



CONSOLIDATION OF WOMEN'S SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

ASOLIDER MODEL, A NETWORK OF WOMEN LEADERS IN ECUADOR

Who is RED DE MUJERES LÍDERES (WOMEN LEADRES NETWORK –RML)

Women Leaders Network (RML) is an associative company of women, which connects professional consultants and entrepreneurs in the same community, in a cooperative work model that proposes making changes in the way of thinking, understanding, doing and feeling the reproduction of our living conditions, marking important transformations that come from this collective and individual work, through the creation or strengthening of companies made up and directed by women and with great social impact.

What is Women Leaders Network (RML) proposal?

The proposal is to consolidate the management model as a social business model directed by women and for women based on three pillars: training, research and development of tools and financial institutions. This, within the framework of the social economy, where cooperativism is the associative form par excellence for the economic development of communities and societies. Initially the proposal aims to expand the management to other provinces of the country and later to see the possibility of regionalizing (internationalizing) its model.

Women Leaders Network (RML) has currently a training program in entrepreneurship for women with a gender focus that emphasizes on the appropriate mechanisms for generating decent self-employment without self-exploitation for women. This proposal is scalable to different territorial and social contexts, where women can undertake.

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At the same time, the experience has allowed the association to strengthen the mentoring processes for entrepreneurs, in such a way that permanent support, the identification of problems according to the different contexts that women go through and the viability of solutions, has allowed to sustain the ventures classified as high risk, given the vulnerability conditions of the participants in the programs.

Likewise, it has been confirmed that the measurement of the impact of state and non-state actions for the economic empowerment of women is almost null and lacks sufficient sources of information. For this reason, Women Leaders Network (RML) has implemented a line of research, aimed at establishing the status of women and their ventures at the moment they begin their training, their progress (once the path has begun) and, after a reasonable time has passed, determine the impacts of this process. To do this, Women Leaders Network (RML) has designed a tool that called ATENEA (ASSESSMENT OF TRANSFORMATIVE EMPOWERMENT AND NETWORKS FOR ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT) which allows the organization to carry out this monitoring and evaluation process for decision making at the different levels where it is applied. It is a highly adaptable tool for different territorial and social contexts. Therefore, we consider that it can be adapted in different scenarios.

Finally, given the few possibilities for women to access credit, which allows them to set up their ventures and create companies, Women Leaders Network (RML) has designed a process for the construction and development of savings banks, being the own Saving Bank the experience to test a model of financial management, which supports entrepreneurs and consultants in their business and professional growth. The aspiration of the Network of Women Leaders (RML) is to establish a financial entity led by women, whose financial products are designed from the actuality of women and to support their economic empowerment.

In addition to what has been mentioned, Women Leaders Network (RML) has adopted alternative economies, using social currencies which can become, in the medium term, a mechanism for the economic strengthening of women.

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Another associative form that the organization is promoting (non-financial) is the development of women's cooperatives for work, goods and services, consumption, food, among others. This, with the purpose of reinstalling the economy in its social matrix, in such a way that associations are the engine of healthy and supportive economies.

This is the social business model that Women Leaders Network (RML) propose to validate, strengthen and replicate in various latitudes, for the empowerment of women and their economic autonomy.

How does it work?

To achieve this objective and facilitate the processes, Women Leaders Network (RML) propose the creation of a ***Digital Platform for the Comprehensive Strengthening of Economic Autonomy and Prevention of Violence against Women.***

The project proposes to effectively strengthen and make viable the services and products that make up the management model of the Women Leaders Network (RML) for entrepreneurial women who are part of its socio-organizational dynamics, through the implementation of a mobile application (APP) that allows to sustain permanent training and interaction for the development of individual and collective capacities of women, building their economic autonomy, in many cases, in environments crossed by violence.

It is planned to include the following sections in the APP:

- Training for women's empowerment: Provide information and tools to promote economic autonomy through the RML Lab Entrepreneurship training program, with content on preventing risk situations due to gender violence.
- Savings account: It will allow access to the movements and request services.
- Time Bank: It will facilitate the exchange of time to access services, knowledge and information (legal, financial advice, emotional health and others) with a gender focus.

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- Muyu Social Currency: It will allow access to the account status of each participant of the Muyu social currency and the possibility of exchanging products between members of the network (Barter),

Problem that the project seeks to solve

The GIZ (German International Cooperation) National Country Cost Study reveals that violence against women (VAW) in Ecuador, which affects 70%, has an economic cost of USD\$4,608 million, 4.28% of the GDP. , with half of that cost absorbed by those affected and their microbusinesses. Although Ecuador is a leader in entrepreneurship in Latin America, 83% arise out of necessity and only 3% persist beyond three months. The rate of entrepreneurship out of necessity has been, in recent years, 4.7% above the regional average.

Women Leaders Network (RML) seeks to promote female entrepreneurship to fight Violence against Women, but faces limitations in the delivery of services and products, especially in currently intervened rural areas of Pichincha, Carchi and Imbabura. The lack of adequate technology to facilitate communication and process automation prevents timely access to training, financial services and alternative economies, such as the use of social currencies and time exchange. It is vital to optimize resources and time to support vulnerable women, especially in rural areas, for a significant change in their lives.

Project objective

The general objective of the project is to strengthen the management capabilities of the Women Leaders Network (RML) for the promotion of the rights and economic autonomy of women entrepreneurs in Ecuador, through the digitalization of its services.

The following are proposed as specific objectives:

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- Improve institutional processes regarding training services for self-employment, solidarity finances and leadership, which allow strengthening women's capacities.
- Promote the financial inclusion of women through solidarity savings activities aimed at supporting their economic autonomy.
- Promote the exchange of services, knowledge and information through the digital Time Bank with a gender focus.
- Promote a digital strategy to exchange products and promote meeting and community spaces on supportive digital platforms.

Target Group / Project Beneficiaries

Target group:

Women between 25 and 65 years old in vulnerable conditions, who access the services of the Network.

Beneficiaries:

5000 trained women who access the app

100 professional and entrepreneurial members linked to the Network

350 members of the Muyu community

100 women integrated into the Time Bank, in the first stage

200 women members of the National Union of Women of Ecuador - UNME, an allied organization, with branches in Pichincha, Guayas, Loja, Zamora, Napo, Orellana, Carchi, Imbabura, Sucumbíos, Esmeraldas, Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas, Morona Santiago.

Location

Initially Provinces of Pichincha, Quito Canton, Carchi Province, Bolívar Canton and Imbabura Province, Cotacachi where we currently have a direct connection.

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Customers

Entrepreneurial and vulnerable women who become members of the RML and participate in the entrepreneurship training initiatives of the Savings Bank, the Time Bank and the Muyu-Moneda Social Community.

In addition to women's groups organized in the Provinces of Pichincha, Carchi and Imbabura. Members of the National Union of Women of Ecuador, UNME, will also be included.

Channels

App, RRSS, Podcast, Events at Headquarters, Coworking, Training Rooms, Business Roundtables, Workshops.

Viability Guarantee Factors

Since its constitution, the Women Leaders Network (RML) has had a sustained growth in the number of members and service offering.

Regarding services for members, the network began with training and networking events. Later, it established the Savings Bank for the benefit of its members, to later develop alternative means of exchange (Social Currency in 2021 and Time Bank in 2022).

Since its creation, 5,000 women have been trained in person and virtually. It currently has a Headquarters with large spaces with training rooms, networking, and a showcase of the entrepreneurs' products.

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The Network maintains agreements with public and private institutions (GAD DE BOLIVAR, AEI, UTPL, UIDE, CEPS, CAPEIPI, among others) and will have a greater impact thanks to the availability of an app.

The experience of the Network since its constitution has allowed the development of methodologies for each of the services, obtaining a level of maturity in the processes that makes their digitalization viable, which will allow having a greater impact by facilitating access to services at national level.

Financial Sustainability

The financial sustainability of the project is anticipated through the commercialization of training programs, workshops, places for business conferences, advertising through our live programs and Podcast, rental of the headquarters spaces; training classroom, coworking and consulting with the recently developed tool in conjunction with EDES BUSINESS SCHOOL that allows measuring the empowerment of women through entrepreneurship – ATENEA.

Advertising linked to the APP and eventually payment for access to a panic button (Very necessary because of the current violent atmosphere in Ecuador).

Value proposition – differentiation

The possibility of elevating the Women Leaders Network (RML) experience to the digital sphere allows more women to be integrated into specialized information and support spaces to confront situations of economic dependence and violence. It will also allow it to expand its radius of intervention to other provinces, and to other countries in the region.

The main differentiator is that the Women Leaders Network (RML) is an associative company; a space to develop leadership, empowerment and economic
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autonomy. Through the project, the aim is to expand opportunities for capacity building and association, generating a space (digital platform) for self-sustainable women's cooperation that includes elements of empowerment, as well as alternatives for access to savings and exchange opportunities of services through the use of social currencies.

The digital platform will be based on a security and trust scheme to integrate more women so that they can access services in a single channel.

Project scalability

The project will expand the capacity of the Women Leaders Network (RML) to provide training services, technical assistance, promotion of savings and exchange of goods and services for the benefit of women, promoting their financial inclusion.

The APP allows the scalability of network services by becoming a new channel without geographical barriers, facilitating unlimited access to training and promoting savings in different places in the country and the region.

To be successful in scalability, a robust mobile application is required that allows users to be served efficiently; in addition, a design that is easy to navigate is required, considering the diversity of women who will use this tool.

A business model will also be established that provides sustainability to the maintenance of the app according to the services provided, especially based on the generation of alliances and new projects.

The APP will enable greater visibility of the objectives promoted by the RML focused on the empowerment and eradication of violence against women.



Positive social and/or environmental impact.

- Reduces the gender gap in access to resources: By facilitating women's access to resources such as training, advice and financial services, the application contributes to reducing the gender gap in access to economic and social opportunities.
- Promotes sustainability: By promoting the exchange of knowledge and resources through the Time Bank and the Social Currency Network, the application encourages more sustainable consumption practices, reducing resource waste, in addition to promoting the circular economy.
- Promotes gender equality: By challenging traditional gender roles and promoting the active participation of women in the economy and society, the application contributes to creating a more equitable and fair society.
- Empowers women: By providing access to resources and tools for economic and personal empowerment, the app helps women develop skills and confidence to improve their lives and actively participate in society.
- Reduces gender violence: By offering information and support to prevent gender violence, the application contributes to raising awareness and changing attitudes, which helps reduce the incidence of violence against women.
- Create a supportive community: The app serves as a platform to connect women from different communities and provides a safe space to share experiences, seek help and provide mutual support.

Scientific-Technological Base

The project is aimed at strengthening the RML's digital strategy to bring services closer to women, empowering them and generating a new access channel.

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The implementation of an APP allows users to reduce access costs and maintain information permanently for decision making. It also allows greater interaction with users, clients or beneficiaries.

The APP will enable greater access to the beneficiaries' data, which constitutes information for new initiatives. An easy-to-navigate interface will be developed to improve women's experience. Usability is fundamental in the development of the project. Furthermore, this new channel allows you to maintain direct communication with women through notifications on key topics, especially linked to prevention of gender violence and entrepreneurship.

This proposal corresponds to the area of Information and Communication Technologies in the field of STEM. It is in the planning and design stage, it is expected to last 12 months and includes an estimated budget of \$200,000.00 USD (TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND AMERICAN DOLLARS 00/100).

Budget by category

APP creation 50,000.00
Personnel - payroll 20,000.00
Consulting / External services 60,000.00
Transportation costs / Travel expenses 5,000.00
Acquisition of equipment and materials 3,000.00
Other costs / Consumables 7,000.00
Savings Bank Management 15,000.00
Commercial Event Management 8,000.00
Live Program 2,000.00
Training 20,000.00
Mentoring/accompaniment 10,000.00

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The project transforms gender roles or stereotypes in the medium term

The training offered in the app challenges traditional gender roles by promoting economic independence and female leadership. By providing tools and resources for women to develop professional and personal skills, it encourages greater participation of women in leadership and decision-making roles in various areas.

The exchange of time in the Time Bank also challenges gender roles by recognizing and valuing women's knowledge and skills (legal, financial advice, engineering, mechanics, coaching, etc.), which have historically been dominated by men.

The Muyu Social Currency contributes to the redistribution of economic power by allowing women to actively participate in their ventures through exchanges of products that benefit their economy, counteracting stereotypes that women are financially dependent.

The project empowers women in the medium term

The training and resources offered in the app increase women's confidence and self-esteem by providing them with the tools necessary to achieve economic independence.

Access to personal and economic development opportunities through the app empowers women to take control of their lives and make informed decisions about their future, eliminating gender violence.

The exchange of knowledge and skills in the Time Bank fosters a sense of community and solidarity among women, strengthening their support network and increasing their capacity to face challenges.

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The project manages to prevent violence against women in the medium term

By providing information and resources to prevent risk situations and gender violence, the app will raise awareness about this issue and help women identify and avoid abusive relationships. On the other hand, training in personal safety and promoting self-esteem and confidence helps women establish healthy boundaries and defend their rights in situations of violence.

Creating a caring and supportive community through the app offers women a safe place to share their experiences and seek help if needed, contributing to prevention and early intervention in cases of violence. Through education in entrepreneurship and financial management, empowerment and economic independence are generated and, therefore, greater respect for oneself and against abusive relationships.

<https://redmujereslideres.com/>

<https://www.youtube.com/@rmlecuador>

<https://www.facebook.com/RMLecuador>

<https://www.instagram.com/rmlecuador/?hl=es-la>

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