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Intercontinental network for the promotion of social solidarity economy
Réseau intercontinental de promotion de l'économie sociale solidaire
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RIPESS intervention in the session 'Shaping the New Essentials, Panel 2: Preparing for the future through the New Essentials', at the 2025 UCLG Retreat

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'The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) as a catalyst in the provision of innovative public services in just transitions and the care economy.'

As we approach 2030, the world continues to face a systemic crisis and the SDGs and just transitions are seriously threatened. At RIPESS, the Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of the Social and Solidarity Economy, we have been working for more than 25 years at an intercontinental level on emancipatory proposals that put people back at the centre of economic policies, based on the long legacy of initiatives by indigenous, migrant, black, peasant, feminist and working class populations who have created solidarity economies to survive and face the precariousness generated by a patriarchal system and by a capitalist economic model that eagerly seeks profitability and profit based on exploitation and, of course, the abandonment of the public sphere. of social protection and the provision of public services. Let me link this issue to just transitions and care economies from an intersectional perspective and taking youth as a construction of a political subject into account.

The global food crisis, the increase in inequalities and the triple planetary crisis of climate change, loss of biodiversity and pollution are stark reminders that maintaining the status quo is no longer viable. The implementation of complementary policies on just transitions towards agroecology and food sovereignty, as expressed in the report presented by the Secretary-General on the advancement of the SSE in the adoption of the second resolution 77/281 of the UN General Assembly, with existing UN instruments, such as the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), can provide a human rights framework from which the SSE can gain greater relevance. RIPESS has participated in the negotiations of the Food Security Committee's policy on inequalities, managing to have an entire paragraph dedicated to the SSE. This is the first time that a policy document from the FAO's Committee on World Food Security has mentioned the SSE as a solution to food insecurity and to ending inequalities. The SSE fosters local economies, reducing dependence on global supply chains. This promotes sustainable territorial development and strengthens the resilience of communities. In Cameroon, our member RESSCAM has recently shown how SSE structures through public-community partnerships are playing an essential role in the provision of basic services such as health, education, access to drinking water, sanitation and local markets, demonstrating that governments should adopt a greater reliance on local production from the SSE as an engine for growth and sustainable development. RESSCAM works hand in hand with REMCESS, the network of Cameroonian mayors for the SSE who actively work to promote the participation of SSE communities, agents and entities in local development plans. In this context, REMCESS advocates for a better provision of essential public services such as cooperative housing, social protection and access to water and electricity. Currently, REMCESS is collaborating with seven of its member municipalities on an innovative project aimed at strengthening the management of solar energy infrastructures. The project consists of delegating the maintenance and management of these infrastructures to local cooperatives through public-community partnerships. REMCESS has proposed contracts to the municipalities to establish solid relationships with the cooperatives according to the type of project in each municipality. All these initiatives are part of the



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framework of public-community partnerships between municipalities and cooperatives, favouring synergies that are beneficial for all parties involved. It is important to point out that this type of cooperative did not previously exist in these municipalities. It has therefore been necessary to structure these organisations to ensure their transition from the informal to the formal sector. REMCESS and RESSCAM have also set up, in collaboration with the municipalities, training and capacity-building programmes in the fields of renewable energy and cooperative management. These initiatives aim to make maintenance cooperatives fully operational, thus reducing not only the response times of technicians, who often come from large cities, but also the costs of interventions for municipalities. These actions contribute to the improvement of public services while promoting the autonomy of local communities, with a view to sustainable and inclusive development.

In terms of new essential aspects related to the responsibilities of local and regional governments in the field of care, we would like to bring up two approaches to consider today from the contributions of the social and solidarity economy: On the one hand, food policies linked to the concept and implementation of local food sovereignty policies through a holistic lens covering the following aspects:

- Protection of peasant seeds, peasant agriculture and the use of agricultural land (UNDROP; VGGT (Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security) and Community Land Trusts) to guarantee regional supply. Our challenge is to achieve greater integration of the SSE with UNDROP to strengthen just transitions. Habitat 3, for example, recognises community land trusts. In several cities they operate not only for food production but also for housing cooperatives.
- Legislation by local and regional governments on the elimination of chemical pesticides to protect the health of both people and the quality of water and food consumed. Many local governments have introduced legislation to ban the use of chemical pesticides, although national governments are still dragging their feet.
- Support and enable access to local, nutritious, healthy and freshly prepared agroecological food in schools, prisons and hospitals through favourable public procurement procedures. This also supports peasant agriculture. The link between health and nutrition is paramount. Introduce food social security systems similar to those that exist in many French, Swiss and Belgian cities. Citizens receive a card that is credited (€150/month) and that can be spent with conditions in farmers' cooperatives, Community Supported Agriculture programmes and the like. This is a strong emerging trend in social protection and the solidarity economy. Food social security is a promising response to the growing food insecurity in our societies, as well as to the question of providing a decent life for food producers. It is a novel and important aspect that can help build truly sustainable and local food systems. It is a card similar to a bank card to which a specific sum is credited monthly through a Food Social Security Fund administered collectively at the local level. The amount allocated was €150/month. The conditions for spending have been in accredited structures such as cooperative shops, weekly organic/agroecological food boxes from identified Community Supported Agriculture organisations or similar. In general terms, it is available to all, according to the principle of non-discrimination. The funds can be collected in various ways, generally as a tax applied to employers above a certain threshold, rather than a tax on employees. The funds are then redistributed to local authorities, through the logic of devolved powers.



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The European experiments have been an attempt to address several problems: the rapid increase in food insecurity and the growth of food banks distributing essentially industrial food; the health impacts of ultra-processed industrial food; and support for small-scale local food producers. RIPESS also participated in the general debate of the International Labour Conference on Decent Work and the Care Economy in June 2024, to which we brought our main demands on how to ensure that the SSE plays a crucial role in the development of care economies, both for users and providers of care services, particularly vulnerable groups, including informal economy workers, migrants and racialised communities, many of whom are women. The YOU(th) CARE project, developed by RIPESS EUROPE, is strengthening the active citizenship and engagement of the next generation of global carers by supporting young people in building a common strategy for a better future. Many SSE organisations prioritise the empowerment of women, offering them leadership opportunities and fair remuneration, such as ASSEFA's women's self-help groups in southern India promoting livelihoods, finance, social security and participation in decision-making bodies for women in the unorganised sectors. ASSEFA works in Tamil Nadu, is present in more than 10,000 villages and works with local governments, especially in the public procurement of its products. Its membership amounts to more than one million people.

Considering the approach taken in Spain to the provision of community care, a lot of resources would be required to implement it and, above all, the most important challenge is to raise awareness in the community so that they see care as something important that should be recognised. One challenge that needs to be considered is the regularisation of a large number of women and men who provide care from the shadows, that is to say without papers, but who are already providing care in some way and who, until now, have been prioritised in training programmes. These people, who are undocumented, are providing care without any guarantees, neither for themselves physically or emotionally or for the care they need, nor for the people and families they care for. The proposal being handled by the social platforms of the citizens' organisation for the right to care is the creation of a national healthcare system with the obligation of the state that all citizens have the right to access care when necessary. This requires a change in existing policy, in all existing regulations on the provision of care.

For REAS Euskadi, the provision of care is organised socially around four agents: institutions, the market, community networks and families. In order to find a balance between the forces between these actors, especially from an intersectional perspective, eight measures have been drawn up to move towards a public-community model of care based on the SSE. Ekosolfem is the group that works on the feminist proposal of REAS Euskadi. It has drawn up a document of measures and proposals to move towards a care model that puts life at the centre from a public-community perspective based on the cross-cutting concepts of: 1. Defamiliarising, that is to say that families are not obliged to provide this care and especially women in families; 2. Defeminising, 3. Publicise, linked to institutions in a cross-cutting manner, not only in terms of dependency but also in terms of other issues such as urban planning, commerce, culture, 4. Eradicate the profit motive, eliminate profit from the provision of care, which invites us to put equality, equity, dignified work and decent employment, agroecology, the distribution of wealth and commitment to the environment at the centre. The measures include, among others: strengthening the public nature of care services, reformulating the role of the public administration as a contractor when it outsources services; raising awareness to politicise care, that is to say, to make it a public issue; prioritising the SSE, through responsible public procurement but also through supporting and strengthening the entities and public policies that favour this type of entity.



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Finally, the SSE contributes to addressing almost all the cross-cutting issues identified in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development (FfD), and should therefore be recognised in the documents of the Global Financing Framework for the next FfD agenda in 2025. We recommend that the actions in the Private Enterprise and National and International Finance section support the development of social and solidarity financing mechanisms, such as ethical banking, financial cooperatives, community development banks, community-based savings plans, as alternatives to conventional private financing. We also recommend that in International Development Cooperation actions, Multilateral Development Banks and other international development finance institutions, in collaboration with the United Nations Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy, apply operative paragraph 3 of United Nations Resolution A/RES/77/281 on their role in financing the SSE.

Despite its potential, the SSE faces numerous challenges, such as limited access to finance, political barriers and a lack of recognition. To overcome these obstacles, we need Political support: governments must create enabling environments that recognise and support the SSE, such as favourable tax policies and access to public procurement. Capacity building: Providing training and resources can improve the skills of SSE actors, helping them to expand their impact and sustainability. Collaboration is key. By creating networks between SSE actors, governments and civil society, we can share resources, knowledge and best practices. These partnerships can amplify the impact of SSE initiatives and foster a more integrated approach to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

