

COOPERATIVES

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT

OF SELF-LEARNING PLATFORM



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COOPERATIVES NEEDS ASSESSMENT TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-LEARNING PLATFORM

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A young woman works at the IOM-established Mersin Solar Dryer Facility. As part of livelihoods projects, IOM support empowerment of woman workforce and integrating to the local market. © IOM Türkiye 2021 | Begüm Başaran

TABLE OF CONTENT

INTRODUCTION	6
METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH	6
PURPOSE	7
INTERVIEW PROCEDURES, PARTICIPANTS, AND ANALYSIS	7
FINDINGS	10
OBJECTIVES OF COOPERATIVES, SERVICES PROVIDED, AND PARTNER/MEMBER REQUIREMENTS	10
TRAINING NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	14
EVALUATIONS OF THE SOLAR DRYER PROJECT	15
Why do the stakeholders find this initiative successful/unsuccessful?	16
Issues Highlighted by Stakeholders Related to the Initiative	17
From the Cooperatives Administrators Perspectives	18
From the Other Local Authorities Perspectives	18
From the Host Community Members Perspectives	18
From the SuTP Members Perspectives	18
STEPS TO BE TAKEN TO SUPPORT THE RELATIONS OF THE HOST COMMUNITY AND SuTP	20
EXPECTATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS OF COOPERATIVES ADMINISTRATORS	21
Trainings Provided to Partners/members	21
Trainings Received From Cooper	23
Required Trainings	23
CONCLUSION	24
RECOMMENDATIONS	26

INTRODUCTION

Since people began to live collectively, they have been making joint efforts with other people to meet their needs. These joint efforts for various purposes have reached the present day as cooperation. The cooperation is manifested in almost all areas. Cooperative activities, which are an extension of those, are also the result of efforts made to achieve these goals. Cooperatives that contribute in terms of economic, social, and cultural points of view are one of the most important tools that benefit the development of countries.

In this study, in order to determine the needs of the partners/members operating in agricultural cooperatives in Türkiye, research was conducted on agricultural cooperatives operating in the pilot provinces of Adana, Mersin, Kahramanmaraş, Gaziantep, Kilis, and Şanlıurfa. The potential educational needs of stakeholders were tried to be revealed. On the other hand, it was also aimed to reveal the opinions of the cooperatives administrators, local authorities, host community, and SuTP partners/ members regarding the solar dryer project. Solar dryer project has been implemented by IOM with women agricultural cooperatives in seven provinces of Türkiye: Adana, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Kilis, Mersin, and Şanlıurfa.

Based on the findings in the focus group opinions, two measurement tools have been developed:

a) needs related to cooperatives and b) solar dryer project satisfaction. As a result of applying the measurement tools to the stakeholders, opinions, and suggestions of them in relation to the solar dryer project as well as the needs of the cooperative were obtained. These findings have been discussed, interpreted, and presented in headings.

METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

In this study, a mixed-method approach was adopted. The mixed-method is an approach to collecting, analyzing, and collating both qualitative and quantitative data within a single study or a sequence of studies to understand the research problem. Its main assumption is to provide a better understanding of the research problem and research questions by using qualitative and quantitative methods together compared to using these methods alone. One of the designs of the mixed method, the “exploratory sequential design”, was used in this study. The exploratory sequential design begins with a qualitative exploration of the subject before the quantitative stage in a study. The emphasis on discovery is also reflected in the name of this design. In this design, researchers develop a measurement tool based on the findings obtained based on qualitative results and use this tool to collect data at the quantitative stage. In other words, the exploratory sequential design is used to contribute to the development of the quantitative stage by the data obtained in the qualitative stage and provide data for the qualitative stage.

At the qualitative stage of the mixed method, the phenomenological design was used. Phenomenology is a research design in which the researcher describes the experiences of individuals related to a subject as defined by the participants. These descriptions are obtained by interviewing the participants. They are used to figure out the basis of what and how individuals with various experiences on the subject experience. In the second stage, a quantitative method, cross-sectional survey design, which is a sub-design of the survey design, was used. The cross-sectional survey design studies the current attitudes of a whole population or a sample of the population. In this aspect, the design has the quality of detecting the current situation as it measures the current attitudes.

PURPOSE

In this study, it was aimed to determine the needs of agricultural cooperatives supported by IOM in the context of solar dryer projects in Adana, Mersin and Kahramanmaraş, Gaziantep, Kilis, and Şanlıurfa provinces. On the other hand, it is also aimed to reveal the opinions of cooperatives administrators, local authorities, host community, and SuTP partners/members about the solar dryer project established in the abovementioned provinces. To develop a measurement tool in this context, initial group interviews were conducted with the cooperatives administrators and host community, and SuTP partners/members at the qualitative stage of the research. A focus group interview is a type of interview conducted with relatively small groups of participants aimed at identifying the views, expectations, and feelings of all participants about something that they are concerned with.

Based on the findings obtained from the focus group discussions and key informant interviews, two measurement tools were developed for the below topics as follows:

- a. the needs related to cooperatives
- b. the satisfaction regarding the solar dryer project.

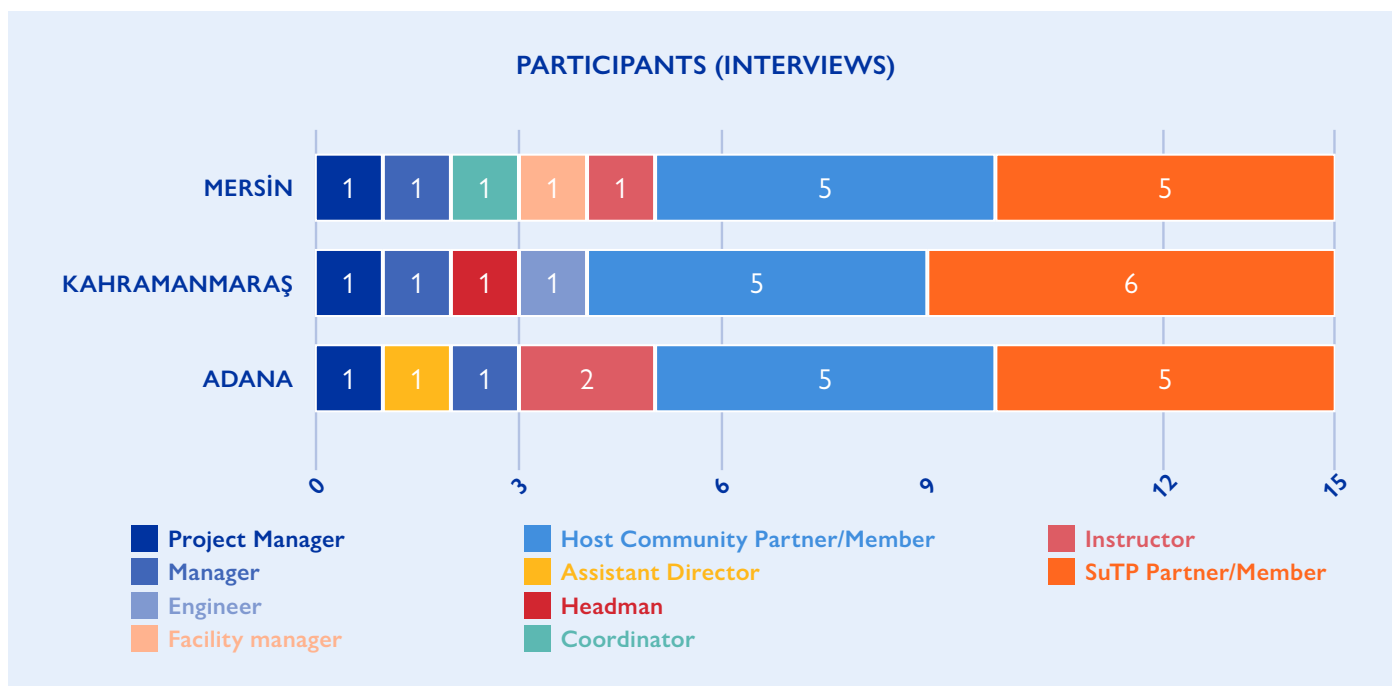
Therefore, the data provided from the participants in the interviews were taken as a basis while developing measurement tools. The created quantitative measurement tools were applied to

1. cooperatives administrators,
2. local authority participants,
3. host community partners/members, and
4. SuTP partners/members operating in these provinces.

INTERVIEW PROCEDURES, PARTICIPANTS, AND ANALYSIS

During the development phase of the focus group interview questions, both national and international literature was thoroughly reviewed to ensure the validity of the scope. As a result of the review, open-ended questions were prepared and experts both in the field of agricultural cooperatives and educational sciences were consulted in terms of the convenience of the questions for the purpose. As a result of the mutual negotiations, simplification was carried out on draft questions in accordance with the opinions of these experts. Within the scope of the purpose of the research, to ensure the consistency of the qualitative stage, special care was taken to create the interview questions in such a way as to support the quantitative stage and enrich the scale to be created. On the other hand, separate questionnaires were created for the two stakeholder groups. In the related forms, the questions are structured under four headings: 1) personal information, 2) educational needs, 3) thoughts about the solar dryer project and 4) personal suggestions. As a result, a total of 17 questions were prepared for both question forms.

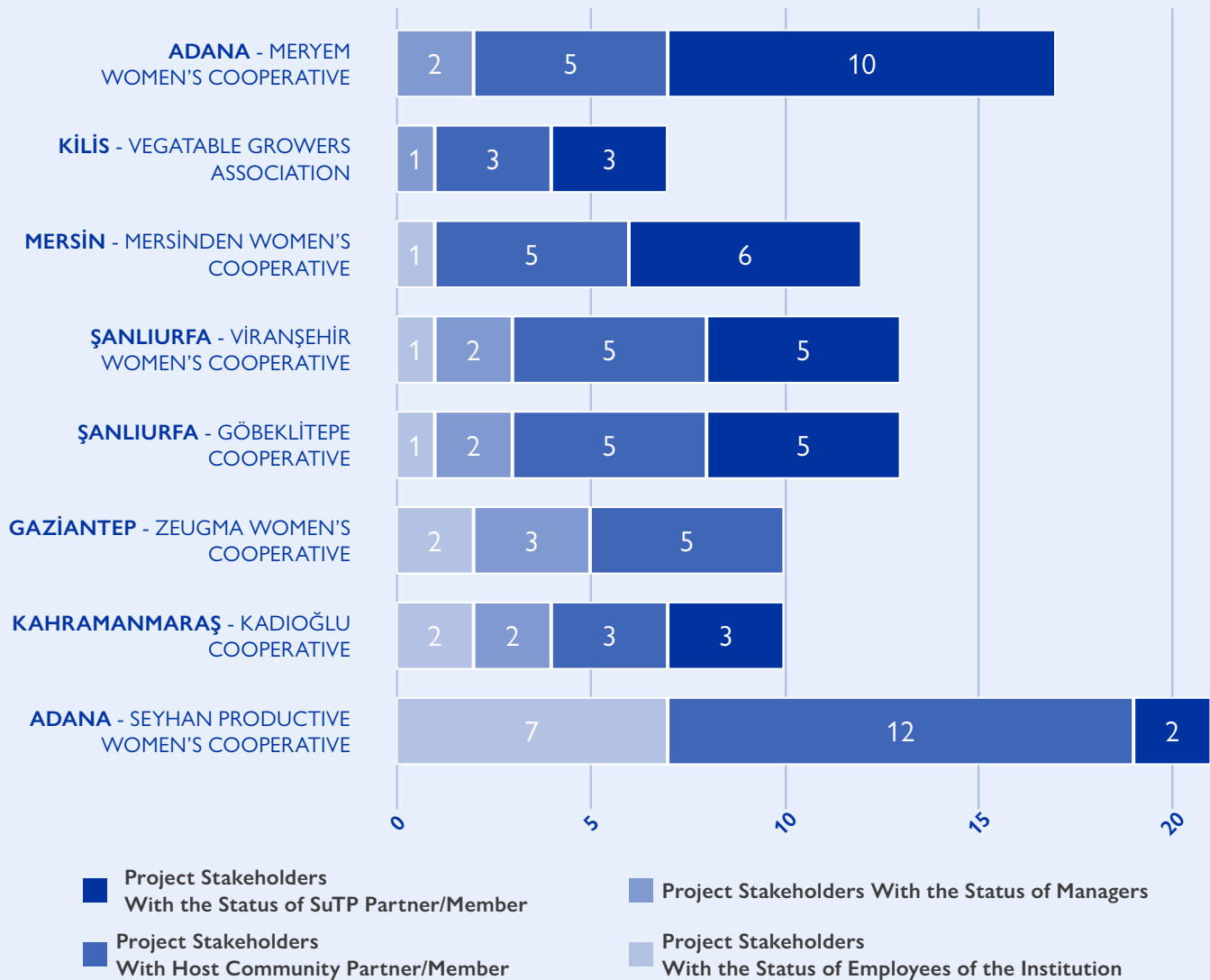
A purposeful sampling method was used to reach the stakeholders who participated in the study at the qualitative and quantitative stages. The purposeful sampling method refers to the inclusion of appropriate and accessible participants from participants who demonstrate consistency with the purpose of the study in the sampling (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, appropriate, and accessible ones were reached from the participants who took part as a stakeholder in agricultural cooperatives operating in Adana, Mersin, and Kahramanmaraş provinces, and measurement tools were applied.



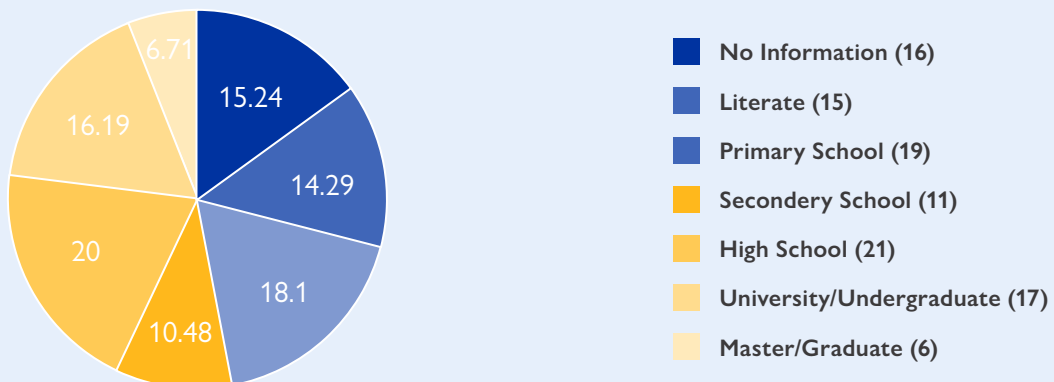
On the other hand, before the interviews started, detailed information about the study was provided to each participant interviewed. As the information was provided to the participants about the study, permission was requested to take audio recordings during the interview. The interview started right after the permission was obtained. During the interviews, the participants were allowed to express their thoughts as much as possible and their conversations were not interfered with in any way except for questions related to the subject.

The content analysis technique was used to analyse the participants' opinions about their experiences. In content analysis, the data obtained should be analysed in depth. Similar data were collected within the framework of certain codes and themes extracted from the codes and decoded in a way so that the reader could understand, and they were interpreted by the researcher(s). Before starting the analyses, preliminary information about the creation of codes and themes was tried to obtain considering the opinions of the experts interviewed for the validity of the scope. Thus, internal reliability was tried to be ensured in the study. The data collected during the interviews were analysed after the audio recordings were deciphered. The qualitative data were also checked by the research cooperatives administrators to ensure the internal reliability of the study. As a result of the control, some codes were combined within the framework of the recommendations of experts since they have similar meanings. The codes obtained later were tried to be themed by paying attention to common points. As a result, both the codes and the themes were interpreted by including direct quotations to reflect the original thoughts and opinions of the participants as well as to ensure transferability (external validity).

PARTICIPANTS (SURVEY)



DISTRIBUTION BY EDUCATION LEVEL (%)

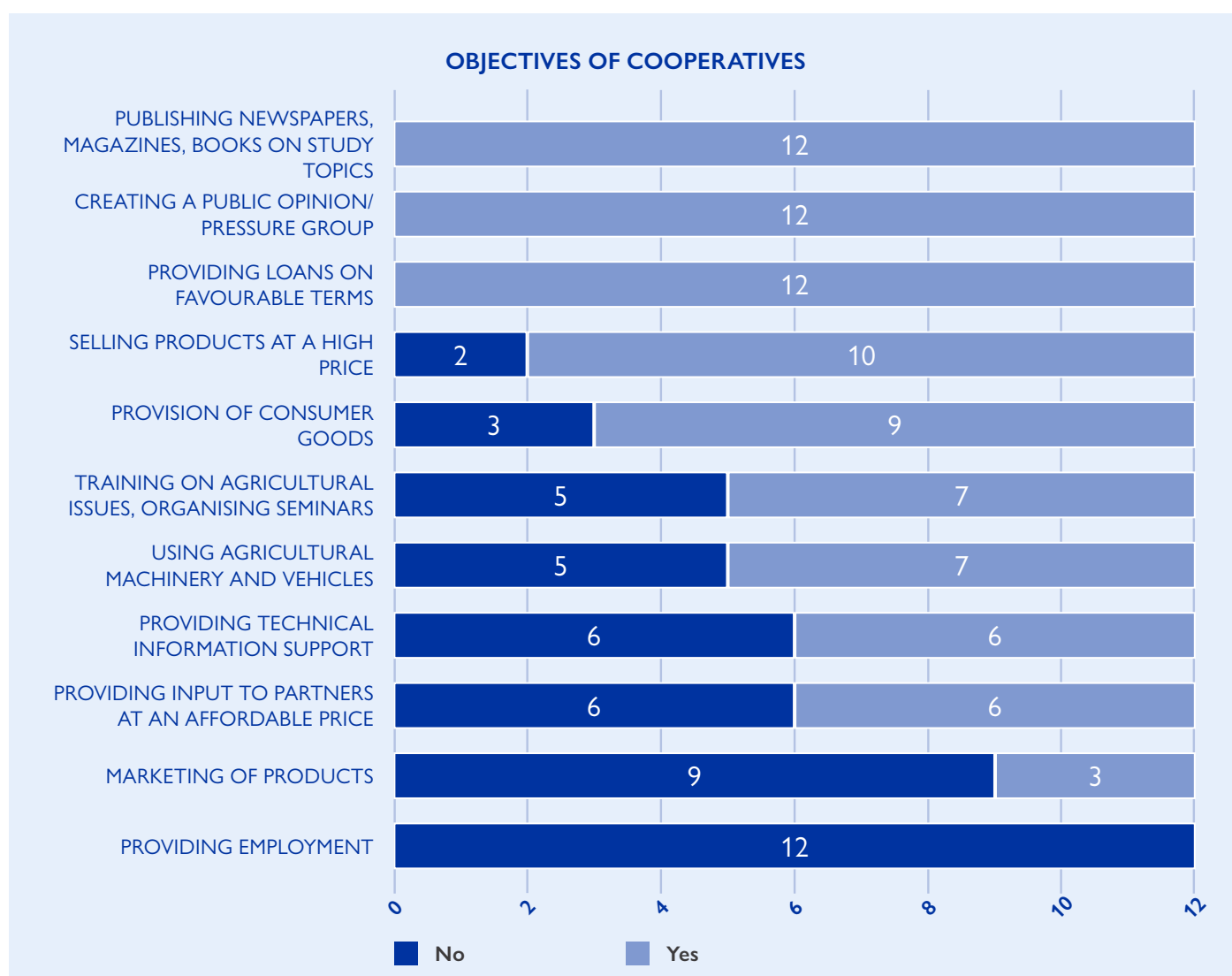


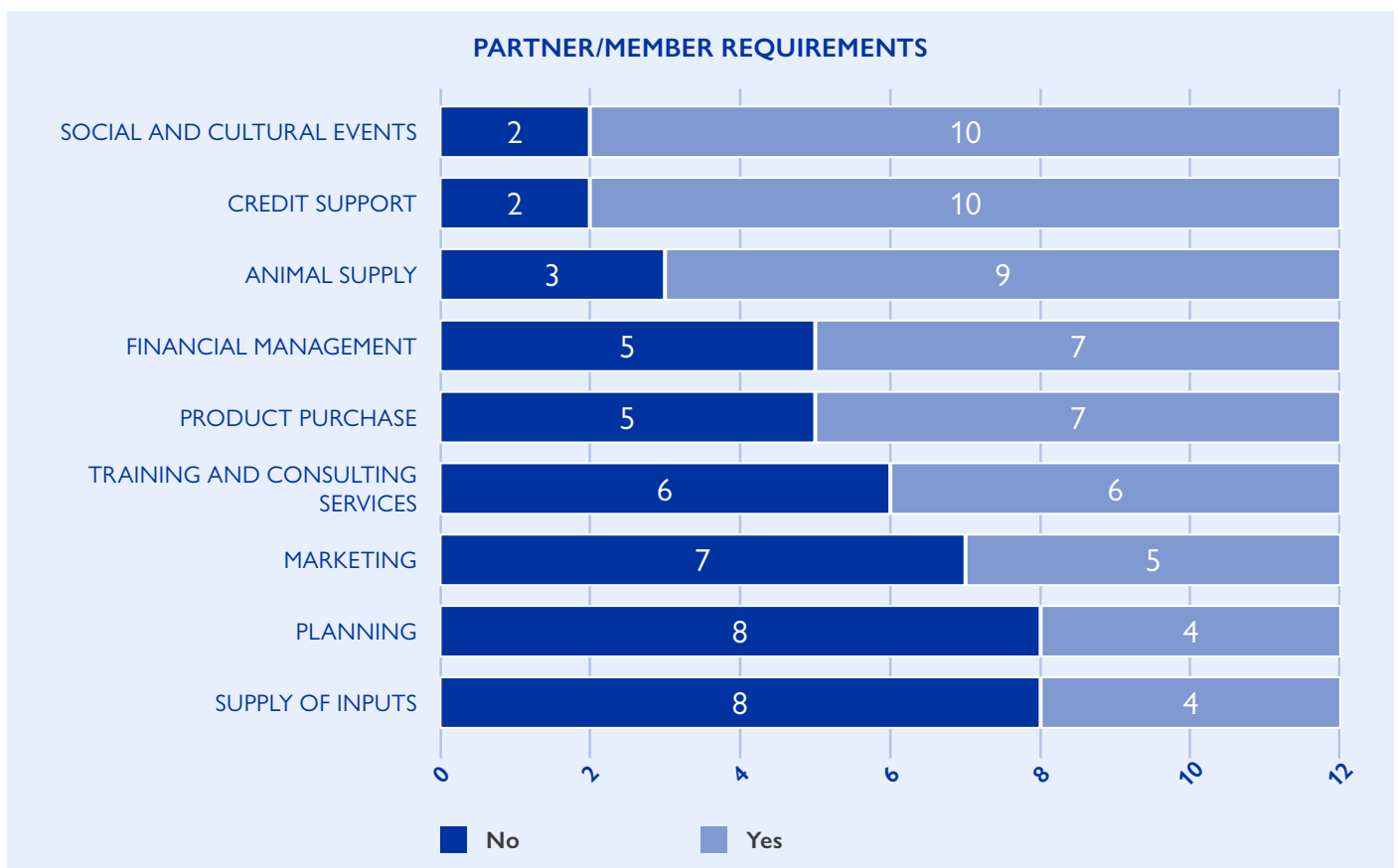
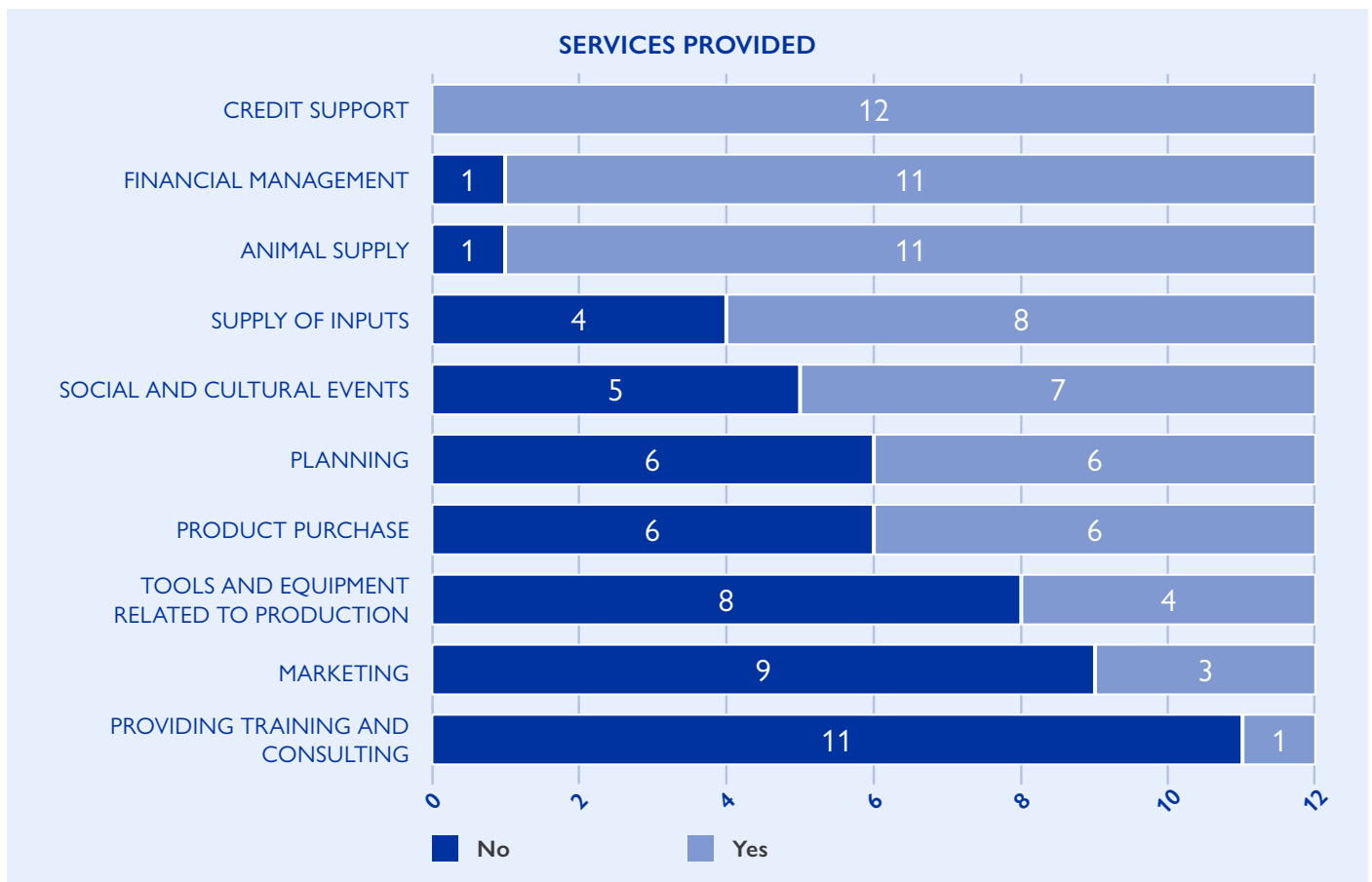
In the quantitative stage of the study, data were collected from 105 participants, including 12 cooperatives administrators, 16 local authority participants, 43 host community partners /members in co-operatives and 34 SuTP partners/members in cooperatives (n = 105). The collected data were analysed. In the scope of validity and reliability of the data, exploratory factor analysis and Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis were applied. Frequency distributions were also used to obtain descriptive statistics.

FINDINGS

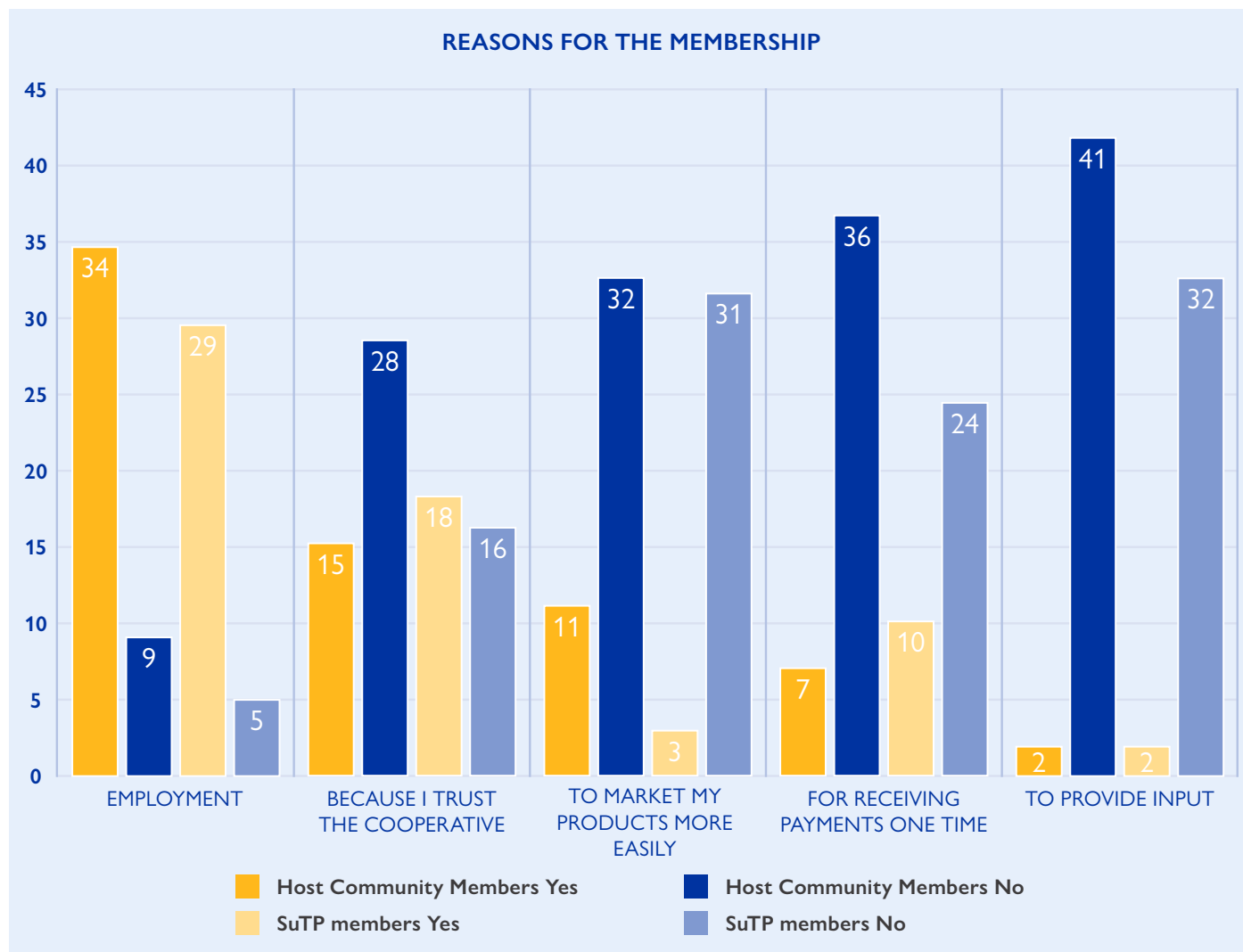
OBJECTIVES OF COOPERATIVES, SERVICES PROVIDED, AND PARTNER/MEMBER REQUIREMENTS

Cooperatives administrators indicated information below regarding the objectives of the cooperatives they are affiliated with, the services they provide in these cooperatives, and the issues they have specified for the needs of their partners/ members.

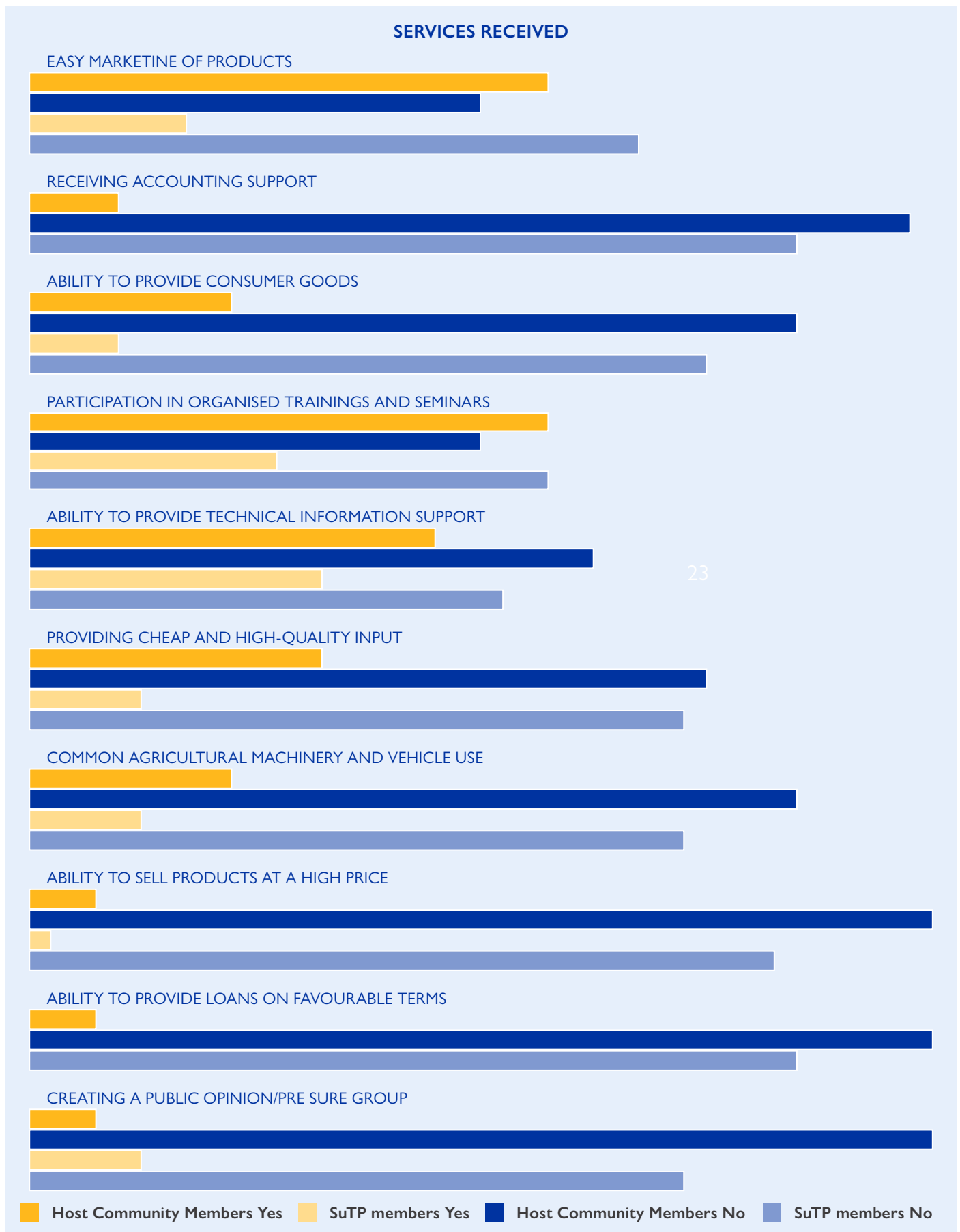




It is seen that there is the greatest participation in the issue of “providing employment” (n = 12; 100.0%). This is followed by “marketing of products” (n = 9; 75%), “providing input to partners at an affordable price” (n = 6; 50%) and “providing technical information” (n = 6; 50%) respectively. It is noteworthy that the largest participation in terms of the services provided is in the dimension of “providing education and counselling” (n = 11; 91.7%). It is followed by marketing (n = 9; 75%), production-related tools and equipment (n = 8; 66.7%), product purchase (n = 6; 50%) and planning (n = 6; 50%). Finally, within partner/member requirements context, the highest participation is of “inputs” (n = 8; %66,7), “production-related tools” (n = 8; %66,7) and “planning” dimensions. This is followed by “marketing” (n = 7; 58.3%), and “education and consulting services” (n = 6; 50%).

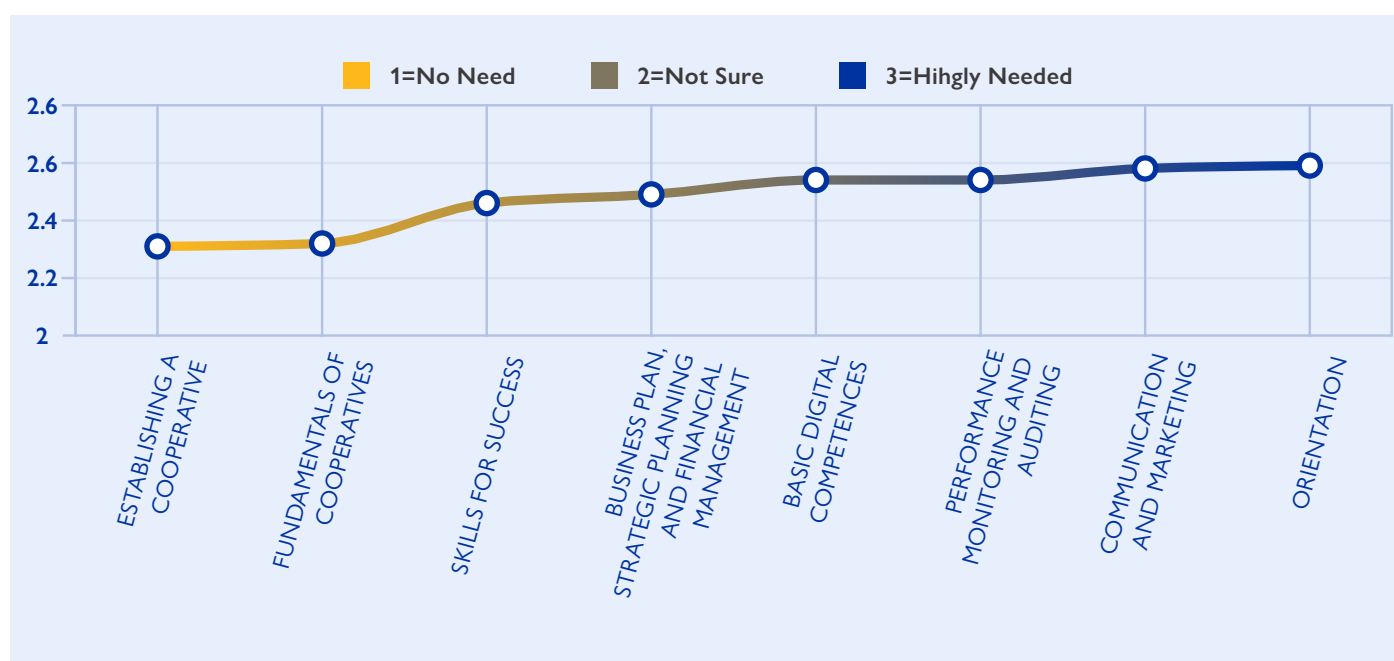


It is seen that the employment dimension of the host community partners/members of cooperatives has a high participation rate at the beginning of the reasons why they become partners/members of cooperatives (n = 34; 79.1%). This is followed by confidence in the cooperative (n = 15; 34.9%), easier marketing of products (n = 11; 25.6%), timely receipt of payments (n = 7; 83.7%) and provision of input (n = 2; 4.7%). On the other hand, the top reason for SuTP partners/members of cooperatives to become partners/members of cooperatives is high participation in the size of employment (n = 29; 85.3%). This is followed by trust in the cooperative (n = 18; 52.9%), timely receipt of payments (n = 10; 29.4%), easier marketing of products (n = 3; 8.8%) and provision of input (n = 2; 5.9%).



It is seen that host community partners/members receive from the cooperatives to which they are affiliated, it is remarkable that participation is high in size in “easy marketing of products” (n = 23; 53.5%) and “participation in organised trainings and seminars” (n = 23; 53.5%). This is followed by “the ability to provide technical information support” (n = 18; 41.9%) and “providing cheap and high-quality input” (n = 13; 30.2%). On the other hand, looking at the services that SuTP partners/ members receive from cooperatives to which they are affiliated, it is seen that the participation in the dimensions “the ability to provide technical information support” (n = 13; 38.2%) and “attending organised trainings and seminars” (n = 11; 32.4%) are high. This is followed by “easy marketing of products” (n = 7; 20.6%).

TRAINING NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



When the arithmetic means for the needs scale are evaluated, it is noted that the most educational needs are in the orientation dimension (M = 2.59; SD = 0.66). It is followed by communication and marketing (M = 2.58; SD = 0.63), performance monitoring and auditing (M = 2.54; SD = 0.65), fundamental digital competencies (M = 2.54; SD = 0.65), business plan, strategic planning and financial management (M = 2.49; SD = 0.68), skills for success (M = 2.46; SD = 0.68), the fundamentals of cooperatives (M = 2.32; SD = 0.81) and establish a cooperative (M = 2.31; SD = 0.68) respectively. Therefore, it can be stated that the greatest need for education arises in the orientation dimension and the least need for education is observed in the cooperative education dimension.

Based on both qualitative and quantitative findings, IOM (International Organization for Migration) should highly consider developing a Training Program for Cooperatives that consist of courses including but not limited to the list below: Fundamentals of Cooperatives, Establishing a Cooperative, Business Plan, Strategic Planning and Financial Management, Performance Monitoring and Auditing, Communication and Marketing Skills for success, Fundamental Digital Competencies and Orientation.

It was observed that there was a gap found in the “Institutionalisation” of the cooperatives. That’s because most of them lack fundamental information about cooperatives; skills of creating a business plan, monitoring performance in cooperatives, communication, and marketing, as well as fundamental digital competencies. To figure this out, courses could be designed by experts on business plan, strategic planning, financial management, performance management, communication and marketing, career development, and fundamental digital competencies, costs, and financial accounts. As IOM is the leading intergovernmental organisation in the field of migration and is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society, enabling cooperatives administrators and SuTP members, and so on to get training on these main topics coincides with IOMs aim. Besides, one of the results showed us that

SuTP members needed orientation to communicate in a better way with the others. Upholding human rights for all is one of the missions of IOM, hence orientation courses in particular for the SuTP members should be given.

Also, most of the participants stated that they needed training on the abovementioned courses. However, they had problems with the format and schedule of the courses. About the courses, they agreed on one thing: distance education. Most of them wanted some parts of the courses to be given face to face for a better learning while more parts of them are given online, as they did not always available on the scheduled time to follow the courses face-to-face while working and they wanted to attend the courses later which meant they needed some flexibility in terms of time and space. Regarding this, it is recommended to utilize distance education and in particular one of the most effective and innovative approaches in distance education, namely a blended learning approach in delivering the proposed training program for cooperatives. A well-designed Educational Management System includes major components like a Learning Management System (LMS), learner analytics system, content management system, and user support system. This learning would provide participants with the opportunity to acquire skills they need anytime and anywhere.

It is recommended that a blended learning approach is employed in designing courses for the professional development of cooperatives. Those courses could be tested in cooperatives. The Education Management System for the proposed Training Program for the Cooperatives may also provide opportunities for training on numerous topics and for knowledge exchange among members. Training is crucial in efforts to transition into distance or blended learning for cooperatives because soft skills and digital competencies are considered as major success factors. Unless we can use the tools effectively, investing in hard technologies (e.g., broadband internet, computers, mobile technologies, etc.) will not contribute to creating success stories. Soft technologies (e.g., competencies, skills, etc.) are equally important and we need the right mix, a harmony between these technologies.

EVALUATIONS OF THE SOLAR DRYER PROJECT

SCALE	ITEM	MEAN	<div> <div></div> 1=No Need <div></div> 2=Not Sure <div></div> 3=Hihgly Needed </div>
PRODUCT DRYING PLANT SATISFACTION	I would like the product drying plant initiative to continue	2,77	<div> <div></div> 3.8% <div></div> 15.2% <div></div> 81.0% </div>
	Information and training were provided to the employees related to the product drying plant	2,52	<div> <div></div> 11.4% <div></div> 24.8% <div></div> 63.8% </div>
	I think the product drying plant initiative has been successful	2,52	<div> <div></div> 13.3% <div></div> 21.0% <div></div> 65.7% </div>
	The product drying plant has effectively benefited from the employees	2,49	<div> <div></div> 11.4% <div></div> 28.6% <div></div> 60.0% </div>
	The product drying plant ensured the efficient use of products	2,47	<div> <div></div> 12.4% <div></div> 28.6% <div></div> 59.0% </div>
	The product drying plant has effectively performed its function	2,36	<div> <div></div> 17.1% <div></div> 29.5% <div></div> 53.3% </div>
	Arithmetic Mean	2,52	

is evident that the arithmetic mean of the solar dryer project satisfaction scale is close to 3. It can be stated that the satisfaction level of the cooperative stakeholders is generally high. On the other hand, when the items of the satisfaction scale are checked, it is noted that the highest mean is found in the item "I would like the solar dryer project to continue" ($\bar{x} = 2.77$; $s = 0.51$). It is seen that the lowest mean is in the item "The solar dryer project has performed its function effectively" ($\bar{x} = 2.36$; $s = 0.76$). However, the fact that this average is above 2 and close to 3 gives the impression that the cooperative stakeholders generally agree with this item.

WHY DO THE STAKEHOLDERS FIND THIS INITIATIVE SUCCESSFUL/UNSUCCESSFUL?

		COOPERATIVES ADMINISTRATORS	LOCAL AUTHORITY PARTICIPANTS	HOST COMMUNITY MEMBERS	SuTP MEMBERS
Those who find the Project/ Initiative Successful	Ensuring effective production			11	7
	Providing employment		2	6	9
	Providing added value	1	6	1	2
	Providing personal development			3	2
	Enabling to open up to different markets		1		
	Being innovative		2		
	Working with perseverance	4			
Those who find the Project/ Initiative Unsuccessful	Failure to meet expectations	1			
	Lack of sustainability	2			
	Lack of technical and physical facilities	4	4	3	1
	Lack of financial opportunities			2	4
	Lack of marketing support			1	
	Lack of staff		1		
	The necessity of increasing the profit rate			1	
	TOTAL	12	16	28	25

The topic of “working with perseverance” came to the forefront in the evaluations of why the **cooperatives administrators** found this initiative to be successful (n = 4; 80%). Regarding this, the stakeholders drew attention to the importance of working with perseverance in the initiative by including statements such as “We have successfully carried out the production of flake pepper by drying pepper despite the systemic problems in the solar dryer project” and “We have turned the pepper we dried into a finished product even though it was the first trial.”. On the other hand, the stakeholders who found this initiative unsuccessful mostly emphasised the lack of technical and physical facilities (n = 4; 57.1%). In connection with this, it has included statements like “Since the technical infrastructure was delivered incomplete, it also forced us hard to complete these processes.”, “The working capacity of the facility as a person is 3-4 people. That’s it is quite difficult to employ 30 people at the same time at this facility.”.

The issue of “providing added value” came to the forefront in the evaluations of why stakeholders- who have the status of **employees of the institution**- found this initiative successful (n = 6; 54.5%). Regarding this, the stakeholders stated that “The fact that there is an initiative that increases the added value of an agricultural product allows you to increase the added value of vegetables grown in our region in the summer.” and “We find it very meaningful to introduce such an environmentally friendly facility to our province in terms of adding value to products.”. On the other hand, the stakeholders who found this initiative unsuccessful mostly emphasised the “lack of technical and physical facilities” (n = 4; 80%). In this context, the stakeholders said, “There is not enough space in the facility, the ventilation system is not good, humidity occurs, and we do not have a cold storage where we can store the products, we cannot store the products.” and “The plant has a low capacity and there is a shortage in the marketing of products.”.

The issue of “ensuring effective production” came to the fore in the evaluations of **the host community partner/member stakeholders** in cooperatives about why they found this initiative successful (n = 11; 52.4%). Regarding this, the stakeholders stated, “It is a very successful initiative in the context of the production process and the products produced.”, “We dried the products well. We produced quality goods.” and “It Presents an innovative production model.”. The stakeholders who found the initiative unsuccessful mostly emphasised “the lack of technical and physical facilities” (n = 3; 42.8%). Regarding this issue, the stakeholders said, “We did not have our own living space. In winter, our field collapsed. The tables were tight, so we had a hard time.” and “The working area was very small, we had difficulties while working.”.

The issue of “providing employment” came to the fore in the evaluations of **SuTP partners/members** in cooperatives about why they found this initiative successful (n = 9; 45%). Regarding this, the stakeholders said, “It is convenient and nice to work at the facility, this is how we have a job.”, “The idea of the project is nice, and my friends who work there are nice, we are comfortable working together.” and “The business idea and the style of work are nice, and the work is easy.”. On the other hand, the stakeholders who found the initiative unsuccessful emphasised more on the “lack of technical and physical facilities” (n= 4; 80%). Regarding this, the stakeholders said, “The plant did not work, there were shortcomings, and the project is currently stalled. The business strategy of the tools must be changed.” and “The tools did not work, and the process of drying the red pepper was not exactly successful.”.

ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED BY STAKEHOLDERS RELATED TO THE INITIATIVE

	COOPERATIVES ADMINISTRATORS	LOCAL AUTHORITY PARTICIPANTS	HOST COMMUNITY MEMBERS	SuTP MEMBERS
Improvement of physical facilities	4	6	10	2
Improvement of technical facilities	4	3	5	1
Development in terms of economic benefit	1	3		
Improvement of social facilities	2		1	
Ensuring sustainability				
Improvement of working opportunities		4		
Increasing employment			1	1
Establishment of social facilities				
Ensuring continuity			4	3
Increasing production			3	1
Providing work-related trainings				4
Improvement of working conditions				3
TOTAL	12	16	24	15

FROM THE COOPERATIVES ADMINISTRATORS PERSPECTIVES:

The issues of improving physical facilities (n = 4; 40%) and improving technical facilities (n = 4; 40%) came to the fore. Regarding these, the stakeholders have included statements such as, “I would like a stronger technical system to be established with a larger area and equipment.” and “I would fix the glitches at the facility. At the first attempts of the plant, the ventilation windows did not work.”. It was noted that the stakeholders agreed on “ensuring sustainability” within the scope of other issues. In this regard, they have expressed statements such as “I would apply the continuous production model.”, “I would strive to ensure production every season.”.

FROM THE OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES PERSPECTIVES:

The issue of “improving physical facilities” came to the fore more in the mentioned theme (n = 6; 37.5%). Regarding this, the stakeholders stated, “Cold storage and product storage should be available.” and “Since the Solar dryer project is very large in area, there is a shortage of heating. If possible, I would narrow the area and strengthen the solar energy system.”.

FROM THE HOST COMMUNITY MEMBERS PERSPECTIVES:

The issue of “improving physical facilities” came to the fore more in the mentioned theme (n = 10; 41.7%). Regarding this issue, stakeholders said “The plant could have been designed in a larger area for higher production”, “There are shortcomings that I wish could be fixed. There are no shelves and no cold storage. The roof collapsed due to the snow. We are very aggrieved. We can’t do the refills there anymore.”, and “I would enlarge the space. There are few drying places. I would enlarge tomato paste places.”.

FROM THE SuTP MEMBERS PERSPECTIVES:

The issue of “providing work-related training” came to the fore mainly in the mentioned theme (n = 4; 26.7%). The stakeholders stated: “A course with at least 3 months of duration should be given to work at the facility.”, “Vegetable drying training should be given under the guidance of an expert instructor.” and “In order to overcome the problems experienced among employees within the facility, lessons should be given for the successful management of the team.”.



Hatice is one of the women who benefits from the IOM's Community Farming Greenhouse project in Şanlıurfa. She's got new knowledge and skills in farming and is now able to earn some money. © IOM Türkiye 2021 | Begüm Başaran

STEPS TO BE TAKEN TO SUPPORT THE RELATIONS OF THE HOST COMMUNITY AND SuTP

	COOPERATIVES ADMINISTRATORS	LOCAL AUTHORITY PARTICIPANTS	HOST COMMUNITY MEMBERS	SuTP MEMBERS
Provision of Financial Support	1	1		
Ensuring the Supply of Raw Materials	2	1		
Increasing Employment	2	2	1	1
Providing Marketing Support	1	1		
Supporting Manufacturers	2	1		
Ensuring Continuity in Production	2		3	
Development of physical facilities		1		
Improvement of physical facilities			1	
Improvement of technical facilities			1	
Improvement of working conditions				7
Conducting Orientation and Trainings	1	1	12	9
Conducting Social Events and Cultural Activities	1	3	4	2
Provision of educational support		4		
Ensuring sustainability		1		
Providing marketing and communication courses			2	
TOTAL	12	16	24	19

Statements given by the cooperatives administrators on the steps that should be taken to support the relations of the host community and the Syrians are discussed in two themes: “providing support” and “training and activity”. In the support theme, it was determined that the codes of raw material supply (n = 2; 20%), increasing employment (n = 2; 20%), supporting producers (n = 2; 20%) and ensuring continuity in production (n = 2; 20%) came to the fore. What is stated regarding these by the stakeholders are as follows: “Supporting manufacturers with such joint projects can help in alternative products and marketing, increasing the diversity of the essential products of the production, increasing the capacity of the plant in a more efficient way.”, “Ensuring the supply of raw materials for the products and the diversity of products in the Drying Plant ensures that the plant is constantly in operation.”, “The number of people to be employed can be increased by making the facility more conducive to food production and increasing its capacity.”, and “It is necessary to increase the employment opportunity. For this, the plant needs to be continuously put into production.”.

Stakeholders who have the status of employees of the institution have evaluated the steps that should be taken to support the relations between the host community and the Syrians in two themes: “providing support” and “education and activity”. The issue of “increasing employment” (n = 2; 28.5%) came to the fore in the theme of providing support. In connection with this, a stakeholder declared “A contract must be signed between the buyer and the seller regarding

the sale of contracted products, and the seller must know the price of the product he is selling in advance. If this is done, our Syrian siblings will be provided with more employment opportunities.” In the theme of education and activity, the issue of “providing educational support” was emphasised more (n = 4; 44.4%). Stakeholders related to this said, “Until the promotion and marketing channels of the products are created at this facility, the women who will carry out production should be trained in some subjects and additional support should be provided.” and “It is necessary to provide training on how to do this work. In addition, at the end of the training, these people must also undergo an examination.”

Statements of the host community members/partners about the steps to be taken to support the relations of the host community and the Syrians were evaluated in two themes: “providing support” and “education and activity”. The issue of “ensuring continuity in production” (n = 3; 50.2%) came to the fore in the support theme. Regarding this, one stakeholder stated, “Continuity in production needs to be ensured.” On the other hand, it has been determined that the code of “conducting orientation training” has come to the fore a lot in terms of training and effectiveness (n = 12; 66.7%). Regarding this, the stakeholders said, “We cannot communicate because of the language difficulty.”, “Syrians should be given Turkish language education. We get into trouble because we don’t understand each other, otherwise there are no other problems.” and “A compliance guide should be prepared, and orientation activities should be organised together.”

Statements of the stakeholders with SuTP member/partner status on the steps to be taken to support the relations of the host community and the Syrians were evaluated in two themes: “providing support” and “training and activity”. On the theme of providing support, the issue of “improving working conditions” (n = 7; 87.5%) came to the fore. Regarding this, the stakeholders said, “Working conditions should be improved, and round-trip transportation to and from the plant should be provided”, “Due to the fact that work is daily and there is no fixed salary, wages should be improved and working days should be increased.”, “There must be Equality in labour intensity, wages and relationships.” and “wages should be increased in working conditions.”. On the other hand, it was noted that the stakeholders emphasised the issue of “conducting orientation training” on the theme of education and activity (n= 9; 81.8%). Stakeholders related to this: “It is needed to create opportunities for dialogue, and joint cooperation.”, “It is a necessity to master the Turkish language in order to establish a dialogue and create opportunities to bring points of view closer.” and “It is needed to create opportunities to work in a team spirit and to have a dialogue.”.

EXPECTATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS OF COOPERATIVES ADMINISTRATORS

Statements made by the cooperatives administrators regarding their opinions, expectations and suggestions concerning cooperative training are explained under this heading. The theme created and the codes discussed for each theme are presented in the following titles.

TRAININGS PROVIDED TO PARTNERS/MEMBERS

Although it has been said that some trainings have been provided to partners/members in cooperatives before, it has been emphasised that these trainings are not very efficient. In particular, the synchronous implementation of online trainings has brought some problems. In this context, it is underlined that the attendance is low because the time of the online training coincides with the production time. It has also been stated that the partners/members do not have the necessary equipment for training.

“Fundamentals of cooperative education was provided online by the ILO and the Youth Cooperative. After that, the youth cooperative came to Adana and three days of face-to-face training were given. The online training was not very efficient because it coincided with the production time. Training that partners can watch later and also on weekends should be given. These training sessions should be done very often. I think that online training is not very efficient because some partners have problems in terms of equipment. The role of the educator in online training is also very important.”

Cooperatives administrators have suggested that cooperatives should be institutionalised in relation to the needs of partners/members in terms of education. It is stated that institutionalisation can bring sustainability with it. In this context, it is underlined that trainings related to institutionalisation of cooperatives and sustainability should be offered to partners/members:

“There is also a need for training on the institutionalisation and sustainability of cooperatives. Because sustainability brings along the possibility of work.”

It has been expressed that trainings should be provided under the headings of “formalisation” and “how institutionalisation is realised cooperatives” Statements have been made to provide training to both partners/members and cooperatives administrators under the heading of “fundamental digital competencies” On the other hand, it was emphasised that the following trainings should also be given:

“All partners need to be trained on the areas of fundamentals of cooperatives, business plan-model, performance monitoring-evaluation processes, communication-marketing, skills for success, and digital competencies very often. Digital training will be especially useful.

There should be fundamental digital competencies training. The training should be training that can be given both to cooperatives administrators and partners. This is how participation can be achieved.”

One of the stakeholders stated that orientation training for SuTP members should be provided in Türkiye. In this regard, it has been underlined that the trainings given about Turkish language education are not enough, especially in the past:

“Turkish language education should also be included in these trainings. SuTP participants have also received training before, but it is not enough. The education needs of partners and cooperatives administrators are different.”

In addition to the needs mentioned here, some cooperatives administrators have made recommendations about several issues. These recommendations included having flexible training hours, providing minimal financial support, and designing trainings in a way that everyone can understand:

“There were some problems that we encountered when conducting face-to-face and distance education. there were issues such as the fact that the participants do not attend the training hours every day, and their perception of I know this topic, etc. They do not want to participate when financial support is not provided. Hence, participation is also low unless financial support is provided to the participants.”

Some cooperatives administrators have expressed that they have taken steps towards establishing their own cooperatives and established their own cooperatives at the end of the one-day training on cooperatives. This indicates that the trainings provide benefits to potential partners/members, albeit at a minimal level:

“Training about the cooperative was conducted, and fundamentals of cooperative education was provided in the form of what kind of contributions the agricultural cooperative provides to our province and district. We went there, too. We had a big meeting there. Cooperatives and the benefits of cooperatives were explained. The training was for one-day. I don’t know if it helped those who would become partners/ members of the cooperative there or not, but it helped, we say that after that meeting, our cooperative was established.”

Some of the cooperatives administrators have stated that they will participate in a training to be designed within the scope of the needs of the partners/members:

“Even we participate in a training program that will be designed for partners/members. Knowledge is always infinite.”

EXPECTATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS OF BOTH HOST AND SuTP COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

The statements regarding cooperative education made by the host community and SuTP beneficiaries with partner/member status regarding their opinions, expectations, and suggestions are discussed under this heading. The codes determined for each theme and theme created were shared in the following titles.

TRAININGS RECEIVED FROM COOPERATIVES

The beneficiaries stated that they had received various theoretical and practical training related to cooperatives. It has been said that these include topics like fundamentals of cooperatives, cooperative legislation, the process of conducting activities, and information about medicines and products:

“Information was provided about the cooperative. A team from Izmir gave training on the fundamentals of cooperatives for three days.”

“I was previously trained in the field of fundamentals of cooperatives and was satisfied. As a cooperative partner, we received training on what our rights were and the process of conducting activities.”

“I received training in cooperatives. However, I do not have information about my rights and responsibilities in the cooperative.”

“It organizes joint training with the Public Education Centre (PEC). It’s about medicines, and products. The cooperative demands education from PEC according to the need and education is adjusted in a hands-on manner. I got that way.”

“We have had requests for cauliflower and spraying courses.”

REQUIRED TRAININGS

Beneficiaries stated that they managed the processes with the guidance of cooperatives. In other words, it is worth noting that the processes are provided by the cooperative, not the individual. At this point, the beneficiaries emphasized that they want to complete the missing aspects by receiving the necessary trainings related to cooperatives:

“Courses on the business plan, strategic planning, financial management, performance management, communication and marketing, career development and fundamental digital competencies can be provided.”

“There may be training to cover women in all aspects related to cooperatives. Training related to the cooperative can also be continued.”

“We are short on costs and financial accounts.”

“There can be a Turkish language course and a computer course.”

“There is a need for an orientation that accustoms you to life in Türkiye. (How to talk to an official, how to get to the hospital, what the rules in Türkiye are, etc.).”

The beneficiaries have also expressed their thoughts about how these trainings they have stated should be. Based on their previous educational experience, they offered suggestions on some issues:

“I can devote up to 2 hours a day, totally to 10 hours a week, to training. It can be ensured that these face-to-face training sessions are recorded and given to everyone for later monitoring. In this sense, digital would be a more logical option.”

“I prefer face-to-face training because I have time. The part where the educator asks questions in face-to-face training contributes to the learning activity. However, since there is not always time for face-to-face training, it is better if these trainings are online.”

“I have taken many classes remotely in my field. I prefer an educational environment where time management

is in my hands.”

“I studied online at the cooperative. I would like an educational environment where I can manage time on my own.”

“I just studied. We got efficiency when the training was face-to-face. In the online system, the time did not match much, and we could not get efficiency from technical problems. Online education is suitable if we can take classes anywhere at any time.”

“It was the specified hours that were the most exhausting in online education. We didn’t get any results from fatigue and intensity.”

“Online education is suitable if we can take classes anywhere at any time.”

“We learned about the drying plant by researching and watching videos in the training.”

“I also learn about the topics that I am personally interested in from the videos. In general, we have no problems using digital media.”

CONCLUSION

The findings obtained at the qualitative stage of the research indicated that cooperatives administrators, host community members and SuTP members need training on “institutionalisation of cooperatives”. In this aspect, it was requested to meet the information deficiencies of the partners/members concerning formalisation. On the other hand, in addition to the fundamental information about cooperatives, it was evaluated that the skills of creating a business plan, monitoring performance in cooperatives, communication, and marketing, as well as fundamental digital competencies, were also within the scope of the required needs. It was evaluated that the skills to be gained in the training to be designed under these headings could also be provided to cooperatives administrators. Even cooperatives administrators declared that they could participate in these training sessions and increase their level of knowledge. It was also expressed that cooperatives administrators and SuTP members needed education, especially about orientation to Türkiye (how to talk to an official, how to get to a hospital, what are the rules in Türkiye, Turkish language education, etc.). In this aspect, it was stated that orientation training should be mandatory in the cooperative education to be designed.


The host community and SuTP members declared that they needed courses on the business plan, strategic planning, financial management, performance management, communication and marketing, career development, and fundamental digital competencies. Stakeholders also stated that there should be a special training on costs and financial accounts. It was emphasised that as well as cooperatives administrators, SuTP members should definitely be provided with an orientation education that helps them get used to life in Türkiye.

The findings obtained at the quantitative stage of the research also support the findings determined at the qualitative stage. In this context, orientation courses for SuTP partners have been determined as one of the most desired courses. These courses are followed by communication and marketing, performance monitoring and supervision, fundamental digital competencies, skills for success, fundamentals of cooperatives, and establishing a cooperative. However, the subjects of establishing cooperatives and the fundamentals of cooperatives have been identified as the least needed courses. It is considered that this situation is caused by the fact that the stakeholders in question have received previous courses on these two issues.

The stakeholders expressed their satisfaction in general regarding the solar dryer project. While emphasising that the initiative should continue, technical and physical improvements were also made. The stakeholders who found the initiative successful emphasised the fact of added value and pointed out that such an acquisition was achieved by this initiative. The stakeholders who found it unsuccessful expressed the lack of technical and physical facilities and stated that the ventilation system should be improved by providing sufficient space in the facility. In addition, some recommendations have been made for the construction of a cold storage facility. Therefore, it has been evaluated that this facility will be more successful in the future with the improvements to be made and will contribute to the provinces in question regarding employment.

Stakeholders shared various opinions about how courses should be designed. It was stated that the courses to be designed should provide flexibility to the stakeholders in the cooperative in terms of time and space. Considering the previous experiences, it was also stated that synchronous courses were inefficient because they did not provide flexibility in terms of timing. Therefore, it was evaluated that the provision of these courses with a blended learning model in the form of distance education can provide the necessary flexibility to stakeholders. As a matter of fact, the blended learning model gives stakeholders the opportunity to learn the information they need anytime and anywhere. In addition, in this learning model, stakeholders are given the opportunity to reach the information on the topics they want without following a certain sequence. Similarly, stakeholders have implied that education can be more efficient for them if time flexibility is provided. The fact that theoretical training can be given online in shorter periods of time will support stakeholders to turn to the profession by obtaining a certificate in a short time. On the other hand, computer-aided visualised learning materials will also support permanent learning and mental visualisation for practical applications. Thanks to the model, it is possible to support individuals who are currently working to participate in cooperative training for their personal development with the help of computer-aided flexible learning environments. This is also consistent with the philosophy of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning has the power to provide all learning opportunities regardless of time and space.

RECOMMENDATIONS



The solar dryer project was successful and greeted by all stakeholders as only 3.8% opposed it. However, there were some technical and functional issues that need to be addressed for the sustainability of the initiative. Monitoring and Evaluation should be designed to foresee problems before they occur.

In addition to providing trainings, future initiatives by IOM should also focus on support that directly relates to employment. Possibilities like providing raw materials (vegetables etc.) and supporting producers in areas they are not skilled like marketing should be considered in developing the next initiatives.

IOM should consider efforts in postulating non-monetary benefits like offering counselling on needed areas like individual entrepreneurship, e-commerce, and marketing through group or one-to-one counselling and mentorship activities.

Stakeholders stated a strong need for several topics regarding some professional needs about the fundamentals of cooperatives and also some topics on personal development. Particularly, a course on orientation, language skills, and intercultural communication should be designed for both host community members and SuTP members.

A Blended Learning approach is advised in delivering trainings to all stakeholders as they declared major limitations in time and space to be allocated for trainings. Blended Learning or other forms of distance education should stipulate much-needed flexibility for this target group.

An Educational Management System (EMY) should be considered in providing future trainings. Such a system would enable IOM to not only provide trainings but also monitor participant performance to make better decisions on learning.



A woman mixing mandarins as part of the solar drying process at the IOM-established Mersin Solar Dryer Facility. She has been employed through a women cooperative in Mersin within the framework of the livelihood project of IOM Türkiye. © IOM Türkiye 2021 | Begüm Başaran



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