU:** Supervision, feedback, monitoring, and evaluation of project activities; planning and execution / support of training and workshops on selected topics (e.g. best practices for project management of socially oriented projects, basic principles for successful cooperation, market trade dynamics, management of stakeholders relations and best ongoing project evaluation and monitoring practices) ; assistance in data collection and research through interviews with locals with participatory methods; communication with CISU including reporting and accounting; and communication and dissemination of project results online and in Denmark.

**CFV and project team:** Daily management of the project (staff, accounts, reporting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities); collection of primary data and planning of on-site interviews; strengthening sense of community and shared responsibility; training of field staff in selected topics and provision of feedback on their work; communication with UBU and local government institutions on behalf of target groups and local collaborators; local supervision and assistance in case of UBU volunteers field trip; communication and dissemination in Ecuador; leverage of knowledge of artisanal and agricultural best practises, coaching, civic engagement and local product and market knowledge.

**2.4 Benefits of the intervention for Partners’ Cooperation**

For UBU, this project is a major step forward for the organisation's focus and expertise. After many years of experience with Advocacy and Self-Help Group Management in India, the Ecuador project allows the inclusion in the team of management and law graduates. The diversification of our staff will then allow every member to learn more on the field and from each other, with knowledge that will be fundamental in future projects. We will then be able to connect to a new continent and this could have many different implications such as, for example: expansion of our student related projects to Ecuador, enlargement of UBUs volunteers pool and possibility to establish future contacts to see whether the area also needs support within the WASH area, building on our strengths. Moreover, a possible future idea could also be to connect our local partners in India with the ones in Ecuador, to strengthen a feeling of international cooperation, with huge potential for mutual learning by sharing each other's experiences.

CFV represents a local grassroot organisation with good resources, skills, and ideas, however mostly experienced in a limited sector, health. What this project will bring is inspiration and support in other work areas, since their local network is strong, but capabilities of volunteers need to be built and the organisational focus needs to expand. The local community has a huge need for them to be an active leader and this project can move them closer to be a broad community development organisation, significantly improving their impact. This international partnership will allow them to significantly step up in terms of capabilities developed, but also growth of the organisation regarding number of volunteers or attraction of people with different skills and backgrounds. The project is meant to be the one of a long-term oriented collaboration; setting up a marketplace will require management and then supervision, and if successful expansion plans and potential involvement of bigger target groups.

**3. Target groups, objectives, and expected results**

**3.1 Target group composition**

The primary target groups are actively involved in the project and benefit directly from its objectives and activities. To assess whether individuals belong to the target group, the following criteria will be used: the entrepreneurs’ business has less than 5 permanent employees, it is the main source of income of the entrepreneur, they produce in the Santa Elena region and the products are either agricultural, artisanal or food items. While approximately 80% of entrepreneurs are men, the aim is to have at least 30% women entrepreneurs in the beginning with the goal to reach 50% throughout the project. The secondary target group benefits indirectly from the intervention but is not actively involved in any project activity.

1. *Small scale entrepreneurs* are the *primary* target group that suffers most from missing livelihood possibilities and major social risks. The local farmers in the project areas are mostly men and small scale farmers, belonging mainly to the lower income quintile, and, despite they tend to have jobs on the side, they depend heavily on farming for sustenance of their families. Local artisans manufacture a variety of products, mostly from natural resources. In many cases, the artisanal activity constitutes the family livelihood for many community members. Our local partner estimates 150 potential entrepreneurs within the project area that fit the criteria set out above. The cooperative should initially involve at least 30 local entrepreneurs, with no limits in maximum number of members.
2. The local NGO *CFV* is the second primary target group in this project, especially as their representatives are responsible for the daily management of the entire project. CFV consists of 9 active (6 men, 3 women) and several more part-time members.
3. Behind every entrepreneur, usually lies the work and support of 4 family members, such as wife, husband, kids, parents or cousins. They will indeed be the most immediate secondary target group, since any gain earned by the entrepreneur will be shared with them. Assuming then 4 family members to benefit from the project’s effects, more than 120 individuals belong to this group.

To sum up, the project aims to initiate with, and directly benefit 30 entrepreneurs through participation and 10 CFV members through skill development with at least 30% women participation. Over the course of the project, we aspire to increase the number of entrepreneurs to 50 with 50% women participation. The secondary target group is estimated to incorporate 120 individuals in the short term. In the long term, we also believe that the benefits will be extended to different community members, due to the greater attraction of people and tourists in the area.

**3.2 Target groups’ participation in and benefits from the intervention**

The first beneficial component for the artisans or farmers is the establishment of the cooperative, an initiative actively promoting civil society participation, by strengthening the sense of belonging to a community. Through its participatory governance structure, its regular assembly, and the representation of a variety of interests, the cooperative is founded due to the communities’ desire to gain control of their own local development and increase representation. Moreover, benefits are extended also to CFV representatives, with an overall development of capacity and capabilities. As a second beneficial component in fact, CFV’s competences are strengthened, thanks to constant dialogues and technology transfer will contribute to the second beneficial component, i.e., strengthening CFV’s competences, in terms of organisational capacity and members’ individual development. A third beneficial component will arise from the increased exposure and visibility granted by the marketplace. The exact location of the site is at the main coastal high-way “Troncal Pacífico - E15”, which connects the two big coastal cities “Manta” with approx. 200.000 inhabitants and “La Libertad” with approx. 100.000 inhabitants. Once in the Province of Santa Elena, the Troncal del Pacífico (E15) passes through several coastal towns and villages of high tourist attraction such as Ayampe, Olón, Montañita, Ayangue, Ballenita, etc. The fourth and last beneficial component is that the project's support will also make sure that the vendors can dictate their own prices and receive fair value for their products. Currently, producers’ limitations in selling attitude and transportation means, forces them to sell goods for a market price below-average to a restricted number of “retailers”, identified as “truck owners”. The price you get depends on the information you have access to, and local producers need an intermediary to be trusted.

**3.3 Intervention objectives, strategy and planned activities**

This section breaks down the immediate objectives, their indicators, and the planned activities.

**As the first objective, we aim for the primary target groups to fully embrace the vision and value of the implementation. After the benefits of the cooperative are clear to every stakeholder, we aim to foster organisational capability-building for CFV and market-oriented knowledge for the entrepreneurs.** As *indicators:*

* Before the cooperative is set up, interviews with the target groups show their understanding of the benefits for their business in being part of a cooperative, what contribution is asked to them (what’s their role? how often?) and their commitment in being part of it
* Within 2 month after fund allocation, a refined project plan is set up by UBU and CFV that details activities and their sequence
* Members of the primary target group attend the kick-off workshop (Target: 50). After the kick-off workshops, entrepreneurs that fit into the criteria mentioned in section 3.1 express their interest in participation (Target: 30).
* Number of capability-building workshops conducted for CFV (Target: 3)
* Number of market-oriented knowledge workshops for entrepreneurs (Target: 3)

As related *activities:*

1.1 UBUs team shares with CFV its project management structure and tools, and vice versa. The partners then agree on timelines and task division, setting up bi-weekly meetings to keep track of the project status

1.2 The locally based team approaches local entrepreneurs, to invite them to an info session / workshop in which the project scope is presented. Individual meetings will also be taken into consideration depending on people’s comfort.

1.3 UBU and CFV hold organisational-capability workshops to mutually learn from each other and discuss sustainable organisational best-practices.

1.4 Interested participants are interviewed and reminded of what benefits and responsibilities will be granted and demanded. Thereby, the eligibility of members is assessed whether they fit within the selection criteria.

1.5 During the first 9 months of the project, CFV conducts workshops for the local farmers and artisans and their families on project topics with special focus on their own role in the issue, how they act financially sustainable and how they can change behavioural patterns. CFV actively involves the entrepreneurs through participatory methods.

1.6 UBU and CFV discuss, design, and develop a catalogue of locally appropriate measures to bring the project forward such as training-, communication- and best practice material (presentations, flyers, lessons learned, etc.) - based on activities 1.1., 1.2., 1.3. and 1.5.

1.7 After the cooperative is set up, CFV aims to provide to 30 participants a folder with necessary project information explained in a locally appropriate manner.

As a second objective, **project participants form an active cooperative and build a physical marketplace.** As *Indicators:*

* Within six months from the grant allocation, the procedure to register the cooperative as a legal entity is completed
* The cooperative’s bylaws are written and approved by the assembly, regulating, among other elements, its democratic governance structure and participatory methods, the frequency of assembly meetings, and 50% women representation in the board
* The cooperative members composition includes producers of the five most common crops of the area and the five most produced artisan goods.
* Quarterly guidance from CONAFITS is received by the cooperative
* In the second half of the project duration, the following indicators will be assessed: Market stand constructed (Target: 30), parking lots marked, amount of promotion material elaborated (Target: monthly 10 posters, 100 flyers and 1-2 newspaper articles), logistic processes defined

As related *activities:*

2.1 UBU and CFV set up a written agreement for the cooperative, identifying basic values and rules that regulate its functioning. The local farmers and artisans with the facilitation of CFV choose a temporary board, i.e., president, vice-president, treasurer, and secretary. They set up a governance structure, define the roles of the diverse actors and the duration of time these actors will hold the position. The members of the cooperative identify time, place and frequency for recurring board meetings.

2.2 UBU supports CFV with its legal expertise in the administrative effort to register the cooperative as a legal entity and further helps with the elaboration of the necessary documents.

2.3 The members of the cooperative contact the governmental institution the Superintendency of the Popular and Solidarity Economy (SEPS by its Spanish acronym) for guidance in registering and to become a legal entity.

2.4 The cooperative contacts the governmental institution “CONAFITS” for registering as a member, for getting advice and training in associative groups' management techniques and better practises for achieving the cooperative sustainability.

2.5 Over the course of the project, the cooperative enquires on an ongoing basis further potential project participant and analyse their motivation of joining, with strong consideration of the interventions core values.

2.6 Initially, CFV volunteers take the central role of organising the marketplace area and the construction of the sellers' stands. The volunteers organise materials, bring it with the CFV truck to the marketplace and construct the stands. Also, they designate and sign entrance points, vehicle parking and overall guidance.

2.7 Over the course of the project, the cooperative organises the set-up of a physical marketplace with parking lots, stands, security measures, signs etc. The cooperative board plans the positioning of the stands and ensures that the respective farmers or artisans confirm their availability in that time span. CFV and the cooperative use their combined resources of transportation means from its members to facilitate the transportation of goods from their place of storage to the marketplace.

2.8 Marketplace promotion materials are elaborated by UBU and CFV and communicated through the cooperative in a variety of communication channels in the project area. This includes visible signs, handing out newsletter, appearance in local newspapers, networking and communicating through farmer and artisan organisations, and online material on CFV’s webpage.

2.9 CFV checks and confirms the participation of sellers in the marketplace two days in advance before the market, in order for the project team to plan the logistics of it.

As a third objective, **through the course of the project, the local small-scale entrepreneurs will increasingly take over central roles within the cooperative. After the duration of 18 months, they should actively organise, manage and shape the project according to their needs and possibilities**. As *Indicators:*

* After the cooperative is set up, every decision includes the members’ input by a democratic voting system within the monthly cooperative meeting.
* The quarterly gathered feedback of all project participant is revised and implemented
* Gradual decrease in involvement of CFV members in board management, with the target of ⅓ of board positions occupied by the local producers after 6 months, reaching ⅔ after one year and filled in entirely by the 18th month
* Attendance rate of members at cooperative meetings

As related *Activities:*

3.1. The project leader monitors overall performance and satisfaction of the marketplace. The leader checks the attendance of entrepreneurs, talks to a variety of actors about their perception of the project and identifies improvement potentials. To stay within the project, an entrepreneur needs a minimum attendance rate of 75% per year to the monthly cooperative meetings.

3.2. In order to keep track of their feedback and share it with the UBU team, the opinions and suggestions of all project participants are gathered, evaluated, and implemented every three months via survey by the cooperative’s board. This survey also measures participants' satisfaction and benefit level.

3.3. Entrepreneurs keep track of sales in the marketplace and analyse the differences between products or factors related to frequency of customers.

3.4. The project team, in collaboration with the entrepreneurs, identifies possible ways to track customers’ satisfaction or customer retention.

3.5. CFV members encourage entrepreneurs to take central roles in the board, moving the project team engagement more towards the form of an external “Advisory Board” the cooperative can rely on.

**3.4 Project monitor, record, and incorporation of learnings on the way**

To become socially sustainable, the project team will ensure a correct implementation so that at the community and professional level, all concepts are understood and absorbed. On our side, UBU assigned part of its volunteers to the “Ecuador Project”, whose tasks will include regular reviews of status, granting support via communication on e-mails, Whatsapp or Google Meet for follow-up on status of activities, as well as a monitoring visit and an evaluation visit. The support of the students within the project and the subsequent collaboration with their Master Thesis will moreover guarantee a detailed documentation of the project evolution on the way, also due to their need to conduct field research and analyse findings. Detailed documentation of activities and corresponding findings will then later translate into consequent action plans and insights about future projects. A tight communication between UBU’s India and Ecuador's projects team, with monthly meetings between the two, will also ensure that potential learnings on the way are incorporated. Concerning monitoring on site, a whole locally based project management unit will be created for the specific purpose to execute, administrate, monitor, follow-up and evaluate the project. The local project manager will hence oversee writing down weekly updates on the project and stimulate an open dialogue with all the parties involved. Furthermore, the registration within CONAFIPS ensures additional support to the project team and the cooperative, guaranteeing its stability even when CFV’s involvement in the organisation will gradually decrease. In addition to that, a third monitoring trip will be conducted in the middle of the project duration to increase the amount of knowledge generation, to generate insights for the second project half and to identify improvement potentials.

**4. Intervention-related information work in Denmark**

Being this project a new specialisation for UBU, informational events will be conducted in order to enhance the diversity of the volunteer pool, mainly in universities to attract future students to collaborate in the project. Furthermore, UBU’s visibility and engagement will be supported by promotion on social media channels.