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# Cooperatives and the Sustainable Development Goals

A contribution to the post-2015  
development debate



**Cooperatives and the Sustainable  
Development Goals:  
A contribution to the post-2015  
development debate**

*International Labour Organization  
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**Cooperatives and the Sustainable  
Development Goals:  
A contribution to the post-2015  
development debate**

by

Fredrick O. Wanyama

A Background Paper to highlight the role of cooperatives  
in the realization of the illustrative Sustainable Development  
Goals as defined by the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons  
on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

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As we approach the Millennium Development Goals target date of 2015, regional, national and online thematic consultations have been taking place to frame the post-2015 global development agenda. A consensus on goals, targets and indicators for sustainable development will have to be reached before the end of 2015. The big questions revolve around the ways the international community will respond to the pressing issues of economic development, environmental protection and social equity in a sustainable manner.

Among the preliminary findings of these consultations, is that job creation and concerns about the quality of jobs – especially in the informal economy - are top priorities in most countries, and will remain a major challenge well beyond 2015.<sup>1</sup> Jobs provide livelihoods, income and security for populations, and in addition to creating new jobs, good quality jobs are a prerequisite for dignity for all. The ILO Decent Work Agenda of job creation, rights at work, social protection and social dialogue has been recognized as among the guiding principles at the debate. Achieving sustainable development must include the world of work. As values-based organizations, cooperative enterprises provide livelihoods for millions of people around the world, and are by nature sustainable and participatory form of business. They can be found in all sectors of the economy, and place emphasis on job security and improved working conditions, pay competitive wages, promote additional income through profit-sharing and distribution of dividends, and support community facilities and services such as health clinics and schools. In addition, cooperatives foster democratic knowledge and practices and social inclusion, making them well-placed to support the achievement of sustainable development. Cooperatives have also shown resilience in face of the economic crises.

An important dimension of the contribution of cooperative enterprises to sustainable development has been acknowledged in the global consultations on growth and employment: The role of cooperatives in expanding social

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<sup>1</sup> ILO: *Jobs and livelihoods in the post-2015 development agenda: Meaningful ways to set targets and monitor progress*, Concept Note No. 2 (2013).

protection to the informal sector. Promoting cooperatives, it was noted, could empower farmers to negotiate for better agricultural inputs and produce prices.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, cooperatives have all along delivered towards sustainable development, and this contribution should be further emphasised and acknowledged.

The present publication is part of a wider initiative of the ILO to ensure that the voices of the cooperative movement are heard in the discussions around the post-2015 development agenda. In close collaboration with partners such as ICA, UNRISD and others, this work has already created increased interest in incorporating these voices in the agenda. This initiative is in line with ICA's Blueprint for Cooperative Decade, which seeks to place the cooperative model as the acknowledged leader in economic, social and environmental sustainability by 2020. The publication of this timely and relevant study further demonstrates the role of cooperatives in sustainable development, and is intended to provide evidence to support increased inclusion of the cooperative business model in the debate.

ILO and ICA have collaborated in sustainable cooperative development for many decades, and this publication is a logical continuation of this work. The main messages of the publication call for: Increased and more visible participation and engagement of the cooperative movement in the discussions around the post-2015 development agenda for sustainable development; and further involvement and acknowledgement of the cooperative model by the international community in the processes leading on to sustainable development goals. Cooperatives have much more to offer in ensuring inclusive and democratic sustainable development beyond 2015, and this publication and the wider initiative are an important step towards this objective. Cooperatives can not only contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, but offer a potential alternative model of social enterprise, that inherently addresses the “triple bottom line” of social, economic and environmental sustainability.



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<sup>2</sup> UNDG: *Growth and Employment in the Post – 2015 Agenda, Messages from a global consultations* (undated) [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---nylo/documents/publication/wcms\\_221951.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---nylo/documents/publication/wcms_221951.pdf) [accessed 27 March 2014].

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## Abbreviations

DGRV	Deutscher Genossenschafts- und Raiffeisenverband e. V. (German Cooperative and Raiffeisen Confederation)
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HLP	High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda
ICA	International Co-operative Alliance
ILO	International Labour Organization
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
REB	Rural Electrification Board (Bangladesh)
SACCOs	Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEWA	Self-Employed Women's Association (India)
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
VANLA	Vereniging Agrarisch Natuur en Landschapsbeheer Achtkarspelen (the Netherlands)
VEL	Vereniging Eastermar's Lansdouwe (the Netherlands)

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This report also builds on an analysis of the inputs of close to 300 respondents from the cooperative movement to an online survey and related interviews, as well as the feedback from participants at the sessions where the report was presented.

# 1. Introduction

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have successfully drawn the world's attention to the significance of ending extreme poverty and exclusion. But, time is running out on meeting all the targets by the end of 2015.

To maintain the momentum generated by the MDGs on poverty reduction and sustainable development, a new initiative to set the development agenda for the post-2015 period was launched at the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012. World leaders at the Conference resolved to end extreme poverty and hunger as a matter of urgency by putting poverty in the broader context of sustainable development. It is in this regard that the final resolution of the Conference called for new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that would expand on the gains of the MDGs, and converge with the post-2015 development agenda (UNGA, 2012).

The Rio+20 Conference also launched an intergovernmental Open Working Group to make recommendations to the UN General Assembly on the design of SDGs. This has seen the discussion of SDGs gain traction, marking a clear distinction from the process that led up to the adoption of MDGs that was rather hasty and lacked thorough debate and analysis (Brito, 2012).

The discussion on the SDGs is also gaining ground because of the growing urgency to ensure the sustainability of the gains made in the development of the entire world, especially in the developing countries. The Brundtland Report defined sustainable development as the process of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987). It has since been generally accepted that sustainable development involves a combination of economic development, environmental sustainability and social inclusion.

However, the specific focus and objectives of these three elements differ globally, between and within societies. It is partly for this reason that there has been no consensus regarding the tradeoffs and synergies across the economic, environmental and social objectives that culminate in the sustainable use of resources (Sachs, 2012). Consequently, SDGs are being discussed and debated

with a view to reaching a potential consensus before they are formally adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) before the end of 2015.

Whereas the detailed content of the SDGs is being discussed and debated by a wide range of stakeholders, including international organizations, states and civil society organizations, the voices of the cooperative movement are not being heard clearly. Consequently, their involvement in the process of developing SDGs has yet to reach its full potential. This is in spite of the fact that the Rio+20 Conference recognized the potential role of cooperatives in the achievement of social inclusion and poverty reduction (UNGA, 2012).

The invisibility of cooperatives is most probably due to a lack of understanding of the actual and potential contribution cooperatives can make to sustainable development, partly due to the disparate nature of the literature on this subject.

The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to highlight the contribution of cooperatives to sustainable development with a view to stimulating discussion on the role of cooperatives in the design and implementation of SDGs.

The paper is based on the available secondary data, supplemented by primary data from an online questionnaire survey of close to 300 cooperative actors from around the world.<sup>1</sup> In-depth interviews were held with leaders of the apex cooperative organizations in East Africa, Europe, Asia and the Americas.

The starting point for this discussion is to clarify what cooperatives are and locate their role in sustainable development and in the post-2015 development agenda before delving into their potential contribution to SDGs.

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<sup>1</sup> The survey was organized in the last quarter of 2013 by the Cooperatives Unit of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to support the analysis of the contributions and potential of the cooperative movement to achieve sustainable development. Almost all of the respondents affiliated themselves with the cooperative movement, representing primary cooperatives, international NGOs, cooperative federations and cooperative support institutions, among others.

## 2. Cooperatives and the post-2015 development debate

### 2.1. UNDERSTANDING COOPERATIVES

#### 2.1.1 *Cooperative Principles*

There is an emerging consensus that cooperatives are autonomous associations of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprises (ICA, 1995; ILO, 2002). As a business model, cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. The members of these associations believe in the ethical ideals of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

These values and ethical ideals have led to the formulation and revision of the principles upon which cooperatives operate. The last revision of the principles was made in 1995 during the Centenary celebrations of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) when the ICA adopted the seven universal principles of cooperatives listed in Box 1.

#### **Box 1: Cooperative principles**

1. Voluntary and open membership
2. Democratic member control
3. Member economic participation
4. Autonomy and independence
5. Education, training and information
6. Cooperation among cooperatives
7. Concern for community

Source: <http://ica.coop/en/what-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles>

The first principle – **voluntary and open membership** – implies that cooperatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination. However, there are membership obligations which all members must abide by.

The principle of **democratic member control** affirms that cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (“one member, one vote”). Cooperatives at higher levels are also organized democratically.

Members do not only participate in the cooperative’s governance, but also contribute to economic activities as well; this hence refers to the principle of **member economic participation**. Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative; part of which is the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate part or all surpluses for developing their cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities as approved by the membership.

The fourth principle is **autonomy and independence**. In line with the principle of voluntary and open membership, cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into any agreement with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on their own terms that ensures their members maintain autonomy, independence and democratic control.

Education and training are important for organizational effectiveness and this is recognized by the fifth principle: **education, training and information**. Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees to effectively contribute to the development of the organization and the wider society. In respect of the latter, cooperatives inform the general public about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

The sixth principle is **cooperation among cooperatives**. Cooperatives endeavour to support each other and enhance service provision to members. To this end, cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures that build their solidarity.

Finally, the seventh principle is on **concern for community**. Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities, be it social, labour and environment related, through policies, projects and practices that are approved by their members. These principles define the identity of cooperatives around the world (ICA, 2013b).

### **2.1.2 Classification of Cooperatives**

Though cooperatives are guided by these principles, there has been debate and discussion on how these organizations can be classified. It is generally accepted that cooperatives can be distinguished or classified in two ways: either by their ownership structure or by function of the goods and services they provide. On the basis of the ownership structure, cooperatives have been classified into two basic types: worker-owned and client-owned cooperatives (Schwettmann, 2012).

**Worker-owned cooperatives** are business associations that are owned and democratically governed by their employees. The cooperative members own the business, work in it, govern it and manage it. The business is owned by some or all of the workers. Management structures of worker cooperatives vary greatly depending on the desires of members. Some of them use a traditional management hierarchy, while others opt for flatter management structures – often called collectives – that allow employees to be more directly involved in management decision-making. Others use a team-based structure that employs elements of both traditional and open management systems. As employers, worker cooperatives pay their employees (who may also be members) a wage or salary in return for the work rendered. Pay structures, however, also vary widely. Some cooperatives use a traditional position-based pay scale while others pay strictly on seniority. At the other end of the spectrum are worker cooperatives that pay all workers the same wage. Like other cooperatives, worker cooperatives return profits to their worker-owners in the form of annual patronage dividends based on hours worked, salary and/or seniority.

**Client-owned cooperatives** are formed and owned by individuals or groups that seek goods and services from the business that they have established. It is in this type of cooperative that the second basis for classifying cooperatives mentioned above is quite apparent. Since members of client-owned cooperatives seek specific goods and services, the nature of these goods and services or functions has led to the distinction of two basic types of client-owned cooperatives: those oriented towards consumption and those oriented towards production. Consequently, client-owned cooperatives consist of consumer and producer cooperatives.

**Consumer cooperatives** are those owned and governed by individuals who seek to purchase goods and services from the cooperative that may not be available from other businesses or are offered by other businesses at higher prices.

By organizing a cooperative, consumers are able to achieve better prices and quality not available from for-profit businesses.

Consumers can create a cooperative to provide virtually anything that they want to get access to and buy. Their purchases may include groceries, electricity or telephone service, housing, health care or - under the label of credit unions - financial services. Thus, consumer cooperatives are organized to deliver goods and services to their members. Like other cooperatives, they often distribute patronage refunds, in which profits are returned to members based on how much they purchased from the cooperative. It is, however, important to note that some consumer cooperatives do not track purchases well enough to offer patronage refunds or donate the annual surplus to community organizations chosen by the members or their elected leaders.

**Producer cooperatives** are owned and governed by people engaged in the production of goods and services in separate enterprises as a means of supporting their productivity. The cooperative members are independent producers, but they own a business that may for instance buy and sell farm inputs and equipments; advertise and market produce; or operate storage, transport and processing facilities for their produce.

This form of cooperative is most common in agriculture, where farmers often must band together to succeed in the markets, but can be also found in fishing, forestry or crafts production, for example. In the absence of cooperatives, farmers could be trapped in a situation where processors and middlemen dictate the prices paid for produce. For instance in dairy farming, where the product is too perishable to take to another processor, often miles way, farmers may be forced to sell their milk at the price determined by the nearby processor or middlemen. To avoid this, dairy farmers could form a producer cooperative for producing, processing and marketing their milk to improve returns on sales.

Consumer and producer cooperatives tend to be further classified by the sector of their core business. Accordingly, there are housing, agricultural marketing, savings and credit, insurance, handicraft, health and social care cooperatives, among others. Some of these categories are further subdivided. For instance, agricultural marketing cooperatives may consist of cocoa, coffee, cotton, pyrethrum, sugarcane, tea and dairy cooperatives, to name just a few examples. Cooperatives are, therefore, spread in many sectors of the world economy to offer various goods and services to producers and consumers.

Most types of cooperative tend to be vertically organized in multi-level structures called 'federations' or second-level 'cooperative unions'. In some cases, these secondary structures have both individual farmers and other primary cooperatives as their members. These vertical structures help cooperatives

balance local control and the economies of scale that are needed to not only be competitive, but also to be productive in their activities.

## 2.2 COOPERATIVES AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Millennium Summit of the United Nations that met in New York in September 2000, saw 189 states commit themselves to achieving the eight Millennium Development Goals listed in Box 2 over a period of fifteen years. As the world moves towards the deadline for realizing these goals, the available evidence shows a mixture of results on each of the goals in different regions. On the positive side, there is evidence that the MDGs have established the momentum for development in developing countries. They have successfully generated widespread public concern regarding poverty, hunger, disease, unmet schooling, gender inequality and environmental degradation. By packaging these priorities into an easily understandable set of eight goals, and by establishing measurable and time-bound objectives, the MDGs have become a type of global report card for the fight against poverty. Developing countries have subsequently made substantial progress towards achievement of the MDGs, although the progress is highly variable across goals, countries and regions (Sachs, 2012).

On average, low-income countries have seen improvements in core target indicators of three MDGs: extreme poverty and hunger, HIV/AIDS and access to safe drinking water (part of the goal 7) (CGD, 2013). This is indicated by:

### Box 2: The Millennium Development Goals

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

Source: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

- The proportion of people living on less than US\$ 1.25 a day reduced by more than half,
- More children than ever before attending primary school,
- The drop in mortality rate for children under five by 41 per cent,
- The decline in maternal mortality rate by 47 per cent,
- The incidences of starvation and malnutrition reduced in most parts of the world,
- The incidences of HIV/AIDS reduced and the important gains achieved in making antiretroviral drugs accessible to those infected,
- Significant strides made in the fight against malaria and tuberculosis, and
- The achievement of the target of halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water (United Nations, 2013).

Nevertheless, the MDGs have also been criticized of having significant shortcomings. For instance, the trading gap between the developed and developing countries has persisted; environmental sustainability is under severe threat, more so than it was in 1990 following the increasing emission of carbon dioxide and overexploitation of natural resources; and gender-based inequalities in decision-making and power persist in most parts of the world (United Nations, 2013).

With little emphasis on the sustainability of development initiatives, it has also been observed that there has been little commitment of the global North to the responsibilities set out in goal eight while the responsibilities of the global South, as outlined in goals one to seven, have been excessive, resulting in an imbalance between the North and the South in responsibilities for ensuring realization of MDGs.

Furthermore, it has been argued that some of the positive indications of MDGs could be a result of reliance on national averages that tend to obscure inequalities within countries; and that global targets arrived at through a non-consultative process were not only brought down to the national level, but were also interpreted to be the national targets.

Indeed, the manner in which MDGs were agreed upon has been criticized and blamed for the lack of enthusiasm by some actors to contribute towards their achievement. The MDGs were adopted by acclamation by a resolution of the UN called the 'United Nations Millennium Declaration'. This procedural innovation, called 'consensus', stands in stark contrast to UN tradition, which

requires texts of this sort to be carefully prepared and discussed at great length in committees. In the case of the MDGs, the discussions prior to the said resolution were neither inclusive nor comprehensive. The preparatory meetings of the earlier cycle of summits, organized in the 1990s to generate discussions on the goals, tried to organize assemblies of civil society representatives parallel to the official conferences that were only attended by state representatives. However, in reality, it was the charitable non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which receive financial support from large foundations and states that found space at these discussions. This led to a situation where many popular organizations struggling for social and democratic progress were excluded (Amin, 2010).

Despite being neither involved in the design of MDGs nor in the delivery mechanisms for realizing them, cooperatives have contributed to the realization of the positive outcomes of MDGs. This is partly because these goals are consistent with the fundamental values associated with cooperatives: freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility (Birchall, 2004). Thus, the convergence of values allowed cooperatives to make important contributions to the MDGs.

### **Poverty alleviation and elimination of hunger**

The natural disposition of cooperatives to create income-generating opportunities for their members has helped to raise a significant number of people out of poverty. Cooperatives provide jobs and livelihoods for millions of people around the world, and, together with small and medium-sized enterprises, are the most significant source of new employment (ILC, 2007). Additionally, cooperatives have contributed to food security by supporting members to diversify the production and marketing of food (Sizya, 2001; Wanyama, Develtere, and Pollet, 2008; Khurana, 2010; IFAD, 2012).

### **Access to primary education**

Cooperatives improve access to primary education by raising incomes, allowing people to afford school fees and other requirements (Evans, 2002; Develtere, Pollet and Wanyama, 2008), and also by improving school infrastructure (Meskela, 2012).

### **Improvements in maternal health & combatting of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases**

Health cooperatives in Canada, USA, Japan, Nepal and Sri Lanka, among others, have contributed to maternal and child health care services as a routine, while cooperatives in many African and Asian countries have played a significant role in providing HIV/AIDS awareness services and facilitated access to health care by people living with the virus (WOCCU, 2010; Lo lacono and Allen, 2011; Keregero and Allen, 2011).

### **Environmental sustainability**

Forestry and environmental cooperatives have helped reduce the depletion of natural resources by providing fora for local people to get involved in finding solutions to environmental challenges and changes and defining their property and user rights, managing natural resources, and diversifying their economic activities to embrace green economic ventures such as renewable energy (ILO 2013c, Wiskerke et al, 2003; Renting & Van Der Ploeg, 2001).

### **Enhance global partnership for development**

With respect to facilitating a fair trading environment between the North and the South, cooperatives have supported the creation of an alternative marketing structure in the North for products from the South through fair trade initiatives, which are helping producers in developing countries obtain improved market access and better trading conditions in the developed countries' markets. Focusing on exports from developing countries, the fair trade marketing structure has arguably contributed to better prices; decent working conditions; ethical production, marketing and consumption; and fairer terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world (Develtere and Pollet, 2005; Global Exchange, 2011, 2013).

These examples clearly indicate that cooperatives have significantly contributed towards the realization of the MDGs despite not being involved in the process and being largely invisible in the targets, indicators, and implementation mechanisms.

The exclusion of cooperatives from the MDG process would seem to have been a missed opportunity to make use of the most appropriate institutional framework for poverty reduction. This is particularly the case because the cooperative business approach is not only inclined towards combating poverty, but is also suitable for the general development of society.

Consequently, the ongoing debate on the post-2015 development agenda must seek to harness the cooperative advantage in the formulation and implementation of sustainable development goals if it is to have the full impact it desires. What role have cooperative played in this process until now?

## **2.3 COOPERATIVES IN THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

### ***2.3.1 The Transition from MDGs to the post-2015 Development Agenda***

Though the MDGs have arguably succeeded in mobilizing the world to face the challenges of eradicating poverty, the timeframe for these goals ends at the end of 2015. The widespread recognition among national and international actors that the MDGs have significantly contributed to the progress in reducing

poverty around the world has led to the resolution that a globally agreed agenda to fight poverty should continue beyond 2015. To this end, a number of initiatives have been set in motion to formulate the post-2015 development agenda.

The initial effort was the 2010 High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations on MDGs. This requested that the Secretary-General initiates thinking on a post-2015 development agenda and include recommendations in his annual report for the efforts to accelerate MDG progress (UNGA, 2010).

The UN Secretary-General subsequently established the UN System Task Team on the Post 2015 UN Development Agenda that was chaired by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme and brought together the efforts of more than 60 UN agencies and international organizations. In its first report to the Secretary-General in May 2012, *Realizing the Future We Want for All*, the Task Team outlined a vision for the post-2015 development agenda and suggested the four key dimensions of: inclusive social development, environmental sustainability, inclusive economic development, and peace and security (UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, 2012).

Another initiative to set the post-2105 development agenda was launched at the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012. World leaders at the Conference resolved to end extreme poverty and hunger by putting the fight against poverty in the broader context of sustainable development. The Conference's final resolution called for new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that would expand on the gains of the MDGs. The Rio+20 Conference also launched an intergovernmental Open Working Group (OWG) to act as the main forum for debate and make recommendations to the UN General Assembly on the design of SDGs (UNGA, 2012).

As part of the process for developing an acceptable new global development agenda, Expert Groups and member states agreed that the process of developing the post-2015 development agenda must foster a broad-based, open and inclusive dialogue with all relevant stakeholders.

Consequently, dialogue was initiated through the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) on the possible features of a renewed global partnership for development in the post-2015 setting, and the characteristics of a monitoring and accountability framework. Representatives from governments, UN and other multilateral organizations, civil society, philanthropic organizations, academia and the private sector were, and continue to be, engaged in these conversations, which will also examine the broader implications – for development cooperation – of a post-2015 development agenda (ECOSOC, 2013).

To further stimulate international debate on how the global development agenda should look like after 2015, the UN launched national consultations in more than 70 countries. In addition, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) organized a set of eleven thematic consultations on: conflict and fragility; education; environmental sustainability; governance; growth and employment; health; hunger, food and nutrition security; inequalities; population dynamics; energy; and water. A report with the preliminary findings from the national and thematic consultations was issued in March 2013.

In July 2012, the Secretary-General launched his High-level Panel of Eminent Persons (HLP) to provide guidance and recommendations on the post-2015 development agenda. The Panel, consisting of representatives of governments, the private sector, academia, civil society and youth, published its report in May 2013, proposing five transformational shifts in development as guiding principles for the post-2015 development agenda:

1. No one should be left behind in moving from reducing poverty to ending it. Based on the concept of universal equality, the guideline here is that no person should be denied basic economic opportunities and fundamental human rights, regardless of age, gender, race, nationality or disability.
2. Sustainable development should be at the core by shifting away from destructive patterns of economic development towards sustainable patterns of production and consumption to stop climate change.
3. Economies need to transform to support job creation and inclusive growth by ensuring that growth benefits the societies and people who need it most, while ending the jobs crisis and harnessing the energy of youth.
4. To build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all; recognizing that peace and good governance are essential for human well-being and sustainable development.
5. Moving towards building a new broad global partnership that is able to deliver the post-2015 agenda and harness the finance needed to invest in change (HLP, 2013). This is essentially an appeal for coherent multi-lateral decision-making and strict enforcement of rules to promote the other four shifts. The relevant policy areas include fair trade, environmental protection, security and other global challenges (Balk, 2013).

To facilitate the successful implementation of these programmatic principles, the Panel proposed a list of 12 illustrative Sustainable Development Goals (see Box 3). Fifty-four targets – four or five for each goal – provide a roadmap for translating the goals into concrete, tangible and measurable action.

**Box 3: The Illustrative Sustainable Development Goals, as proposed by the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

1. End poverty
2. Empower girls and women and achieve gender equality
3. Provide quality education and lifelong learning
4. Ensure healthy lives
5. Ensure food security and good nutrition
6. Achieve universal access to water and sanitation
7. Secure sustainable energy
8. Create jobs, sustainable livelihoods and equitable growth
9. Manage natural resource assets sustainably
10. Ensure good governance and effective institutions
11. Ensure stable and peaceful societies
12. Create a global enabling environment and catalyze long-term finance

Source: HLP, 2013

The Panel's report received mixed reactions. While some civil society groups generally welcomed its scope and the ambition to eradicate absolute poverty, others criticized the decision not to include an explicit goal to reduce income inequality, together with broader-based growth to ensure a fairer distribution of the benefits of globalization. Others have criticized the lack of explicit goals on climate change, planetary boundaries or on population aging. The green lobby has, however, praised the report's emphasis on greater integration of development and sustainability. The reaction of UN member states is important, but most governments were yet to make a public response at the end of 2013 (Evans and Steven, 2013).

This mixed reaction has served to shift the post-2015 agenda into a next phase that entails debating contentious issues arising from the SDGs, which will culminate in the Open Working Group submitting its own report to the UN General Assembly in September 2014.

While the Panel has made a strong start in setting out a possible post-2015 agenda, there remain a number of substantive issues to be debated before any agreement is reached (Evans and Steven, 2013). This debate is increasingly

generating some convergence on the parameters of sustainable development in the post-2015 period. For instance, in a world that is already suffering from the vagaries of climate change and other environmental ills, there is widespread agreement that worldwide environmental objectives need a higher profile alongside the poverty-reduction objectives if sustainable development is to be realized (Sachs, 2012). It is in this regard that the sustainability of development initiatives has become the prime focus of the post-2015 development agenda. The realization of sustainable development depends largely on a framework that binds together and ensures greater balance between economic progress, social equity, a healthy environment and democratic governance (Independent Research Forum, 2013). This is what has also been referred to as the triple bottom line plus good governance (Sachs, 2012).

Economic progress is a function of a vibrant economy that provides the basis for people's livelihoods and the goods and services that are necessary for development. However, this progress has to be structured in ways that do not undermine progress on poverty reduction, social equity or environmental conservation. With regard to social equity, it can be realized by securing the basic material needs and human rights of everybody on the planet (Independent Research Forum, 2013). This requires a commitment to eliminate all extreme deprivation – hunger, extreme income poverty and avoidable diseases and death. The outcome is that some places may remain poor, but no place should be so destitute that it cannot meet the basic needs of its people (Sachs, 2012). The realization of social equity is significant for economic progress because income inequality slows growth, destabilizes the economy and retards poverty reduction.

Besides linking economic progress to social equity, environmental conservation is dependent on healthy and productive natural systems. The world's economic activities are dependent on ecosystem goods and services and common property resources help the poor to survive and thrive in the face of social and economic inequities. Consequently, achieving sustained prosperity for all requires development pathways that respect ecological limits and restore ecosystem health while optimizing the contribution of the environment to economic progress and social equity (Independent Research Forum, 2013).

Ultimately, a vibrant economy, universal human well-being and a healthy environment need to be regulated by a form of governance that provide poorer people with the capabilities to choose and enact their own pathways to sustainable development (STEPS, 2012). This implies enhanced linkage between global science and local participation in decision-making and implementation. To this end, equitable participatory processes, transparency and accountability are essential to build the necessary cooperation among communities, governments, businesses and other stakeholders (Independent Research Forum, 2013).

Thus, good governance complements the triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental objectives in the realization of sustainable development. This forms the gist of the proposed SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda.

### ***2.3.2 Cooperatives in the Debate on the post-2015 Development Agenda***

In total, about one billion people are involved in cooperatives in some way, either as members/ customers, as employees/participants, or as or both. Cooperatives employ at least 100 million people worldwide. It has been estimated that the livelihoods of nearly half the world's population are secured by cooperative enterprises. The world's 300 largest cooperative enterprises have collective revenues of US\$ 2 trillion, which are comparable to the GDP of the world's ninth largest economy - Italy (ICA, 2013c).

As value-based and principle driven organizations, cooperative enterprises are by nature a sustainable and participatory form of business. They place emphasis on job security and improved working conditions, pay competitive wages, promote additional income through profit-sharing and distribution of dividends, and support community facilities and services such as health clinics and schools. Cooperatives foster democratic knowledge and practices and social inclusion, making them well-placed to support the achievement of sustainable development. Cooperatives have also shown resilience in the face of the economic crises.

Hence, cooperatives are well-placed to contribute to the proposed triple bottom line plus governance agenda; not least because they are enterprises that endeavor to meet the economic progress of their members while satisfying their socio-cultural interests and protect the environment. This has been partly illustrated through their positive contribution to sustainable development. They offer an alternative model for enterprise, with contributions to sustainable development well beyond job creation. Since cooperatives' share in GDP and total enterprises is currently relatively small in most countries, their promotion and expansion could be an important instrument for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The governance modalities for linking the household to the global level through equitable participatory processes, transparency and accountability are well-embedded in cooperative principles. The cooperative model, therefore, seems to be one of the means through which the envisaged sustainable development goals may be realized in the post-2015 period.

It is important to emphasize that cooperatives are present in all sectors and contexts of the economy. This includes the natural resource-based sectors like agriculture, fisheries and forestry where there are environmental issues revolving around the need to implement sustainable practices in the use of resources. Indeed, certain cooperatives have been created in reaction to acute ecological

crises. Examples include cooperative pastures set up in the 1930s to manage land damaged by drought and poor farming practices on the Canadian prairies, and textile cooperatives initiated to rebuild economies and communities shattered by war in rural Guatemala.

Cooperatives are also frequently present in sectors with low rates of return on capital largely due to their drive to provide a service. Other cooperatives have been formed in places where conventional firms stay away due to high risks and low returns, particularly in remote rural areas. Cooperatives also exist to foster cultural, social, and technological change that is very significant for the realization of sustainable development (Gertler, 2001).

Based on their values and principles, cooperatives routinely integrate multiple economic, social and environmental objectives in their activities. They are practical vehicles for cooperation and collective action, thereby building and reinforcing democracy and a sense of community. Given their community ties and lower level of interest in short-term profits, cooperatives have the capacity to embrace and act on long-term planning horizons. In this regard they help to stabilize regional economies and provide an enabling environment for further investment. Cooperatives reduce inequalities and promote equitable sharing of the costs and benefits of development by empowering marginalized and vulnerable groups. Beyond the local community, cooperatives serve as facilitating partners in alliances involving local, national and international, and public and private sector organizations. With organizational capacity for training, education and communication, cooperatives are part of a global movement for sustainable development. It is for these reasons that cooperatives should find space in the post-2015 development agenda.

However, the extent to which the voice of cooperative movement is being heard in the on-going debates and consultations on the post-2015 development agenda is unclear. The results of an online survey of the ILO to the cooperative movement showed that almost more than half of the respondents have been involved in the process at the national, regional or thematic consultations, while a substantial number had not participated in these.

The most dominant reasons for not participating in the process included not being invited to the consultations; not knowing about the consultation process; lack of expertise in the thematic focus of the consultations; the consultations being outside the focus area of the organization; and not being aware of the consultations altogether. These reasons demonstrate a lack of knowledge on the post-2015 process, and highlight the need to sensitize cooperative movement about the agenda and bring cooperatives and their partners and affiliates into the upcoming SDG dialogues at different levels (national, regional and international). Furthermore, the respondents in the in-depth interviews informed

that cooperatives tend to be more concerned with local issues than national and international issues.

Despite concerns over the participation of cooperatives and cooperative movement in the debate, the survey respondents were emphatic that the proposed SDGs were relevant to their interests and that most of the proposed goals were addressing issues that they were already helping to resolve. To shine further light on this argument, let us illustrate the actual contribution of cooperatives to the proposed Sustainable Development Goals.

## 3. Cooperatives and the proposed Sustainable Development Goals

Cooperatives are highly relevant and important in the realization of the proposed sustainable development goals. This chapter highlights the actual contribution of cooperatives to the twelve SDGs proposed by the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons in the Post-2015 Development Agenda in their report of 2013. Though the specific goals, targets and indicators will not be agreed upon until September 2015 as part of the ongoing process, these twelve proposed goals reflect the range of themes that will likely be covered by the SDGs.

Though the Rio 20+ Conference recognized the actual and potential role of cooperatives in achieving sustainable development, reducing poverty and creating employment there has been limited efforts to make this a reality. The HLP report and on-going discussions on the SDGs have not underlined cooperatives, nor has the cooperative movement been particularly active in the consultation process for adopting the goals. Consequently, there is little understanding of the activities of cooperatives that have a direct bearing on the design and realization of the proposed SDGs listed in Box 3 above.

If harnessed, the experience and capacity of cooperatives could provide a head start in the realization of sustainable development as envisioned in the goals, given cooperative strength of an estimated more than one billion members from around the world.

What follows is an illustration of the contribution of cooperatives could make to the proposed SDGs.

### 3.1 POVERTY REDUCTION

With almost half the world's population living below their national poverty lines, poverty alleviation has become the biggest challenge to human society. In response, the global campaign against poverty has been going on for decades, with various development actors suggesting the use of different instruments to alleviate poverty.

One proposed solution is participatory development, which helps people help themselves and become active agents in improving their own lives. Participatory development has been justified by the idea that the poor can only stay trapped in the vicious circle of poverty if left on their own. The poor need to get organized to work together to gain from the collective strength that they do not have individually.

But what types of organization are best at doing this? There are several types, including the public sector, private for-profit sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and cooperatives, among others (Birchall and Simmons, 2009). However, there is a widely held consensus among many actors, including the United Nations (UN), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), that the cooperative enterprise is the type of organization that is most suited to addressing dimensions of reducing poverty and exclusion (Birchall, 2004; 2003; ILO/ICA, 2003).

Why cooperatives? The broad argument is that cooperatives have the advantages of identifying economic opportunities for the poor; empowering the disadvantaged to defend their interests and to take part in decision-making concerning them; and providing security to the poor by allowing them to convert individual risks into collective risks. It is in this regard that different types of cooperatives mediate the access of their members to assets that they utilize to earn a living.

For instance, savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs) facilitate their members' access to financial capital, while agricultural cooperatives help farmers access the inputs required to grow crops and keep livestock, and help them process and market their produce. Similarly, consumer cooperatives make it possible for their members and the society at large to get access to household supplies like food, clothing, and other products (Birchall, 2004). Such services ultimately help members to improve their living conditions, thereby helping to pull some of them out of poverty.

Here are some further examples that illustrate the contribution of cooperatives to poverty reduction around the world. Many of these highlight how cooperatives effectively help raise their members' incomes.

- In Tanzania, a significant proportion of farmers and their households access the market to sell their produce to earn an income through their cooperatives. Improved cooperative marketing of agricultural produce like milk and coffee has afforded cooperative members the money to pay fees for the education of their children (Sizya, 2001).

- In Egypt, about four million farmers derive their income from selling agricultural produce by virtue of being members of agricultural marketing cooperatives (Aal, 2008).
- In Ethiopia, about 900,000 people are estimated to generate most of their income through agricultural cooperatives. Even more significant for income-generation is that these cooperatives not only create marketing opportunities for their members, but also try to increase their income margins by negotiating for better prices for their produce, as is the case with grain producers' cooperatives (Lemma, 2008).
- Coffee cooperatives in Ethiopia have been able to penetrate higher-value alternative fair trade markets of Europe and USA (Tesfaye, 2005).

Besides agricultural cooperatives, SACCOs are increasingly becoming a major source of the productive resources that are invested by members to create employment opportunities and increase household income. This is possible due to the growing ability of these cooperatives to mobilize substantial savings from which members can borrow.

In Kenya, the main type of back office loan offered by most SACCOs is for paying school fees, which has afforded many members to educate their children. Development loans offered by most SACCOs have been used to buy land; build houses; invest in businesses and farming; buy household furniture and meet other family obligations (Wanyama et al, 2008). It is a similar story in Ghana, where a study of the University of Ghana Cooperative Credit Union indicates that members frequently obtain loans to support informal businesses that supplement their wage income. These informal businesses are also known to offer part-time employment to housewives and domestic assistants in the University Staff Village. Indeed an examination of the uses to which loans and withdrawals by members of the cooperative are put listed business as the leading of the nine substantive uses to which members direct their funds (Tsekpo, 2008).

In Rwanda, members of *Assetamorwa (Association de l'Esperance des Taxi Motor au Rwanda)*, a cooperative and trade union for motorcycle taxi drivers, have received loans from their cooperative to buy their own motorcycles to increase their revenues. They previously paid extortionate daily rental fees (Smith and Ross, 2006).

In Tanzania and Sri Lanka, a study by Birchall and Simmons (2009) confirms that cooperatives significantly improve members' incomes in various ways. Multi-purpose and savings and credit cooperatives enable members to receive small loans to support their own self-employment through retail shop-keeping, farming or keeping livestock. Some SACCOs have different types of loans for

different business activities, enabling members to repair buildings, install electricity, and buy essential machinery or equipment. In addition to helping to start up new businesses, they also provide working capital and loans to grow the business. Such loans were very difficult for people to get elsewhere and these business activities might not have existed without the cooperative.

In addition to improving incomes, cooperatives also make significant contributions to poverty alleviation through provision of non-financial services. For instance, evidence from Tanzania and Sri Lanka shows that cooperatives make a particular contribution in terms of skill development and education; gender equality and the empowerment of women; help when members suffer illness or other setbacks such as bereavement, and help to improve members' shelter and living standards. They also take their central role in communities seriously, particularly in terms of solving common problems in the community and the creation of 'good citizens' (Birchall and Simmons, 2009).

### 3.2 GENDER EQUALITY

Despite major progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment over the past few decades, inequalities persist in many societies. There is still a significant gap between women and men in terms of leadership and participation in decision-making, access to productive resources, job opportunities, and quality of employment and wages. In addition, violence against women and girls remains widespread.

Gender inequality and other forms of discrimination not only violate the universal standards of justice enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also deprive societies of the full productive potential of large shares of their populations and thereby undermine sustainable development. Consequently, the HLP report considers gender equality and women's empowerment central to sustainable development and the post-2015 development framework.

It is envisaged that gender equality will be realized by stopping violence against women and girls; enabling women and girls to reach their full potential by having equal access to resources and economic opportunities; and building women's capacity to influence decision-making by eliminating discrimination against women in leadership and public life (HLP, 2013; Puri, 2013).

Cooperatives contribute to advancing women's access to resources and economic opportunities by expanding their participation in local and national economies. More women join SACCOs to save and get access to financial services to enhance their economic well-being around the world. In consumer cooperatives, most members are women. In Japan, for example, women have

reached 95 per cent and have gained a place in the governance structure of their cooperatives (Suzuki, 2010).

Women are particularly showing a strong presence in worker cooperatives:

- According to the Spanish Confederation of Worker Cooperatives (COCETA), 49 per cent of worker cooperative members in Spain are women. Amongst them, 39 per cent have directorial positions, while in other enterprise models the percentage of women in these positions is barely six per cent.
- In Italy, according to ANCPL-Legacoop, the presence of women in worker cooperatives in the fashion industry is 95 per cent. The best example of this is the cooperative Stienta CAPA (Rovigo), consisting of around 100 member-workers with an annual turnover of more than three million Euros (CICOPA, 2011).

In East Africa, there are indications that women's participation in cooperatives is rising:

- In the financial cooperative sector, data from Tanzania indicates that women's membership in SACCOs more than quadrupled between 2005 and 2010, increasing from some 86,000 to more than 375,000 members, bringing women's share in SACCO membership to over 43 per cent (Majurin, 2012).
- In agricultural cooperatives, a survey of 55 Area Cooperative Enterprises (ACEs) in Uganda found a more pronounced increase in women's participation between 2007 and 2010 than in men's (132 and 94 per cent, respectively).
- In terms of women's leadership, the survey shows that women's presence on financial cooperative boards ranges from 24 per cent (Kenya) to 65 per cent (Tanzania), with a regional average of 44 per cent (Majurin, 2012).
- In Southern Africa, women make up 60 per cent of cooperative members in Lesotho, and form the majority in all categories of cooperatives apart from mining and service providing cooperatives (Qoane, 2010).

In the occupied Palestinian territory, despite a history of low women's participation in cooperatives, changes are beginning to take shape in favour of women. For instance, the Union of Cooperative Associations for Savings and Credit, registered in 2005, has more women members than men. The vision of the union is to build a better future for Palestinian women living in rural areas based on cooperative principles (Al Madmouj, 2012).

Another example is the experience of the members of the small Benkadi women's cooperative in the Segou region of Mali. Members were experiencing difficulties getting a good price for their produce and as a result were unable to invest and expand their production. By reaching out and coming together with 21 other small associations of women shallot producers, they were able to integrate the women into the larger Faso Jigi farmers' cooperative. Faso Jigi invested in 19 shallot storage facilities and marketed the produce where prices were more advantageous, offering the women a better income and the opportunity to invest in their businesses and expand their production (FAO, 2012a).

In India, women's cooperatives offer self-employment opportunities that can contribute to women's social inclusion and empowerment (Bhatt and Gailey, 2012). Women-only cooperatives are also being reported in the Arab states where women's access to economic opportunities and public life has been limited (ILO, 2009; Esim and Omeira, 2009). Whereas some cooperative societies in Tanzania and Sri Lanka consist of a majority of women, some are increasingly being set up exclusively by and for women. Women have also been empowered to take up leadership roles, set up their own management committees and organize welfare activities through the cooperative (Birchall and Simmons, 2009).

The increasing membership of women in cooperatives and their participation in cooperative leadership is arguably contributing to bridging the gap between women and men in access to resources and participation in decision-making. Nevertheless, a number of challenges remain in the path of cooperatives in realizing gender equality:

- For instance, women tend to be marginally represented in traditional cash/export crop-related cooperatives (for example, coffee, cocoa, cotton, or tobacco) where men are more likely to be the owners of the crops. On the other hand, women are more numerous, and their numbers are on the rise, in subsectors such as fruits, spices or cereals, as well as dairy, in which land ownership is less critical and capital investment requirements often less heavy.
- In financial cooperatives, similarly, the occupational composition of the membership heavily influences its female-to-male ratio; for instance, teachers' SACCOs often have a fairly balanced gender ratio, whereas transport SACCOs are likely to be almost exclusively composed of men.
- There is also a gender difference in the nature of women's and mixed-sex cooperatives, with women's cooperatives usually being smaller in terms of capital, membership, and volume of business; often concentrated in women-dominated (and in some cases low-value) sectors; and generally less well connected to cooperative unions, federations and other support structures. (Majurin, 2012).

Furthermore, the formation and operation of women's cooperatives may be limited by a range of socio-economic factors. In many countries, women have lower levels of literacy, limited access to education and skills development, land, credit, productive inputs as well as information, which both directly and indirectly hinders their ability to form or even join and use the services of cooperatives. Yet in other countries, traditional conceptions of the roles of women and men, and their expected behavioural patterns, are leading to a lower participation of women in economic and public leadership activities. This is consequently constraining women's engagement with cooperatives (Majurin, 2012). The implication is that there is need for sustained gender mainstreaming in cooperative activities to enhance the contribution of these organizations to gender equality as envisaged in the post-2015 development agenda.

### 3.3 QUALITY EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Despite the contributions of MDGs in facilitating access to education, there are still concerns about low enrolment and basic education completion rates, especially in developing countries. Furthermore the quality of education, both in the developed and developing countries, has not been satisfactory (Heyneman, 2004). In any case, education is said to be a lifelong experience, which has seen the search for learning opportunities throughout the lives of individuals. Consequently, the realization of sustainable development may significantly depend on access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities.

Whereas household costs for education such as fees, uniforms and tuition materials discourage enrolment for basic education in developing countries, public budgets at the national level tend to be too low to ensure a quality education. The challenge is, therefore, to ensure that every child, regardless of circumstance, completes primary education and is able to read, write and count to an acceptable standard. There is also a need to increase the number of adult women and men with the skills, required for work and ensure opportunities for lifelong learning, including technical and vocational skills.

It has already been pointed out that cooperatives play a significant role in facilitating access to education by increasing household incomes that translates into ability to meet educational costs. Sometimes cooperatives are a direct source of educational finance: loans from savings and credit cooperative societies (SACCOs) have been particularly instrumental in this regard:

- In Kenya, the main type of back office loan offered by most SACCOs (at interest rates of 1 to 1.5 per cent on monthly reducing balances for a 12-month period) is for paying school fees.

- Similar reports have been obtained from Ghana, Nigeria, Cape Verde, Uganda and other African countries (Wanyama et al, 2008).
- Kuapa Kokoo Ltd., a sophisticated multipurpose cooperative organization in Ghana, has used returns from its fair trade premiums to finance social projects, including the construction of classrooms in primary schools in the local communities (Wanyama, 2013).
- Oromia Cooperative Union in Ethiopia has used premiums from fair trade to improve infrastructure in primary schools (Meskela, 2012).

Where local governments have failed to provide school infrastructure, cooperatives have often filled the gap by using their own funds to build and support local schools (Birchall, 2004). A number of cooperatives have even set up their own youth cooperatives as a way of both developing the skills of young people and encouraging them to save. The support of cooperatives runs from the direct provision of pre-schools and schools, to scholarships to members' children to attend school, and to help with higher education opportunities. Some cooperatives are also directly involved in educational activities, for example organizing competitions, such as singing, dancing and literature competitions, essay writing competitions, speech competitions and so on. Furthermore, some cooperative societies fund equipment and stationery for schools, or maintain a small library.

Cooperatives are increasingly getting involved in direct provision of quality education by setting up their own schools. For instance in Tanzania, Mugeza Secondary School was started by the Kagera Cooperative Union (KCU) in 1992 in a remote area in the hills above Lake Victoria to enable members' children to access secondary education in a place where there were few other secondary education opportunities. The cooperative was at first able to support parents by paying half of their school fees and made large payments to the school itself for buildings and general infrastructure. The school had to fundraise in any way it could to secure money for paying teachers. Schools like this show the contribution that cooperatives can make to education (Birchall and Simmons, 2009).

In the United Kingdom, the Manchester-based Cooperative College is promoting the provision of quality education through the democratically driven growth of Cooperative trust schools. These schools were prompted by Tony Blair's 2006 Education and Inspections Act that established trust schools, billed as "independent state schools", were to be set up with weaker links to local authorities than conventional state-funded institutions. They would be run by a trust that could include businesses, charities, faith groups and universities. Each had to have a parents' council that would have a say in the school's day-to-day affairs. Distinctively, each school allows pupils, teachers, parents, local people and employers to become "members" of the trust, forming a community-based

mutual organization. The members elect representatives to a stakeholder forum, which then expresses the views of the wider group to the school leadership, while also electing trustees, who in turn elect some of the members of the school's governing body. Typically, several Cooperative schools are linked together in a single trust: often a group of local primary schools working with a secondary. This cooperative school movement, and sponsored academies in particular, has a strong commitment to social justice and moral purpose. It means a dedication to the communities served and a deep desire to improve outcomes and close the gap for students in some of the most challenged communities. All of this seems to fit well with what many within the cooperative movement view as core educational values of democracy, equity and fairness (Mansell, 2011).

However, it is not only children who benefit from educational opportunities supported by cooperatives. Alongside the skills training and knowledge development provided by many societies for their members, further opportunities are also provided by some cooperative societies for improving the literacy and numeracy of never-schooled members through the provision of basic language and arithmetic classes (Birchall and Simmons, 2009). For instance, in the United Kingdom example above, Cooperative academies are striving to provide an outstanding education for all learners, founded on cooperative values, welcoming to both adults and children of all faiths (The Cooperative Membership, 2013).

## 3.4 HEALTH

To ensure healthy lives for the majority of the people around the globe, the fourth proposed Sustainable Development Goal endeavours to end preventable child mortality in infants and the under-fives; reduce maternal mortality rates; and reduce the burden of disease from HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, neglected tropical diseases and priority non-communicable diseases.

This essentially calls for the provision of both preventive and curative health services for people around the world, especially in the developing countries that lack functional health insurance schemes and where the burden of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis is highest.

How have cooperatives contributed to the provision of health care? One of the ways the cooperative movement has responded to the challenges of health care delivery is the creation of health cooperatives. Such cooperatives are made up of health care providers (worker cooperative), patients or community members (client or user-owned cooperative), or a hybrid of the two (multi-stakeholder cooperative). They can provide anything from home care services to full-scale hospitals.

To become a member, each user or worker must purchase a share in the cooperative. The membership elects a board of directors nominated from within the membership. Their responsibility is to oversee the operation of the cooperative for an allotted term. The board of directors is then responsible for hiring a manager to negotiate contracts with health insurance companies, the government and health care providers. The manager is in charge of the day-to-day operation of the health cooperative and is the functional link between the health care providers, the board of directors and the membership (MacKay, 2007).

The ICA's Global Monitor estimates that the turnover of 53 health and social care cooperatives distributed in 12 countries amounted US\$ 20.84 billion in 2011. International Health Cooperative Organization estimates that there are more than 100 million households worldwide that are served by health cooperatives. In Canada, the majority of health cooperatives currently provide home care services, but in many countries they operate on scales as large as whole hospitals. Across Canada there are more than 100 health care cooperatives providing care to more than a million people spanning its eight provinces. *Saludcoop* in Colombia, a health care cooperative, is the second-largest national employer and serves 25 per cent of the population. In Japan more than 125 medical cooperatives serve nearly 3 million patients (MacKay, 2007).

In Sri Lanka, health cooperatives began in the 1960s, mainly to provide services to members of consumer and agricultural cooperatives. There are now ten of them, funded by primary cooperative societies (who pay the fees and recover them from members over time), and by public funding. A number of multi-purpose agricultural cooperatives have also provided their own hospitals in rural areas (Birchall, 2004).

In the USA there are several health care cooperatives that operate hospitals and clinics, employing large numbers of people. For instance, Group Health Cooperative of South Central Wisconsin has 65,000 members and employs its own professional medical staff to work in its own clinics. It had gross annual revenue of US\$ 260 million in 2010. There is also the example of Group Health Cooperative of Puget Sound with 650,000 members in Washington State and Northern Idaho. It operates 30 cooperatively owned medical facilities and has contracts with 44 other hospitals, employing 9,500 people, 1,000 of whom are physicians (Oemichen, 2011).

In Nepal, the chaotic health care system has spawned an array of care delivery mechanisms, including primary health care cooperatives. These cooperatives first began surfacing in wealthier communities and neighbourhoods but are slowly spreading to poor communities as it becomes apparent that primary care is a major deficiency of the government system, which is perceived as poor because of corruption and inadequate funding. International donors

provide money for polio and other vaccinations, but not for basic health care. Cooperatives offer members primary health care services at an annual family fee of US\$2 to US\$4, for which they receive clinic services, as well as a 50 per cent discount on fees at the Kathmandu Model Hospital. Full hospital subsidies are available for the extremely poor (Glauser, 2010).

Besides clinics and hospitals run by cooperatives, there are also pharmacy cooperatives that focus on providing members easier access to genuine and affordable medicines. For instance, in Turkey at the end of the 1970's, drug supplies depended largely on imports yet wholesalers only wanted to do business with pharmacies that could pay in foreign currency, which was in short supply. The lack of foreign currency saw many pharmacies go out of business. With few pharmacies in business, there were risks that the products sold on the markets could be counterfeit. The price of medicines and other products also went up. This situation led to the creation of the Association of Pharmacists' Cooperatives in 1989, which has enabled small pharmacies to team up with others and benefit from the collective purchasing power of cooperatives to supply genuine and affordable medicine to members. The cooperative has a network of 13,000 pharmacies all over Turkey providing jobs to 40,000 people. It is reputed for its quality service, especially when delivering drugs that are urgently needed, which is backed up by professional advice from trained personnel (ILO, 2012).

Cooperatives also support their members in financing health care. For instance, health care cooperative is one of the most popular types of health care insurance options for the citizens of the USA. It is a type of a mutual health insurance, where the insurance holders are actually the stakeholders of the health care cooperative. The cooperative uses the money from the insurance premium to pay for the coverage and the profits are given to the policyholders as dividend or exemption in the insurance premium after the reduction of the operational costs. Effectively, the insurance cooperative is owned by the policyholders (Bavoso, 2013).

It should also be recalled here that cooperatives that do business under the fair trade label in Africa, such as Oromia Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union in Ethiopia; Kuapa Kokoo Ltd. in Ghana; and Heiveld Cooperative Society in South Africa, among others use fair trade premiums to provide public health and health care services in remote rural areas (Wanyama, 2013). Furthermore, cooperatives are not only providing home-based care services to members living with HIV/AIDS in Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Lesotho and Swaziland (Lo lacono and Allen, 2011; Keregero and Allen, 2011), but are also meeting medical insurance, employment, housing and representation needs of people living with the virus in many parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America (ILO, 2013b). It is also worth noting that the World Council for Credit Unions (WOCCU) has

worked through SACCOs on peer-to-peer training to raise awareness, share information and mitigate the spread of HIV/AIDS through prevention in many countries (WOCCU, 2010).

Cooperatives have also contributed to healthy lives indirectly by creating employment opportunities to guarantee livelihoods; increasing people's incomes; facilitating improves in housing and food security; and providing social protection and other indirect contributions to public health.

### 3.5 FOOD SECURITY AND GOOD NUTRITION

Food security<sup>1</sup> is a major factor in the realization of sustainable development, yet nearly one in seven people globally suffer from undernourishment. The problem of hunger seems to be worse in rural areas than in urban areas, given that of the estimated 842 million hungry people in the world today (FAO, 2013), 70 per cent live in rural areas where agriculture is the economic mainstay (FAO, 2012b). Indeed, the nourishment problem seems to be growing from the lack of adequate food to inadequate nutrition, especially in early childhood.

Good nutrition has been recognized as a basic pillar for social and economic development. This is largely due to the fact that economic growth and human development require well-nourished populations who can learn new skills, think critically and contribute to their communities. Given that child malnutrition impacts cognitive function and contributes to poverty by impeding the ability of individuals to lead a full and productive life, it is imperative that adequate nutrition in early childhood is ensured. Proper nutrition ultimately enhances healthy growth, proper organ formation and function, a strong immune system and neurological and cognitive development.

Despite these virtues of good nutrition, recent statistics indicate that malnutrition has persisted in many parts of the world (UNICEF, WHO and The World Bank, 2012). This is vindicated by reports on stunting, underweight and overweight, especially among children. An estimated 165 million children under-five years of age in the world, or 26 per cent, were stunted in 2011 and more than 90 per cent of them lived in Africa and Asia. An estimated 101 million children under-five years of age in the world, or 16 per cent, were underweight in the same year. Globally, an estimated 43 million children under-five years of age, or 7 per cent, were overweight in 2011. Increasing trends in child overweight have been noted in most world regions, not only developed countries, where prevalence is highest (15 per cent in 2011). In Africa, the estimated

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<sup>1</sup> The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as a condition that exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

prevalence under-five overweight increased from 4 per cent in 1990 to 7 per cent in 2011. The prevalence of overweight was lower in Asia (5 per cent in 2011) than in Africa, but the number of affected children was higher in Asia (17 million) than in Africa (12 million) (UNICEF, WHO and The World Bank, 2012). These statistics show that good nutrition remains a fundamental goal for sustainable development.

Numerous success stories around the world have shown that cooperatives contribute to food security by helping small farmers, fisher folk, livestock keepers, forest holders and other producers to solve numerous challenges that confront them in their endeavours to produce food. Cooperatives together have an estimated 32% of the global market share in this sector (Bibby, 2014).

For instance, most small producers in developing countries are often too far removed from what happens on national and international markets to benefit from higher food prices. Farmers also face difficulties accessing high-quality inputs. While the selling price for crops may be higher, farmers also have to factor in the variable cost of buying seeds and fertilizer before deciding whether to expand their production. Access to loans to buy these inputs can also be a problem. Even when all these conditions are favourable, many small producers face still other obstacles – such as lack of transport to take their produce to local markets, or the absence of proper infrastructure in rural areas (FAO, 2012b).

Agricultural cooperatives have helped farmers overcome these difficulties by offering their members a variety of services. These services range from access to natural resources, information, communication, input and output markets, technologies and training:

- Through practices like group purchasing and marketing, farmers gain market power and get better prices on agricultural inputs and other necessities. Some institutional arrangements, such as input shops (for collectively purchasing inputs) and warehouse receipt systems (for collective access to credit and market outlets) have increased producers' access to markets and productive assets, while reducing high transaction costs. This has enabled them to increase food production, market their goods and create jobs; thereby improving their own livelihoods and increasing food security in the world (FAO, 2012b).
- Cooperatives are central in building small producers' skills, providing them with appropriate information and knowledge, helping them to innovate and adapt to changing markets. Some enable farmers to build their capacity to analyze their production systems, identify their problems, test possible solutions and eventually adopt the practices and technologies best suited to their farming systems.

- Another powerful contribution of cooperatives is their ability to help small producers voice their concerns and interests – and ultimately increase their negotiating power and influence policy-making processes. They facilitate farmers’ participation in decision making-processes (IFAD, 2012).

While benefiting from these services, small producers can secure their livelihoods and play a greater role in meeting the growing demand for food on local, national and international markets (FAO, 2012b).

Cooperatives have also contributed to food security by preserving indigenous food crops. For instance, in Argentina indigenous potatoes that come in a rainbow of colours (red, pink, purple, yellow, orange, black, and blue) have become threatened by increasing agricultural standardization and climate change. However, a farmers’ cooperative is working to save ancestral Andean crops like the potato, as well as amaranth, quinoa and maize. The *Cooperativa Agropecuaria y Artesanal Unión Quebrada y Valles Ltda* (Cauqueva) is helping farmers improve their cultivation of these crops, providing mechanized services for tilling, reproducing and supplying native seeds, offering training and technical assistance and processing and promoting indigenous products. Cauqueva also processes food products, which are marketed locally and internationally. A museum, the *Museo de la Vida Campesina Quebradeña*, and a small restaurant run by the cooperative help communicate the traditional crops and the way of life of the indigenous farmers of the community (Stories. coop, 2013a).

Besides making food available, cooperatives also contribute to good nutrition by diversifying household food supply. Dairy cooperatives have been particularly instrumental in this regard by making milk available to households as a food supplement, while also making it available as a source of income (giving them the funds to meet other dietary needs). Success story of *Societe Des Eleveur De Vache Laitier De Foubot* (COOVALAIF), presented in Box 4, illustrates how dairy cooperatives can help determined farmers improve not just their household livelihoods but to go beyond their community and help build food security and good nutrition through an integrated crop/livestock energy-recycling farming system.

However, elsewhere, factors such as poor infrastructure, limited access to services, information, productive assets and markets, as well as poor representation in national decision making processes, have sometimes prevented cooperatives from realizing their potential. Cooperative members around the world continue to face constraints that keep them from reaping the benefits of their labour and contributing to food security not only for themselves but for all through active participation in markets every day (Shiferaw, 2012).

#### **Box 4: The Société Des Eleveur De Vache Laitier De Foubot (COOVALAIF)**

In 2005, small-scale farmers from the Foubot community of the Western region of Cameroon formed an agricultural cooperative called *Société Des Eleveur De Vache Laitier De Foubot (COOVALAIF)*. The farmers relied mainly on food crop production, so working together gave them the chance to find alternative livelihoods to unproductive food crop farming. Upon receiving training, as well as 34 heifers and three bulls from Heifer International Cameroon, 34 farming families embarked on dairy farming to supplement crop production in 2006. With the improved farming practice of fertilizing the land with cow dung harvested from the dairy farms, cooperative members witnessed an unprecedented boost in the yield from food crop production. Within six months, average production leaped from a baseline of 976 pounds to 5,500 pounds for maize; 423 pounds to 754 pounds for beans; and from 661 pounds to 1,219 pounds for Irish potatoes. Fresh milk production also witnessed an overwhelming increase, from an average of 125 gallons to 5,230 gallons.

Not only did these 34 farming families drink fresh milk daily, they also supplied hundreds of litres of milk to the cooperative every morning for marketing. With timely financial contributions from the cooperative members, the group bought equipment for processing milk into yogurt, butter and cheese adding further value to their products. This earned them extra income that guaranteed them household food security, which is demonstrated by an increase in the number of households with year-round access to quality food from 14 per cent at the beginning of the project to 76 per cent in 2012. Besides improved nutrition, the average annual household income for each farm family increased from an initial 215,000 Central African francs, or US\$430, in 2008 to 1,500,000 Central African francs, or US\$3,000, in 2012. Cooperative members used their extra income to pay school fees for their children, attend to family emergencies or to buy land and diversify into poultry and goat farming. The success of the cooperative saw membership in the cooperative increase from 34 in 2007 to 48 in 2012. The dairy-herd size has also increased from 34 heifers to 78 with more than 16 bulls sold by members for increased income.

Source: Heifer International, 2012

## **3.6 ACCESS TO WATER AND SANITATION**

Understanding the problem of fresh water scarcity begins by considering the distribution of water on the planet. Approximately 98 per cent of our water is salty and only 2 per cent is fresh. Of that 2 per cent, almost 70 per cent is snow and ice, 30 per cent is groundwater, less than 0.5 per cent is surface water (lakes, rivers, etc) and less than 0.05 per cent is in the atmosphere (Mcintyre, 2012). Due to geography, climate, engineering, regulation, and competition for resources, some regions seem relatively flush with freshwater, while others face drought and debilitating pollution. In much of the developing world, clean water

is either hard to come by or a commodity that requires laborious work or significant financial resources to obtain. Rapid urbanization around the world is greatly increasing pressure on public water utilities, with the result that getting clean drinking water and safely disposing of waste have become some of the biggest problems facing not just city-dwellers, but virtually all parts of developing countries.

A success story from Bolivia shows how cooperatives might provide an alternative way for urban communities to get clean water and safe sewerage services. The Bolivian city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra experienced soaring population growth in the 1970s, leading to increased demand for an efficient water service. In 1979, the national government approved the request of the autonomous water board to become a cooperative, known as SAGUAPAC. Since then, SAGUAPAC has become the largest urban water cooperative in the world, with 183,000 water connections serving 1.2 million people, out of a total population of 1.6 million. According to a study by *Corporación Andina de Fomento*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra scores 99.3 per cent in water quality, which is one of the purest in Latin America, courtesy of the efforts of the cooperative. All of SAGUAPAC's water comes from an underground aquifer through 60 deep wells (360 meters deep), with an annual production of 64 million cubic meters. The water is directed to four storage tanks and pumped to the city through 3,370 kilometres of primary and secondary networks. All of the collected wastewater is led to treatment plants where it is purified before being released into local rivers, something that is not always so common in Latin America (ICA, 2012).

In the Philippines, the water service system of Binangonan city in Rizal Province used to be run by the Barangay Councils or homeowners' associations. In 1998, the Municipal Council of Binangonan resolved to allow cooperatives to provide water service because the Barangay Councils and homeowners' associations were experiencing managerial problems and financial losses, mostly due to corruption and politicking. This resolution was also necessitated by the prevailing water shortage then, due to the El Niño phenomenon, and the relative successes of water cooperatives put up by a number of communities to respond to the difficulty in accessing water before 1998. Water cooperatives seized the opportunity to set up water delivery systems in their neighbourhoods. Besides supplying water to the residents, today these water cooperatives also provide employment opportunities to the community, employing meter readers, bill collectors, maintenance crew, operators, treasurers and cashiers (Klikpad, 2004).

There are also examples of water cooperatives providing water to remote locations away from cities that would otherwise have no service. An interesting illustration of this is reported by Sree (2012) in India in the *panchayat* of Olavanna in Kozhikode; an area that has always faced an acute drinking water

shortage during the summer months. In 1990, members of 23 households in the *panchayat* decided to form the first drinking water cooperative society in the region. They dug wells in the most ideal locations - on slopes or in the valley - and pumped water into small overhead tanks. From those wells people began drawing water through small networks of pipes. Each network was financed and managed by people who had formed the registered cooperative societies and contributed to the initial investment. By 2012, there were 70 drinking water cooperative societies operating in the 30 hillocks in the *panchayat*, providing water to more than 14,000 households in the region. The users pay a maintenance charge to the cooperative, which in turn takes decisions on the maintenance and upkeep of the wells and tanks. While general assembly meetings are convened three times a year, the executive committee meets every month to monitor the functioning of the water cooperatives. Though the quantity of water each household gets has been declining, owing to the increasing number of households in the area, the water cooperative societies have helped respond to the water shortage to a great extent (Sree, 2012).

In Africa, cooperatives in Ghana, Ethiopia and South Africa, among others, are increasingly supporting access to clean drinking water in rural areas by setting up water points like boreholes using fair trade premiums and establishing local groups to maintain the water supply points. However, cooperatives have not fared as well in the urban areas where rapid urbanization has dramatically increased the demand for water, which outpaces supply. In the absence of the most suitable institutional framework for provision of water in the urban areas, local communities and cooperatives are increasingly being presented as the alternative.

Water cooperatives are not just confined to the developing world; for instance, in the United States, 89 per cent of the population that is served by public water systems is served by either a publicly owned, municipal water system or a cooperative utility. Cooperatives are the most common organizational form of water provision in small communities. Water cooperatives, which are consumer-owned utilities formed to provide safe, reliable and sustainable water service at a reasonable cost, are most often found in suburban and rural areas that are located too far from municipal water companies to receive service. Most of these cooperatives are small (serving 501 - 3,300 consumers) or very small (serving fewer than 500 consumers). There are about 3,300 water cooperatives in the USA. They provide water for drinking, fire protection and landscaping irrigation. In addition, many of them provide wastewater services (University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives, 2013).

With regard to sanitation, housing cooperatives that attempt to address the problem of providing shelter in the urban areas have made contributions through upgrading slums in developing countries:

- In India, the National Cooperative Housing Federation (NCHF) has utilized various participatory development programmes to mobilize the urban poor and slum dwellers to form housing cooperative societies for improving their shelter. There are more than 92,000 primary housing cooperatives with a membership of over 6.5 million people in the country. These housing cooperatives have constructed/financed about 2.5 million housing units in various parts of the country, with 75 per cent of housing units going to low income families (Khurana, 2010).
- Turkey presents another unique cooperative example of providing cooperative housing for low-income people through the Batikent housing project undertaken by Kent-Koop (Union of Batikent Housing Construction Cooperatives) in collaboration with Municipal Authority of Ankara and Workers' Unions. Batikent is on the western corridor of Ankara, the capital city of Turkey. The Batikent Project began in 1979, with the foundation of Kent-Koop, and since 1983 has sheltered 200,000 low and middle income people in 45,000 housing units, growing from a humble start of 516 housing units. The project has helped supply housing to bridge the housing shortage and keep down selling and rental prices in Ankara's housing market (MOST Clearing House, 2013).
- In Africa too, housing cooperatives have been playing an important role in solving the housing problem of slum dwellers. In Kenya, for instance, the National Cooperative Housing Union (NACHU) has been at the core of the Slum Up-grading Programme. It has organized slum dwellers into cooperatives and helped some low-income dwellers to acquire decent houses around Nairobi (NACHU, 2012; Mwendu, 2012).

### 3.7 SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

In the developed world, there is ready access to the electricity needed to power virtually every activity. Over 1.3 billion people, 20 per cent of the world's population, do not have access to electricity worldwide (IEA, 2013). Access to clean and affordable energy directly helps women the save time risk of collecting fuel, fetching water and preparing food. It helps farmers to make the transition from subsistence to income-generating activities by, for example, providing irrigation and post-harvest processing. And it reduces health problems deriving from cooking with solid fuels.

It is for these reasons that securing sustainable energy through increasing the availability of renewable energy, ensuring universal access to modern energy services, improving energy efficiency in different sectors, and phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies plays an important role in the post-2015 debate. The available case studies suggest that cooperatives are contributing to both clean energy production and energy access.

In Bangladesh, cooperatives have contributed to the connection of rural communities to the limited available electric supplies. Before 1977, electrification was carried out by the Bangladesh Power Development Board and was mainly limited to urban centres. A national rural electrification programme began in 1977, under the aegis of the Rural Electrification Board (REB), with technical help from a non-profit subsidiary of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, a common-services cooperative owned by the US electric cooperative industry. The REB works with rural communities to establish energy cooperatives that generate and distribute electricity. Over the years, more than 70 rural electric cooperatives have been created with impressive results: electric cooperatives have installed more than 219,000 kilometres of distribution lines connecting about 47,650 villages and 30 million people to the electricity grid, including 170,000 rural irrigation pumping stations (ILO, 2013c).

Rural electric cooperatives In the USA are consumer-owned utilities established to provide reliable and affordable electricity by purchasing electric power at wholesale prices and delivering it directly to the consumer. These distribution cooperatives are primarily located in rural areas where the return on expensive infrastructure investment was not high enough to attract the investor-owned utilities. There are 864 distribution cooperatives delivering 10 per cent of the nation's total kilowatt-hours of electricity directly to consumers each year. They serve 12 per cent of the nation's electric consumers (42 million people), but own and maintain 42 per cent of the nation's electric distribution lines that cover 75 per cent of the country's land mass. To assure an adequate supply of cost-effective and reliable power, distribution cooperatives formed generation and transmission (G&T) cooperatives to pool their purchasing power for wholesale electricity. There are 66 G&T cooperatives owning 6 per cent of the nation's miles of transmission lines. They supply wholesale power to their member-owners either by purchasing and delivering power from public- or investor-owned power plants, or by generating electricity themselves (University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives, 2013).

Besides connection to available electric supply, there is a drive towards generating cheaper and environmentally sustainable sources of energy. In the United Kingdom, cooperatives are ahead in supplying energy through waste minimization and recycling. For instance, the East of England Cooperative is selling different type of renewable energy. In its stores, customers can buy British charcoal and briquettes for open fires and burners from Suffolk-based Bridgebrooke Energy. The firm manufactures charcoal and briquettes from recycled and sustainable materials in a factory, which itself harness all its electricity and heat from a neighbouring anaerobic digester (Kidd, 2013). Cooperatively-owned energy generation is also vibrant and growing. Renewable energy cooperatives are on the rise with more than 30 being registered since 2008 (Willis and Willis, 2012). This is exemplified by solar power cooperatives that are fast emerging as an innovative

way for local communities to gain access to renewable energy generation. Over the last few years, several such initiatives have been successfully launched in a number of cities including London and Bristol (Williams, 2013).

In Germany, a rural energy revolution is underway. The cooperative model is being successfully utilized for renewable energy production. These energy cooperatives are expected to aid the country's transition from a centralized energy system based on fossil fuels to one supplied by distributed renewable energy. The formation of these new energy cooperatives is growing at an impressive rate. According to the German Cooperative and Raiffeisen Confederation (DGRV), of the approximately 250 new cooperatives in 2011, 158 were energy cooperatives. From 2006 to 2011, 430 new energy cooperatives were formed in Germany. The example from Großbardorf village, presented in Box 5, is particularly illustrative of the positive economic, environmental and social impact of these energy cooperatives on local communities and the opportunity for a diverse mix of individuals and businesses to work together to supply renewable energy directly to a community (Bilek, 2012).

With renewable energy cooperatives spreading in a number of European countries, efforts are being made at the regional level to develop an overall strategy and position Cooperatives Europe<sup>2</sup> to implement concrete actions over time. To

#### **Box 5: Renewable energy cooperative in Großbardorf village**

Großbardorf is a village in the northern Bavaria region of Germany with 928 inhabitants. Over a period of four years, individual citizens invested and leveraged outside capital totaling approximately US\$19 million for the development of photovoltaic roof systems, solar power plants, a biogas plant with a combined heat and power (CHP) unit and a district heating network. As a result of these projects, the village generates four times the energy needed to power individual businesses and homes. The district heating system meets 50 per cent of the heating needs for homes and businesses in the village. Approximately 80 per cent of the heat supplied is from the CHP unit at the biogas plant. The village has plans to install a wood heating system to increase the amount of renewable heat supplied to the village. The renewable heat sources supplied to the village are reducing fossil fuel energy use, ensuring stable prices for home heating and saving businesses money. A new manufacturing facility being constructed near the biogas plant will be connected to the district heating system and will realize a one-time saving of approximately US\$100,000 by connecting to the district heating system instead of installing a traditional heating source. All of these different renewable energy ventures also add economic value to the village through local taxes.

Source: Bilek, 2012

<sup>2</sup> Cooperatives Europe is the European branch of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA).

this end, a working group on energy and environment at Cooperatives Europe was set up in 2011, to promote the role of cooperatives in renewable energies. It is a combination of sector organizations and individual cooperatives involved in the energy sector with members from several European countries (Cooperatives Europe, 2013a).

In developing countries, a good number of success stories are emerging from different parts of India. A biomass-based rural cooperative in Tumkur district of Karnataka owes its success to institutional aspects like well-defined property rights in ownership, institutionalized markets and decentralized environmental governance. The biomass is derived through tree-based farming, which provides employment to 30 households. In this cooperative, the farmers manage the supply of biomass, the *panchayat* owns and operates the plant and, through a power purchase agreement, the excess power is given back to the Central grid (Business Line, 2013).

A major challenge facing energy cooperatives is the high capital outlay required to set up the infrastructure. Renewable energy-based rural cooperative models across the world require high levels of initial seed capital. It may, therefore, be necessary for the government, private players such as big industrial houses and high net-worth philanthropic organizations and individuals take the lead in supporting rural energy cooperatives by establishing financing mechanisms. Private-cooperative partnerships could also be explored for this purpose. Such a partnership model can be either a corporate social responsibility initiative or a model that intends to develop local industry (primarily small-scale industries) in the villages, which provide processed raw material inputs to the industries.

### **3.8 EMPLOYMENT CREATION, LIVELIHOODS AND EQUITABLE GROWTH**

The rising level of unemployment has made decent job creation a global concern that requires immediate attention.

After the outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2007, global growth has decelerated and unemployment has started to increase again, leaving an accumulated total of some 202 million people without a job in 2013 (ILO, 2014). Moreover, the global jobs gap continues to widen, reaching 62 million jobs in 2013, with 32 million additional jobseekers. Despite a moderate pick-up in output growth expected for 2013–14, the unemployment rate is set to increase again and the number of unemployed worldwide is projected to rise by another 13 million by 2018 (ILO, 2014).

A quarter of the increase in global unemployment in 2012 took place in advanced economies, while the remaining was in other regions, with marked

effects in East and South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Those regions that have managed to prevent a further increase in unemployment have often experienced a worsening in job quality, as vulnerable employment and the number of workers living below or very near the poverty line increased (ILO, 2013a). The challenge of promoting and generating full and decent employment, therefore, faces policymakers everywhere and the problems of unemployment and underemployment cut across all social, economic and geographical boundaries.

It is widely accepted that cooperatives play a significant role in employment creation and income generation. The cooperative model of economic and social organization has been credited with mobilizing social capital and bridging the economic and the social dimension of Sustainable Development by providing employment, an equitable distribution of profits and, above all, social justice. Typically, cooperatives place more emphasis than the private sector businesses on: job security for employees, paying competitive wages, promoting additional income through profit-sharing, distributing dividends and other benefits, and helping establish community facilities such as health clinics and schools (Logue and Yates, 2005). The cooperative model, therefore, offers an important employment creation opportunity in the face of the global unemployment and underemployment problem.

Cooperative enterprises impact on employment in three ways (Wanyama, Develtere, and Pollet, 2008):

- They employ people directly;
- Indirectly they promote employment and self-employment through creating marketing opportunities and improving marketing conditions; and
- They influence non-members whose professional activities are closely related to transactions with cooperatives (such as tradesmen or input suppliers).

Globally more than 100 million jobs exist in cooperatives, as cited by the ICA (ICA Co-op Facts and Stats). The United Nations estimated in 1994 that the livelihood of nearly 3 billion people, or half of the world's population, was made secure by cooperative enterprise. Together with small and medium-sized enterprises, cooperatives are the most significant sources of new employment (ILC, 2007). While global data on cooperatives' contributions to creating employment needs improvement, available country evidence is quite compelling, as shown in Table 1.

The cooperative business model is often cited as placing more emphasis on job security, long-term perspective, and work quality for employees. Recent

Table 1: Employment in cooperatives in selected countries

Country	Number of jobs
United States	2 million
France	1 million
Italy	1.1 million
Brazil	274,000
Argentina	290,000
Kenya	250,000
Indonesia	300,000
India	100,000 dairy cooperatives employ 12 million women
Colombia	137,888 jobs through direct employment and an additional 559,118 jobs as worker-owners in worker cooperatives

Source: International Cooperatives Alliance, 2014 <http://ica.coop/en/whats-co-op/co-operative-facts-figures>

evidence has found that employment in employee-owned enterprises is less likely to be negatively affected by cyclical downturns and had greater levels of employment continuity over the recent economic downturn (see Box 6). A UK study found that employee-owned businesses were more likely to adopt longer-term horizons when investing in their business, invest more in human capital, and had a stronger focus on organic growth (Brown et al, 2014).

A recent book on capital and the debt trap (Bajo and Roelants, 2013) examined four case studies of large cooperatives that showed that enterprises organized and behaved according to cooperative principles - by which democratic control

### Box 6: Argentinian workers cooperatives retain jobs in the economic crisis

Argentinian workers cooperatives retain jobs in the economic crisis

Argentina experienced its most devastating economic crisis in December 2001, which plunged much of the country into poverty. The crisis coincided with the emergence of a phenomenon that has since been qualified as revolutionary: the *empresas recuperadas*, literally translated as 'recuperated' or 'recovered' companies. The workers who had lost their jobs due to factory closures following the crisis took over the companies, organized themselves into worker-cooperatives – without using the term or even knowing what organizational form they were creating – to keep the factories running, and secured their jobs in the converted *empresas recuperadas*.

Source: Howarth, 2007

goes together with joint ownership - have weathered the brunt of the crisis, and are even increasing employment and restructuring. The study suggests some reasons for this success:

- In the short term, cooperatives are member-based so rather than shedding labour, they think of new activities (productivity, exports, restructuring).
- Members are aware of an imminent crisis and can prepare for it, due to democratic structures and information sharing in real time.
- Since decision-making is participatory and income gaps small among members, cooperatives are more able to take hard decisions that are seen as legitimate.
- Safety and support funds guard against shocks, and common reserves that cannot be withdrawn guarantee financial stability.
- In the long term, cooperatives build pension and education mechanisms for members and target community needs with a long-term vision.
- Restructuring and entering new activities are standard practice for cooperatives.

Interestingly, an increasing body of evidence suggests that employee-owned businesses also outperform non-worker-owned enterprises in normal times, with higher financial returns and greater productivity (Logue and Yates, 2005). Research in the US has found a consistent positive relationship between employee-ownership and labour productivity. Past research across a number of countries within a range of different sectors suggests that employee-owned businesses provide higher financial returns, greater productivity levels, and higher levels of employment stability (Brown et al, 2014).

Other contributions to livelihoods and equitable growth documented for cooperatives include income security, jobs for rural communities, strengthening farmers' position in the value chain, employment in diverse sectors of the economy, spillover effects on employment, provision of infrastructure and other services, and social inclusion, as described below:

### **Income security**

Evidence from around the world also shows the contributions cooperatives have made in promoting decent work and providing income security, especially among those previously excluded. For instance, research on the dairy industry in India indicates that cooperative members enjoy higher and more secure incomes than non-members within the industry, particularly at the primary level of production. Similarly, recent research in Ethiopia's agricultural sector demonstrates how agricultural producers organized in cooperatives see

better incomes, more savings and reduced input costs, relative to those who are not (UNDESA, 2012).

#### **Jobs for rural communities**

As agriculture remains the major source of income and employment in rural areas and the majority of cooperatives are found in the agricultural sector, cooperatives play a key role in providing jobs to rural communities. They provide direct employment, as well as seasonal and casual work. However, cooperatives also maintain a farmer's ability to be self-employed given that for many farmers the fact that they are members of a cooperative and derive income from its services, allows them to continue to farm and contribute to rural community development. The impact of cooperatives in providing income to rural populations creates additional employment through multiplier effects, including enabling other rural enterprises to grow and in turn provide local jobs (ILC, 2007).

#### **Strengthening farmers' position in the value chain**

Cooperatives provide real economic benefits to agricultural families by increasing the stability of the farming sector, improving market access for their products and strengthening the farmers' position in the value chain. Improving farmers' living conditions supports rural development and preserves the viability of rural communities. Given that 70 per cent of the world's poor reside in rural areas, employment growth in rural areas should be strengthened by increasing agricultural productivity, and also through the creation of non-farm employment. With the increasing focus on the revival of the agricultural sector towards poverty reduction, policy-makers would do well to take the opportunity to further promote the cooperative model as a mechanism for employment creation in this sector.

#### **Spillover effects on employment**

Besides increasing income for members, there is also the spill-over effect of the cooperative sector on employment creation and income generation. Though very difficult to estimate, it is clear that a large number of people rely on the vibrancy of the cooperative movement for their income by providing inputs to cooperative enterprises or selling products from cooperatives at the marketplace. For instance in Kenya, a substantial number of entrepreneurs who are not members of cooperatives derive their income from trading in office stationery used in cooperatives, particularly SACCOs; packaging paper used by dairy cooperatives to pack products; machinery for primary processing of agricultural produce like coffee and milk; and farm inputs stocked in cooperative stores. Then there are people who earn some income by marketing products from cooperatives. Dairy cooperatives, for example, produce various products like fresh milk, ghee, butter and yoghurt while other agricultural cooperatives market coffee, fish, pyrethrum, etc. that are usually handled by non-member

entrepreneurs at some point in the marketing chain. It is estimated that over 10 per cent of the country's total population derive a significant part of their income from the activities and services of cooperatives (Wanyama, 2008; Wanyama et al, 2008).

### **Employment in diverse sectors of the economy**

An increasing number of worker-cooperatives worldwide provide employment to millions of worker-members in diverse sectors of the economy. Cooperatives are also major sources of employment in large-scale enterprises providing food-stuffs, services to consumers and financial services. Financial cooperatives provide people with secure institutions where they can deposit savings and access credit, which encourages the establishment of new enterprises and thus creates new jobs. In Europe alone, cooperatives employ more than 5 million individuals (Cooperatives Europe, 2013b).

### **Providers of infrastructure and other services**

Cooperatives are often the only provider of services in rural communities given that traditional companies can find it too costly to invest in these areas or anticipate unacceptable levels of economic return. This is the case, for example, for the provision of services like electricity or water supply that enables other enterprises to be established and grow. Lack of infrastructure has been identified as one of the main constraints on rural development

Further, the cooperative form of enterprise is flexible and so it can respond the needs of its members. For example, in a number of countries new forms of cooperatives are being formed, especially in rural areas. In rural Canada individuals, local authorities and other enterprises have chosen the cooperative form of enterprise to address service provision for their communities and in doing so are reducing rural-urban migration and preserving rural community culture. Other countries too are forming "community interest cooperatives" to address the needs of people in rural areas (ILC, 2007).

### **Social inclusion**

Cooperatives are also providing more quality job opportunities for youth, women, indigenous people, those with disabilities and other marginalized groups. The ability of cooperatives to integrate women and youth into the workforce is particularly important, as these groups face discrimination and poor opportunities for employment.

There is evidence that appropriately designed cooperative enterprises are particularly helpful for women; the women not only benefit greatly from the added security afforded by such group efforts but this form of social organization promotes the retention of economic gains accruing from their own initiative and innovation (Majurin, 2012).

Indigenous peoples have also used the cooperative model to create viable economic enterprises while still sustaining their cultural identity and way of life. Cooperative efforts have enabled more efficient utilization and adaptation of local resources and production methods, while strengthening the capacities of indigenous groups in negotiating for fairer market conditions.

For all these reasons, cooperatives are often seen as an inherently sustainable business model, with their “triple bottom line” of social, economic and environmental sustainability. The promotion and expansion of cooperatives could hence be an important instrument for achieving the SDGs. In light of the employment generation capacity of cooperatives, it becomes compelling for policy-makers at the local, national and international levels, to consider ways and means of mainstreaming the contribution of cooperatives to meet the employment challenge facing the world today. In this regard, an important consideration is how the employment creation impact of cooperatives can be scaled up to massively generate new employment opportunities in those areas where public and private sector initiatives are weak or absent.

## 3.9 SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Environment and natural resources are one of the three key dimensions of sustainable development. People rely on many of the resources that nature provides to cover basic needs - air, food, water, shelter, warmth and energy. These environmental assets also provide crucial ecosystem services such as regulating the climate, purifying water, absorbing and transforming waste, preventing disease and providing the genetic resources that are the basis for many medicines.

For society to be truly sustainable there is a need to understand the impact of people’s lives on nature and the resources it provides. This would help make decisions that minimize adverse impacts so that the natural systems can continue to support life. Scientists and primary producers are working together to better manage soil, water, vegetation and biodiversity so there will always be food to eat, fibre to use and a natural world to live in.

Cooperatives have contributed to the management of natural resources in a variety of ways. To ensure that natural resources are not depleted, cooperatives have provided a forum for local people to get involved in finding solutions to environmental change by defining their property and user rights, managing natural resources, and diversifying their economic activities to embrace green economic ventures.

The best examples of this are the forestry cooperatives that promote the sustainable use of tropical hardwood. In Indonesia, where much of the world’s teak comes from, native forests are often clear-cut. Consequently, the state has imposed several legal restrictions on the harvesting and transportation of teak,

resulting in fewer wood buyers who can, therefore, gain a monopoly over teak prices. Not being organized into groups that individual farmers are obliged to sell their teak for very low prices. To overcome this challenge and earn a livelihood from forest wood sustainably, a group of farmers in Konawe Selatan district partnered with The Forest Trust (TFT) and Jaringan Untuk Hutan (JAUH, Network for Forests) in 2003 organized themselves into a cooperative known as Koperasi Hutan Jaya Lestari (KHJL). With training from these organizations in livelihood strategies, community organizing, the technical aspects of forest management and wood processing, along with help to access international wood retailers seeking Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified products, the farmers can now manage their teak in a largely sustainable manner. In May 2005, the cooperative received FSC certification and is now producing certified sustainable teak for the international furniture market (Stories.coop, 2013b).

Some cooperatives are dedicated to helping individuals adopt more responsible patterns of consumption, thereby consuming fewer resources. Others support practices that return value to environmental resources. Cooperatives promote environmental sustainability through their creation of ecological knowledge and encouraging people to care for the environment, as well as reduced resource consumption and increased efficiency through cooperation. They also encourage environmental sustainability indirectly through the promotion of social and economic accountability, including equality and empowerment, democracy, local economic security and self-governance (Horwat, 2009).

Besides these normative practices that are embedded in the cooperative model of business, there is a growing number of environmental cooperatives around the world formed specifically to conserve the environment. These cooperatives are innovative associations of farmers and non-farmers alike at local or regional level, which promote activities relating to sustainable natural resource management and agriculture, and rural development in their locality. In most cases, the activities involve nature and landscape management, as well as the reduction of environmental pollution on the members' farms. They also include water management, tourism, production of quality regional foods and organic farming.

These cooperatives emerged in the early 1990s in response to the crisis of high-tech agriculture, concerns over the deteriorating public image of farming and, most of all, the increasing number of environmental regulations of the government. Notable is The Netherlands, with a growing number of environmental cooperatives (see Box 7). The first of these was established in 1992 as a self-help group with voluntary membership. It is estimated that there are now more than 125 environmental cooperatives in the country. Environmental cooperatives represent a new form of social organization that has become the most important vehicle through which farmers contribute to natural resource management and the evolution of agri-environment policy. These cooperatives allow Dutch

conservation agencies to develop environmental management contracts with groups (i.e. clubs) of land managers - allowing landscapes to be worked whole rather than piecemeal. Environmental schemes have developed options that allow joint applications by neighbouring farmers, allowing connectivity between habitats and the development of linear features across land under different management and ownership, forming corridors, stepping stones and allowing enhanced management of habitat edge effects (Franks and Mc Gloin, 2007).

The factors that have triggered the formation of environmental cooperatives have often been highly localized in nature. It is for this reason that each environmental cooperative tends to have a strong emphasis on locality and context in its portfolio of activities (Franks and Mc Gloin, 2007). A good example is the VEL & VANLA cooperative, a combination of the *Vereniging Eastermar's Lansdouwe* (VEL) and *Vereniging Agrarisch Natuur en Landschapsbeheer Achtkarspelen* (VANLA), in the Fryslân province in the northern part of the Netherlands. The state regulations on soil pollution, which threatened to block any further prospects for farm development in the area, triggered the formation of VEL and VANLA (Renting and Van Der Ploeg, 2001). The achievements of VEL and VANLA highlighted in Box 7 give an indication of the potential of environmental cooperatives for sustainable natural resource management.

Environmental cooperatives are also active in Italy, where social cooperatives provide services for the maintenance of public green spaces, urban waste collection and urban sanitation. The census of social cooperatives conducted by the *Istituto Nazionale di Statistica* (ISTAT) in 2003, reported approximately 400 such cooperatives operating in the green sector, which also includes agriculture and forestry. Municipal administrations have contracted the collection of certain types of waste and waste-recycling facilities to social cooperatives. Furthermore, the maintenance of public green spaces has also been outsourced to social cooperatives.

Cooperatives also work on private gardens and sanitize industrial areas, creating a macro-scale area of activity that can be designated as “hygiene services”. Some Italian social cooperatives have found it relatively easy to enter the market for the installation of solar panels. Though very few social cooperatives have entered the more industrial phases of the waste cycle, the most innovative social cooperatives in Italy are shifting toward waste prevention and reuse. In other words, these organizations have developed initiatives with low technological, but high cultural content that enable them to promote more moderate consumption and conduct workshops to repair discarded—but otherwise functional—goods for re-sale (Osti, 2012).

In developing countries, waste pickers often work in poor conditions, with lack of physical infrastructure and training, while contributing significantly cleaning

up the environment. They lose a significant amount of profit to middlemen who sell the recyclables to industry. In an effort to circumvent the middlemen and increase their profits, waste pickers have taken to forming cooperatives; some of which are engaged in recycling waste to increase income while at the same time ameliorating problems of final disposal of solid waste in landfills with exhausted capacity. Accordingly, waste pickers have successfully established cooperatives in Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Philippines, India and Indonesia, among other countries, where the members of the cooperatives benefit from increased incomes. In some cases, such cooperatives also provide welfare services such as scholarships and insurance. Furthermore, the cooperatives have helped to dignify waste picker activities, which is also sanitizing environmental conservation (Medina, 2005; Tirado-Soto and Zamberlan, 2013).

### Box 7: The achievements of VEL and VANLA

In the early 1990s the farmers in the Fryslân Woodlands were worried. They were concerned that small-scale farming wouldn't remain viable unless they followed the path of intensification of production and scale enlargement. Furthermore, they witnessed a growing tension between agricultural production, nature conservation and landscape preservation. Pressure for dairy farming with low production costs in the midst of reducing farm sizes left little room for landscape and nature management. The Dutch government had also issued a series of environmental rules and regulations to reduce the impact of agriculture on environment. The increasing body of rules and regulations on environment and nature conservation were seen as difficult to implement, badly balanced and contradicting each other.

The response to this situation was the establishment of VEL and VANLA environmental cooperatives as a means for the farmers to create more room for self-regulation and develop locally effective means to realize environmental objectives. These cooperatives opted to integrate environmental, nature and landscape objectives in their farming practices by taking full responsibility for the governance of landscape preservation. By observing their own farming regulations, cooperative members have reduced the level of environmental pollution of their farming operations through reduced use of external inputs and a more efficient use of internal farm resources. At least 270 ha of land is under special meadow birds and botanic protection, 240 kilometres of hedgerows and 220 ponds are actively managed, with a positive impact on local natural resources. The cooperative also help members to take up new activities to diversify farm revenues, as evidenced by agri-tourism. The activities with the local tourist agency have substantially improved the reputation of the area as a tourist destination, creating new opportunities for the farms in the area. These cooperatives have also contributed to important cost reductions. Farmers now spend less time on bureaucratic regulations and manage their farms more efficiently. There is also a sharp reduction in state control costs as monitoring is now conducted, to a large extent, by the cooperatives themselves, while external state control is reduced to one visit in several years.

Sources: Renting and Van Der Ploeg, 2001; Stuvier, Van Der Ploeg, and Leeuwis (2003) Wiskerke et al., 2003

#### 3.10 GOOD GOVERNANCE

Responsible and effective governance has been identified in the post-2015 process as an enabler for socio-economic transformation and the eradication of structural inequality, as well as an end in itself. The new development agenda provides the opportunity for societies to shift to a more just world, where resources are shared more equitably and people have a greater say in the decisions that affect their lives. Cooperatives have an important role to play in this process.

First, one of the principles of cooperatives is democratic member control. The equal voting rights of cooperative enterprises, on the basis of one member, one vote, impart the necessary and legitimate representativeness to make them key actors in the social dialogue process especially in rural and informal economy settings. Good governance characteristics such as transparency, responsibility, accountability, participation, responsiveness to the people's needs, and respect for the rule of law, are also features of the cooperative identity. Deeply rooted in the community they operate, cooperatives can empower people by enabling even the poorest segments of the population to participate in economic progress. Furthermore, by creating a platform for local development initiatives they bring together a range of community institutions to foster opportunities for decent work and social inclusion (ILO, 2003) Cooperatives can be schools for practicing democracy first hand through participation and control (ICA, 2013b).

Second, cooperatives and cooperative members, in their dual role as stakeholders and owners or controllers, can provide an important voice in the global debate on governance and transparency. Strong and legitimate governance institutions, including social enterprises like cooperatives, are needed to ensure that the benefits of development are equally shared and sustainable over time. In Britain, for example, the retail co-operative movement has been concerned with social as well as economic aims since its origins. In more recent times, it has been an early supporter both of the Fair Trade movement and of ethical banking. The first adopters of the new Fair Tax Mark, to be awarded to companies that meet their corporate tax obligations fully and transparently, have been included the cooperative and social enterprise family (Bibby, 2014).

A vibrant economy, universal human wellbeing and a healthy environment are needed to go beyond the realization of static development goals by embracing a form of governance based on mutually reinforcing actions from household to global levels. The argument is that the post-2015 development framework should also focus on providing poorer people with the capabilities to choose and enact their own pathways to sustainable development (STEPS, 2012).

To this end, equitable participatory processes, transparency and accountability are essential to building the necessary cooperation among communities,

**Box 8: Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade: Governance is key**

Collectively members own their co-operative, and through democratic arrangements they participate in its governance. Individually they have a right to information, a voice, and representation ... There is good evidence to suggest that providing consumers and workers with a voice inside organisations produces better, more intelligent and responsive forms of business.

Source: ICA (2013), "Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade"

governments, businesses and other stakeholders in the quest to achieve sustainable development. The challenge is to identify the institutional framework for ensuring this form of governance. What can be learned from the cooperative model?

It should be recalled that one of the cooperative principles is democratic member control. This principle affirms that cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and decision-making processes. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives members have equal voting rights ("one member, one vote") and cooperatives at other levels are also organized in a democratic manner. All members are, therefore, equal decision-makers in the organization. This form of governance is based on the cooperative values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, cooperative members believe in the ethical ideals of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. Thus, the principle of democratic member control along with the cooperative values and ethical ideals have bequeathed cooperatives a distinct identity and governance culture that resonates with good governance.

The concept of good governance refers to the process of making decisions in the management of public affairs that is transparent, accountable, participatory, responsive, effective and efficient, follows the rule of law, and inclusive and equitable. As these are features of cooperative identity as well as good governance, cooperatives are well positioned to contribute to good governance in societies around the world.

This does not mean that cooperatives automatically have good governance. Implementing the democratic decision-making model has sometimes been a challenge for cooperatives, with issues such as poorly defined property rights and membership apathy. Governance challenges are being countered by innovative responses, such as formulating codes of conduct for management boards in cooperatives. The ILO's Recommendation 193 provides an international

standard that has helped with re-vamping new cooperative laws and policies in ninety-seven countries around the world (ILO, 2002).

Case studies by the ILO's COOP<sup>AFRICA</sup> technical cooperation program confirmed that the institutional set-up of the cooperative model with its general assemblies, elected and co-opted boards of directors, management committees and different controlling agencies is well-suited to make collective decision-making conflict-low and to a certain extent predictable. Nonetheless, this often implies a lot of member education, deliberations and internal debate, as shown in the COOP<sup>AFRICA</sup> case study on the fast-growing Rooibos cooperative in South Africa (Wanyama et al., 2008)

Though cooperative governance is a rather unique model that embodies the best ideals of good governance, implementing democratic principles has sometimes proved to be daunting. For instance, a recent study of agricultural marketing cooperatives in South Africa indicates that cooperatives' performance has been affected by institutional and governance problems. Institutional problems, which stem from poorly defined property rights in traditional cooperatives, give rise to low levels of equity and debt capital, reliance on government funding, low levels of investment and subsequent loss of members. Governance problems are strongly linked to the ballot system (absence of secret ballot), low levels of education, lack of production and management skills training, weak marketing arrangements and consequent low returns to members as patrons or investors (Chibanda et al., 2009).

Similarly, a study of Spanish credit cooperatives has revealed difficulties in implementing the democratic decision-making model, in which decisions emanate directly from the members' General assembly and indirectly from the members' representatives on the Management Board. It shows that there is membership apathy as evidenced by the low attendance rates at members' meetings, the few times that members speak at these meetings and the very low level of questions referring to the operations of the cooperative that they ask when they speak. Thus, there is low participation in cooperative decision-making, but members do mobilize to affirm their positions whenever there is a management decision that threatens the identity of the cooperative. For instance, the attempt to merge *Cajamar* and *Caja Rural del Duero* cooperatives in 2007 saw members mobilize to resist the interference from outside. Though members assert themselves in the making of critical decisions that could affect their cooperatives, a major challenge for Spanish credit cooperatives is to strengthen a participation culture among their members to ensure that managerial performance responds to the objective of meeting the financial needs of their members and users (Chaves et al., 2008).

Nevertheless, such governance challenges are being countered by innovative responses. For instance, cooperatives are increasingly formulating codes of

conduct for their management boards to ensure that member interests and goals prevail in the governance of the cooperatives (Ernst and Young, 2012). Thus, the innovative spirit of the cooperative movement still provides lessons for good governance that is central to the realization of sustainable development.

### 3.11 PROMOTION OF STABLE AND PEACEFUL SOCIETIES

Peace and stability are fundamental ingredients of sustainable development in society. This can best be understood by considering the impact of armed conflict on development. Conflict undercuts or destroys environmental, physical, human and social capital, diminishing available opportunities for sustainable development. It is in this regard that conflict adversely affects human well-being, quality of life, the capabilities of people to live the kinds of lives they value, and the real choices they have. Livelihoods are directly affected through decreased access to land, and inadequate access to natural resources as a result of exclusion, displacement and the loss of biodiversity. Furthermore, personal or inter-group conflict erodes inclusion among people by exaggerating sanguine notions of ‘community’, ‘group’ or ‘nation’ as axes of organization that facilitate violence against others perceived as different.

A pressing challenge in peace building, therefore, consists of finding ways to restore the interpersonal or intergroup relationships that have been eroded as a result of conflict (Staub, 2003). It is against this background that societal stability and peace become fundamental for sustainable development.

In the aftermath of violent social conflict in many places around the world, cooperatives have often emerged as sources of ‘positive social capital’, fostering a strong sense of community, participation, empowerment and inclusion among its members and restoring interpersonal relationships. For instance, a case-study of two cooperatives in post-genocide Rwanda, shows that in addition to dealing with structural causes of grievances – poverty, discrimination and exploitation – the cooperatives also provide emotional support for members dealing with loneliness and seeking justice (Sentama, 2009). Furthermore, the cooperatives aim to promote social inclusion and reconciliation by fostering positive dialogue among members of different communities, thereby seeking to replace fear, suspicion, anger and hatred with hope and peace.

Another example is from women’s cooperatives in Nepal. This country emerged from a ten-year long Maoist insurgency in 2006, which claimed the lives of several hundreds and resulted in widespread displacement, loss of property, and destruction of infrastructure. The total casualties due to rebel and army activity in the conflict are estimated at around 12,700 (Douglas, 2005). Shima and Ghale (2007) have illustrated how, during and after the conflict, cooperatives in conflict-affected rural areas helped women to survive, to manage their livelihood

options and to look after their families through the provision of credit extension services, counselling and skills development training. In the post-conflict period when the country embarked on adjusting to newly established democracy, women's cooperatives worked at the grassroots levels to raise consciousness and political participation among citizens, overcoming several challenges and obstacles in the process (Ramnarain, 2011). Shima and Ghale (2007) argue that one reason cooperatives in Nepal were able to play the role of mediator during the Maoist insurgency was embedded in the very operating principles of these cooperatives, *viz.* transparency, flexibility, pride of local ownership, democratic functioning and a concern for community. Through these principles, cooperatives were able to (re)build trust among members of the community and emerge as voices of justice and peace in the aftermath of the Maoist insurgency.

In India, the state of Gujarat has seen inter-household tensions in the form of severe communal rioting in the recent past. Ahmadabad city, in particular, has had a history of communal riots in the post-independence period with violence exploding several times over the past five decades. The communal violence in 2002 was arguably the most horrific, with massive loss of life, destruction of property, loss of livelihoods and particularly grievous perpetration of sexual violence against women. During and in the aftermath of the 2002 communal riots, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Federation intervened in the relief camps by providing much needed relief to displaced riot victims. Besides running four of these camps, SEWA Federation and its cooperatives also stepped in to provide women in the camps with some means of livelihood, access to basic health care, childcare, and counselling. Employment was generated for 805 women in these camps through the provision of stitching and craft work. In the aftermath of the riots, SEWA Federation's cooperatives continued its work with the women in these camps through the Shantipath programs carried out with the support of the Canadian Cooperative Association and other donors. Thus, SEWA Federation and its cooperatives significantly contributed to peace-building by promoting reconciliation and amity between the two communities (Ramnarain, 2011).

Cooperatives have also contributed to rebuilding societies after conflict. This is exemplified by a women's cooperative in Lebanon. In July 2006, Dayr Qanoun Ras al Ayn, a village in southern Lebanon, was heavily shelled by the Israeli bombing. Homes, lives and livelihoods were destroyed. A women's cooperative with 20 members that produced traditional foodstuffs, mostly jams, pickles and dried herbs, sought support from the Land & People Relief Programme of the American University of Beirut to rebuild the community. By identifying and reviving local and traditional products that faced extinction in the aftermath of the bombing, the cooperative expanded its market from immediate neighbours to the larger village and emigrants who visit the village every year. Today, these revitalized products have not only contributed to the

incomes of the 20 cooperative members, but have also helped to rebuild the memory of the village following its destruction by the bombing (Esim and Omeira, 2009).

These case studies clearly illustrate how women's cooperatives have supported their members in mediating conflict and building peace. Cooperatives have emerged as sources of emotional, moral and political support for women, as spaces for their collective voices and action to flourish, and as guardians of peace alongside their financial and/or production roles. They have also been significant mobilizers for addressing deep-seated prejudices and inequalities, as effective 'schools of democracy' and participation, and as powerful platforms through which the members of these cooperatives are able not just to intervene in domestic and social conflicts but also to transform public consciousness and undertake social transformation. The cooperatives have succeeded in many cases to unify and mobilize women into a significant collective force for peace. The case studies illustrate that cooperatives and their members can be powerful agents of a bottom-up approach to peace building and that women's cooperatives indeed have a significant role to play as brokers of peace and development (Ramnarain, 2011).

### **3.12 GLOBAL ENABLING ENVIRONMENT AND LONG-TERM FINANCE**

The last of the twelve proposed SDGs concerns the creation of a global enabling environment to support an open, fair and friendly trading system and ensure stability of the global financial system.

This is particularly important for bridging the development gap between developed and developing countries. Poor countries encounter barriers to trade and patent restrictions in their attempts to get access to technology in the developed countries in the midst of a growing debt burden that has already become unsustainable. Indeed, the unsustainable debt is increasingly attracting a consensus that developed countries need more trade opportunities instead of aid to develop. Conversely, poor countries also have some positive contributions to growth in developed countries. There are natural resources in developing countries that can spur further economic growth in developed countries to the global benefit. Thus, a global enabling environment that can facilitate the exchange of opportunities to realize sustainable development is needed.

As has already been pointed out, cooperatives contribute to the creation of a global enabling environment by closing the trade gap between the developed and developing countries to enhance development. Through fair trade, for instance, they have helped alter the imbalanced trade relationship between the different regions of the world. Today, thanks to cooperatives, there is a wide

and growing range of fair trade products including coffee, tea, handicrafts, cocoa, sugar, bananas, honey, wine and flowers, among many others.

For example, in Nicaragua, Promotora de Desarrollo Cooperativo de Las Segovias (PRODECOOP) is a fair trade coffee export cooperative that is part of the larger worldwide fair trade network that has the goal of promoting social change by increasing the incomes of farming families in developing nations. PRODECOOP was established in 1993 to provide its member farmers with assistance in sustainably producing and marketing their coffee. Based in Esteli, Nicaragua, it includes 45 cooperatives with more than 2,420 families, most of whom typically farm 7 to 11 acres. PRODECOOP markets its members' coffee to Europe and the US and provides much-needed loans for rehabilitating and improving coffee production. Additionally, it provides advice and technical assistance to farmers with the goal of improving self-management capabilities and productive capacity for the member cooperatives. PRODECOOP is also a leader in the organic coffee movement. Almost all of their members grow their coffee organically under the shade of the forest canopy, resulting in better soil conservation, reduced pollution of streams and groundwater, and the preservation of songbird habitat in the trees above the coffee. The coffee production is often integrated with other crops like corn, beans and bananas, which are grown for household consumption (Global Exchange, 2011).

In West Africa, the case of Kuapa Kokoo Limited in Ghana also provides an example of how cooperatives are closing the trading gap between the north and the south. Kuapa Kokoo started in 1993 as a limited liability company using a cooperative model and subsequently was transformed into a sophisticated multipurpose cooperative organization. It has about 50,000 farmer members spread across 1,650 village societies and supplies 10 per cent of Ghana's cocoa production. It is the largest cooperative in Ghana and is often cited as a success story in the field of fair trade through which most of its products are sold. The cooperative has five main subsidiaries: Kuapa Kokoo Farmers Union; Kuapa Kokoo Limited; Kuapa Kokoo Credit Union; Kuapa Kokoo Farmers Trust; and Divine Chocolate Company. Among these subsidiaries, Kuapa Kokoo Farmers' Union is the primary organization of the cocoa farmers and it is basically a production cooperative. Just as the meaning of its name implies (Kuapa Kokoo simply means "good cocoa farming" in the local *Twi* language), the cooperative embraced fair trade to enhance better farming practices for the production of high quality cocoa so as to improve the social, economic and political wellbeing of its members. In 1997, members of Kuapa Kokoo Farmers Union at their 4th Annual General Meeting resolved to set up a chocolate Company in the United Kingdom to manufacture chocolates using "Papa Paa" ("best of the best" in *Twi* language) cocoa beans produced by members themselves. In partnership with Twin Trading, UK and supported by the Body Shop, Christian Aid and Comic relief, the then Day Chocolate Company was formed in the United Kingdom

in 1998, with Kuapa Kokoo owning a third of its shares. Divine Chocolate Company has since grown into a unique fair trade company with a trading system that allows members of Kuapa Kokoo to own the majority stake in the company and share in its profits. It has extended its business beyond the United Kingdom to the USA. Owning shares of the Divine Chocolate offers members of Kuapa Kokoo multiple benefits as it not only gives them a voice in the global trade of chocolate, but it earns them profits that are invested in social projects (Kuapa Kokoo website).

The list of examples of cooperatives in the south that are using fair trade, organic and other produce labelling to obtain better trading terms with the north can be very long. What is clearly apparent is that the fair trade mechanism is increasingly helping link up cooperatives in the south to markets in the north, with rebates for ethical production and marketing of products being used to support a variety of social development projects in local communities in the south. It is in this way that cooperatives are contributing to the creation of a global enabling environment to chaperon sustainable development.

Cooperatives are also significantly contributing to the stabilization of the global financial system. They have fared well in overcoming the instabilities caused by the economic crisis which started in 2007 largely because of the ability to control debt and hold onto common reserves. Cooperatives and cooperative members have a dual role as stakeholders and owners or controllers. In terms of capital, members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Thus, it is the customer-owned business model that has made them so resilient in a downturn (Birchall, 2013). Diverse studies show that those organized and behaving according to cooperative principles, by which democratic control goes together with joint ownership, have weathered the brunt of the crisis, and are even increasing employment and restructuring. Thus, amid the crisis, cooperatives offer hope, resilience and innovation (Bajo, 2013).

Besides thriving during financial crises, it should also be recalled here that financial cooperatives are some of the best means for financial deepening. They provide the financial base for other kinds of development activities in many parts of the world. In most cases, they are the only formal financial organizations available, particularly in remote rural areas, where members can save and borrow money to develop their own businesses. For instance, in Rwanda, the *Union des Banques Populaires*, a savings and credit federation, has a huge membership of close to 400,000 and employs 600 members of staff. It has accumulated US\$ 44 million in savings; it has expended US\$ 36 million in loans; and makes an average annual surplus of US\$ 1.5 million. The union is increasingly becoming instrumental in the provision of risk coverage to SACCOs in

the country, thereby strengthening SACCOs' capacity to serve a larger clientele (Nyamwasa, 2008). Cooperatives also provide micro-insurance in the form of health insurance and death benefits. It is in these ways that cooperatives ensure stability of the global financial system for long-term finance.

## 4. The way forward to the Sustainable Development Goals: Cooperatives have a key role to play

Cooperatives are already present in all the areas that the proposed Sustainable Development Goals envisage the direction the world will take in its journey to make sustainable development a reality. Although cooperatives are central to the realization of sustainable development around the world, with their focus on members and local needs, they have not always been proactive in national and international debates. With little visibility at national and international levels, the potential and importance of the contribution that cooperatives can make to the design and realization of SDGs seems to have been missed by policy makers at respective levels. This explains the relatively limited visibility and attention that cooperatives are enjoying in the debate on the post-2015 development agenda.

This debate should not just build on cooperative experiences, but should also accommodate the voices of the cooperative movement. This is particularly important because, as was the case in the implementation of the MDGs, the realization of the proposed SDGs will most likely require the active participation of cooperatives and such participation needs to be elicited right at the point of formulating the goals.

There is a widely held consensus among many actors, including the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, and the International Co-operative Alliance, that the cooperative enterprise is the type of organization that best meets all dimensions of reducing poverty and exclusion. This is because the way cooperatives help to reduce poverty is important - they identify economic opportunities for their members; empower the disadvantaged to defend their interests; provide security to the poor by allowing them to convert individual risks into collective risks; and mediate member access to assets that they utilize to earn a living.

Cooperatives are contributing towards gender equality, not just by increasing female membership, but by expanding opportunities for women in local

economies and societies in many parts of the world. They support access to quality education and life-long learning opportunities by providing the means for financing education; supporting schools; establishing their own schools to provide quality education to both the youth and adults; and by serving as centres for lifelong learning. Cooperatives ensure healthy lives by creating the infrastructure for delivering health care services; financing health care and providing home-based health care services to people living with HIV/AIDS, among others.

Cooperatives contribute to food security by helping small farmers, fisher folk, livestock keepers, forest holders and other producers to solve numerous challenges that confront them in their endeavours to produce food. They are increasingly becoming major actors in facilitating access to clean water and sanitation services to make up for the failures of both the public and private sectors. Energy cooperatives are contributing to the achievement of the sustainable energy goals of energy access, energy efficiency, and reduced emissions.

Cooperatives play a significant role in employment creation and income generation, with more than 100 million jobs worldwide. Recent evidence has found that cooperatives are more resilient and perform better during financial and economic crises.

Whereas environmental cooperatives are spearheading the sustainable management of natural resources for posterity, the cooperative governance model can easily provide the framework for equitable participatory processes that guarantee transparency and accountability in cooperation with communities, governments, businesses and other stakeholders to realize sustainable development.

In the aftermath of violent conflict in many places around the world, cooperatives have often emerged as sources of ‘positive social capital’, fostering a strong sense of community, participation, empowerment and inclusion among its members and restoring interpersonal relationships and peace. Women’s cooperatives have been especially active as brokers of peace and development.

Finally, cooperatives also contribute to the creation of a global enabling environment for sustainable development by closing the trade gap between the developed and developing world; by stabilizing financial systems during crises; and by providing the base for financial deepening around the world.

## Recommendations

For all these reasons, cooperatives can be seen as an inherently sustainable business model, contributing to the “triple bottom line” of social, economic and environmental sustainability. To this end, the recommendations are:

*The United Nations should recognize* the role of cooperatives in the realization of sustainable development by including cooperatives in the indicators, targets and funding mechanisms for the Sustainable Development Goals.

*Cooperatives should be proactive* by getting involved in discussions at all levels (local, national, regional and international) on the post-2015 development agenda in order to secure the opportunity to share their experiences on the realization of sustainable development.

*National, regional and international cooperative organizations* should enhance their representation and advocacy roles to improve the presence and voice of cooperatives in the post-2015 development agenda and the wider international policy debates.

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# Annex I: Survey Questions

## I. Institutions

### 1. What type of institution are you associated with? (Please tick as appropriate)

- Primary Cooperative
- Cooperative Union
- Cooperative federation
- Cooperative support institution
- A national cooperative support institution
- Government Institution responsible for cooperatives
- Others: Please indicate

## II. Involvement of Cooperatives in the promotion of the Millennium Development Goals

### 2. Based upon a four point rating scale, how would you rate your institution's contribution to the Millennium Development Goals?

Millennium Development Goals	Four -point rating scale			
4=very significant, 3=significant, 2=not very significant and 1=insignificant				
Eradicating Extreme Hunger and Poverty	1	2	3	4
Achieving Universal Primary Education	1	2	3	4
Promoting Gender Equality and Empower Women	1	2	3	4
Reducing Child Mortality	1	2	3	4
Improving Maternal Health	1	2	3	4
Combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases	1	2	3	4
Ensuring Environmental Sustainability	1	2	3	4
Developing a Global Partnership for Development	1	2	3	4

**3. What was the nature of involvement of the institution that you are associated with in achieving the above development goals? (Please mark all that apply)**

- Providing logistic support
- Contributing to research
- Providing training
- Providing financial support
- Direct project implementation
- Sharing knowledge through publications, organizing conferences
- Participating and contributing to discussion platforms organized around the above-mentioned goals
- Other ways of involvement (please indicate) .....

**4. At what level were your institution's contributions to issues related to sustainable development?**

- A.  Local     National     Regional     International
- B. Would you briefly explain what your contributions are or were about? (In 2 or 3 sentences)

**III. About the post-2015 development agenda framework**

**5. In which of the following consultations, organized on the post-2015 development agenda, did your institution participate? (Please mark all that apply)**

- Thematic consultation     National consultation
- Regional consultatio     None

**6. If you didn't participate in the consultations around the post-2015 development agenda, what do you think prevented your institution from participating? (Please mark all that apply)**

- It is not our focus area
- We didn't know about the consultation process
- We were not invited/included in the consultations
- Lack of expertise in the area
- Others reasons: Please indicate

**7. Do you think the proposed goals are in line with the priorities of your organization?**

Yes     No

**8. Based upon a four point rating scale, how would you rate the potential of cooperatives to contribute to the achievement of the following goals? (Please mark the point you deem most appropriate)**

Proposed Sustainable Development Goals	Four -point rating scale			
4=very efficient , 3=efficient, 2=inefficient and 1=very inefficient				
Poverty Reduction	1	2	3	4
Promotion of Gender Equality	1	2	3	4
Quality education and lifelong learning	1	2	3	4
Health Promotion	1	2	3	4
Food Security and good nutrition	1	2	3	4
Access to water and sanitation	1	2	3	4
Sustainable Energy	1	2	3	4
Employment Creation, livelihoods and equitable growth	1	2	3	4
Natural Resources management	1	2	3	4
Good governance	1	2	3	4
Promotion of stable and peaceful societies	1	2	3	4
Enabling environment and long-term finance	1	2	3	4

**9. Of the twelve areas above, please list the top three most important goals in your opinion in priority order**

1	
2	
3	

#### IV. Cooperatives, vibrancy, employment and decent work

**10. Looking at the last ten years, which following statements reflect the reality for cooperatives in your country/region?**

- 1. The number of cooperatives:  
 increased     decreased     remained unchanged
- 2. Individual membership:  
 increased     decreased     remained unchanged
- 3. The governmental support:  
 increased     decreased     remained unchanged
- 4. The number of people employed by cooperatives:  
 increased     decreased     remained unchanged

**11. Has your institution been involved with the promotion of decent work and job creation?**

- Yes     No

**12. If yes, how have you been involved?**

- Contributing to Jobs creation
- Advocating for and promoting social protection to all
- Promoting freedom of association
- Other: (please indicate) .....

**13. How do you think cooperatives could play a bigger role in contributing to achieving the proposed goals?**

**14. Are there any cooperative case studies/success stories/good practices that you would like to share?**

**15. Do you have any other observations you would like to share either on the challenges or opportunities for cooperative in your country? (any available figures)**

**16. Please provide contact information if you would be willing to talk with us further (Optional)**

Name of respondent:.....

Institution:.....

Email: .....

Telephone: .....

## Annex II: Interviewees

Name	Organization
João de Azevedo	Independent Consultant (Portugal)
Peter Couchman	Plunkett Foundation (UK)
Kofi Ansong Denkyi	MDG Centre (Senegal)
Mirna De Hart	IMAC Services (South Africa)
Lekh Nath Dhakal	Nepal Information and Communication Central Cooperative Union
Ingrid Fischer	Canadian Co-operative Association International Development Division
Raul Montemayor	Federation of Free Farmers Cooperatives (Philippines)
Judith Nthiga	Cooperative Alliance of Kenya
Romulo Villamin	Coop Institute (Philippines)
Yoshiko Yamada	JWCU (Japan)

Sustainability is recognized as one of the five pillars of the International Co-operative Alliance's (ICA) Blueprint for a Cooperative Decade, which aims to position cooperatives as builders of economic, social and environmental sustainability by 2020. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) highlighted decent work as a central goal and driver for sustainable development and a more environmentally sustainable economy. In order to bring cooperative voices into the discussion around the post-2015 development agenda, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and ICA launched an initiative on the contribution of cooperatives to sustainable development.

This report is an integral part of this initiative. Its main recommendations include: Increased and more visible participation and engagement of the cooperative movement in the discussions around the post-2015 development agenda for sustainable development; and further involvement and acknowledgement of the cooperative model by the international community in the processes leading on to sustainable development goals. Cooperatives have much more to offer in ensuring inclusive and democratic sustainable development beyond 2015, and this publication and the wider initiative are an important step towards this objective.

This report is complemented by two briefs: one based on a survey on cooperative movement's engagement in sustainable development, and another one providing policy highlights on the topic.

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