

International
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Advancing gender equality: The co-operative way



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The co-operative way

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Cooperative Muszinianka (Poland) © Lydie Nesvadba

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Introduction

The adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 laid the foundation for action towards gender equality in all aspects of economic, social, cultural and political life. Twenty years later, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Co-operative Alliance (Alliance) have joined together to assess how one particular sector—the co-operative movement—is impacting (and is impacted by) progress towards women’s empowerment and gender equality.

Great strides have been made towards gender equality over the last two decades. Nevertheless, deep gender disparities persist across the globe, surfacing in labour markets, as well as other realms. Compared to men, women continue to earn less, are more likely to partake in unpaid labour, and are more apt to be excluded from decent work and opportunities for advancement. As gender equity is increasingly seen as a pillar for sustainable economic development and broad social well-being, alternative models to development which incorporate women’s equality in work are needed. Rooted in values of self-help, equality, and equity, as well as economic growth through cooperation and democratic processes, co-operative enterprises are well-positioned to answer this call.

The *Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade*, adopted by the General Assembly of Alliance in 2012, set forth key ambitions for the co-operative movement. According to the *Blueprint*, one critical area for co-operative development is creating economic opportunities for marginalized populations—especially women. Another key area is to, “elevate participation within membership and governance to a new level”, which entails expanding membership to include more women and further engaging women members in co-operative democratic processes. Despite a push for gender equity in co-operative policy and practice, little evidence has documented whether and in what ways co-operatives affect women’s empowerment and gender equity. The present report aims to address this knowledge gap.

Drawing on surveys and interviews with experts and practitioners from the co-operative, labour and women’s movements, this report sets forth a preliminary review of the interface between the co-operative movement, women’s empowerment and gender equality. The findings suggest that various manifestations of gender equity have been achieved across the co-operative movement, and that the co-operative model is particularly adept at addressing women’s empowerment and gender equality concerns. However, the findings also identify various obstacles to women’s empowerment and gaps in gender equality that persist within the co-operative movement. In responding to these obstacles and gaps, the report sets forth recommendations for policy and practice. It also indicates areas that warrant further research.

The International Co-operative Alliance (Alliance) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) define a co-operative as “an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.”

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

Methodology

In an effort to set forth a comprehensive understanding of the interface between co-operatives, women's empowerment and gender equality, a dual-method research approach was employed. First, an online survey was administered, which yielded a large range of perspectives from around the world. Next, follow-up interviews were conducted with key informants, which expanded survey results with specific and in-depth information.

Survey

The online survey was administered utilizing SurveyMonkey and disseminated through the ILO and Alliance networks in February 2015.¹ The objective of the survey was to gauge perceptions amongst practitioners, academics, and members of NGO and government institutions concerning: the impact of co-operatives on women's empowerment and gender equality generally and in comparison to other business forms; barriers hindering their implications; the progress made in achieving strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform's actions related to co-operatives and barriers to this progress; and the role of government in facilitating the capacity of co-operatives to impact women's empowerment and gender equality.

Survey questions asked for demographic data on the respondents, as well as questions concerning the finances, location, membership, and sectoral participation of co-operatives. Questions were also asked probing the respondents' understanding of gender equality, the role of co-operatives in creating this equality, power differentials in economic organizations, and the role of international and national organizations in facilitating equality within co-operative organizations (see Annex 1 for survey questions).

Ultimately, 581 participants responded to the online survey. The survey results were analysed using statistical text analysis tools made available through SurveyMonkey. Reports on the results were then created using easy-to-understand charts and graphs.

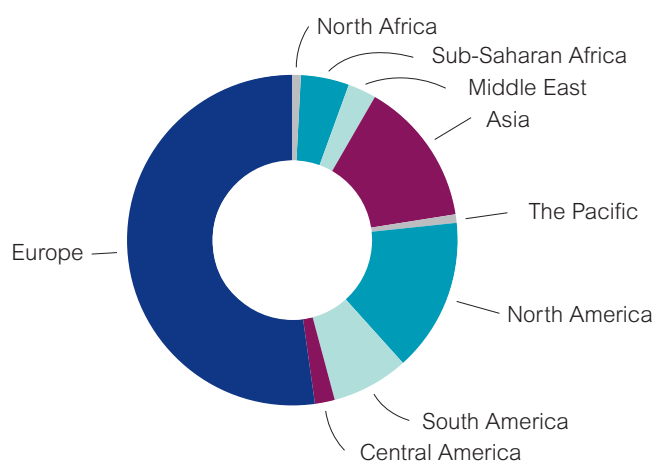
Of the 581 respondents, 64 per cent responded to the survey in English, 23 per cent in Spanish and 12 per cent in French. 50 per cent of the respondents were from primary co-operatives, and another 30 per cent were academics or from co-operative federations

¹ SurveyMonkey is a popular online service that allows users to create web browser based surveys. Its design is user-friendly, and it is very easy both to create the questionnaire and to complete it. At the same time, SurveyMonkey does not allow a high level of customization, and there are a number of limitations for creating elaborate survey questionnaires. <https://www.surveymonkey.com>

and co-operative support institutions. Approximately 75 per cent of respondents were between the ages of 30 and 60, which suggests that the majority of respondents were professionally active, thus well poised to speak to a wide range of experiences. About 66 per cent of the respondents were female.

50 per cent of the survey respondents identified themselves as being from Europe, 15 per cent from Asia, and 15 per cent from North America. Responses from other regions were relatively low, with 10 per cent from South and Central America, 5 per cent from sub-Saharan Africa, and 3 per cent from the Middle East and North Africa. Low response in the latter regions is possibly due to factors such as the languages of the survey and the extent of survey dissemination networks in these regions.

Survey respondents by location



Respondents were asked to indicate the sector with which they are most familiar. A quarter of the respondents selected the financial sector (i.e. 24 per cent chose banking and 1 per cent chose insurance). Another quarter of the respondents identified industry and services as the sector with which they are most familiar (24 per cent). Respectively, 19 per cent noted agriculture and 13 per cent mentioned retail as the sector with which they are most familiar. An equal number of respondents identified with each of the three co-operative forms: producer, consumer, and worker co-operatives.

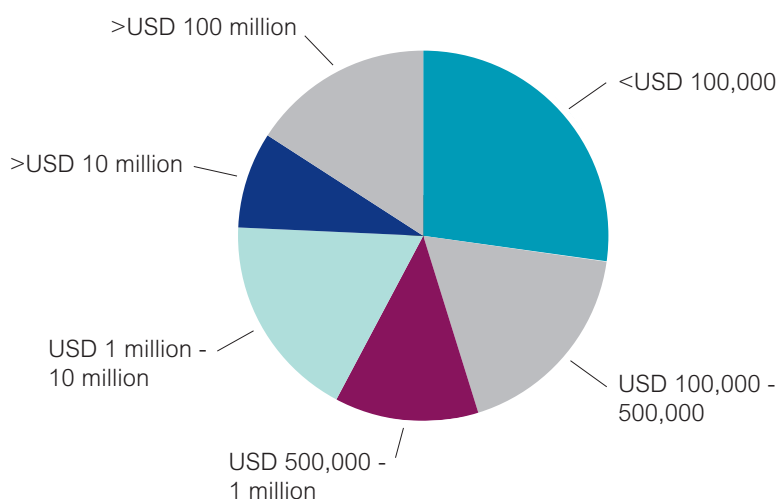
Almost 30 per cent of respondents indicated that they are most familiar with co-operatives that earn an estimated income of less than USD 100,000 per year, and about 65 per cent reported to be most familiar with co-operatives with an estimated income of less than USD one million. These figures illustrate that the survey captured the perspective of smaller and emerging co-operatives.



Over 75 per cent of survey respondents believe that co-operatives have improved participation of women over the past 20 years.

Overall, the respondents represented a broad diversity of knowledge and backgrounds, which bolstered the results of the survey on a global and cross-sectoral scale.

Co-operatives described in the survey, by size of annual budget



Interviews

A total of 14 follow-up, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 key informants. Some of these participants were interviewed together. All interviewees are co-operative practitioners, academics, and development specialists, and hold international and/or regional expertise in the contexts of Africa, the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and the Americas. During interviews, participants were asked to engage in a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) of the co-operative sector, particularly as related to gender equality (see Annex 2 for the interview questions asked).

Study limitations

As with any research study, the present report is not without limitations. First, the sample was derived using a “snowball technique” starting with co-operatives in the researchers’ and ILO and Alliance networks, and asking them to encourage other co-operatives in their networks to participate. This is therefore not a random technique that would draw a sample from all co-operatives in a region. It is possible that the perspectives on women empowerment and gender equality issues among co-operatives that are outside of ILO and Alliance networks are different from those linked to these networks. Further research and study would be needed to test the results of this survey in a more scientific manner.

Second, survey respondents and interviewees self-selected into the study. Because of this, it is possible that the data was collected from individuals within the co-operative movement who are particularly interested in issues of gender equity and women's empowerment. As such, the data reported may be skewed, particularly in regards to issues such as the importance of gender equality within co-operative organizations. The languages of the survey questionnaire (English, French and Spanish) were possibly an additional impediment for those who do not have easy access to these languages. If the survey questionnaire was available in other languages, there may have been wider representation from regions that were underrepresented among the respondents.

Finally, the survey sample size is relatively small, particularly in comparison to the number of co-operatives in operation worldwide. As a result, generalisations drawn from the sample to the broader population of co-operatives must be made with caution.

Despite its limitations, this study succeeds in addressing a pressing gap in practice and policy knowledge: the ways in which the co-operative movement and women's empowerment and gender equality affect one another. By documenting these relationships, this study sets forth a critical first step on which future research and practices may build.

Findings

Gender equality achievements within the co-operative sector

Although conditions vary according to context, interviewees indicated that within the co-operative movement, they have seen **a growing attention to gender issues, a progression of women into leadership roles, albeit slow, and an increase in the number of women-owned co-operatives.**

Sectoral impacts

In Europe and North America, interviewees reported achievements in gender equality particularly within the financial sector and in social co-operatives. In Africa, Latin America and India, interviewees reported progress primarily in the agricultural sector. In other parts of Asia – where women participate primarily in consumer, credit, and producer co-operatives – interviewees stated that efforts to enhance women's participation appear to be underway at all levels (primary, secondary and tertiary levels of co-operative institutions).



Observable advantages of co-operatives for gender equality

Recent research from ILO's Cooperatives Unit shows there are strong links between women's involvement in co-operatives and poverty reduction. After becoming involved in co-operatives, women report they perform new and more productive labour activities and earn higher incomes. Women also share that joining co-operatives increases shared caregiving and their decision making in the household, and improves their participation in community affairs.

Source: http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/ent/coop/africa/download/coopafrika_leaflet_iwd2012.pdf

When asked to describe how co-operatives advance the status of women, interviewees identified a variety of factors related to the co-operative structure and guiding principles (explored in greater depth in the following section of this report). Overall, interviewees emphasized that the noticeable advantages of co-operatives for women fall into three overlapping and mutually reinforcing categories: access to employment, improved conditions of work and social benefits.

“ In terms of poverty, co-operatives are critical for providing basic livelihoods. This is beyond question. It's still one of the most commonly found, if not the most common institution at village level in Africa. Co-operatives have to be part of the answer because they're there already. They're often ignored but they're there. ”

– Dr. Linda Shaw – The Co-operative College (UK)

Interviewees shared that co-operatives affect—and are affected by—women's access to employment in both direct and indirect ways. In terms of direct effects, co-operatives create employment opportunities by facilitating women's **access to business capital and marketplaces**. By offering financial, legal and marketing services specifically tailored for women, co-operatives enable women to start and grow their own businesses. In addition, when women establish a co-operative, they gain **access to (self-) employment**, as well as provide jobs to other women (and men) as employees. Furthermore, some co-operatives specifically aim to employ women who are disadvantaged by factors such as poverty, gender-based violence and limited access to education and training. This extends inclusion to the most marginalized women.

Interviewees reported other ways in which co-operatives directly affect women's access to employment, as well as improve their conditions of work. Co-operatives inherently provide a structure that promotes **resource pools**, which women use to produce and market their goods and services. Women also gain **collective bargaining power** in co-operatives through which they negotiate with external power centres and gain access to resources necessary for work, such as contracts with public authorities and other private sector institutions. Collective organizing within co-operatives also helps to create **transparency in financial transactions and coordination of activities**, improving enterprise efficiency and profitability—benefits which are in turn extended to all members by virtue of collective ownership. The interviewees noted that women's participation in co-operatives improves women's **income and livelihoods**.

“ We have a strong and consistent belief in the membership-based co-operatives sector, as institutions responsible for making the poor and self-employed women's contribution to the economy and the society visible through regular employment and sustained income. Co-operatives give bargaining power to the members, enhance their skills, and teach them new techniques to compete in the open market. ”

Lalita Krishnaswami – Chair Person, Gujarat State Women's SEWA Co-operative Federation (India)

Interviewees reported that co-operatives also facilitate various indirect effects on women's employment. In fields such as food security, finance, housing, healthcare, childcare and eldercare, co-operatives provide women with **affordable and accessible services**, which enable women to work while meeting their basic needs. One example discussed in interviews is the Self Employed Women's Association of India (SEWA), a co-operative organization widely recognized for providing integrated support services to women working in the informal economy.

Interviewees shared that the economic empowerment and collective organizing which co-operatives facilitate may contribute to **improvements in other areas of women's lives**. With enhanced empowerment, for instance, women may be better positioned to address personal and communal needs such as freedom from violence and environmental protection. An example some interviewees cited is Café Femenino in Colombia. This organization's members have established an agricultural school that encourages young adults to work in their home communities and practice sustainable farming as an alternative to entering the drug trade. Co-operative-led **awareness raising** activities that address issues such as child labour, child marriage, HIV, gender-based violence and alcoholism are also seen as having an impact on the status of women and their livelihood.



“ [Women] deal with a whole variety of gender issues – violence, unequal distribution of household income, health, and education. Getting women organized around their work empowers them to deal not just with issues in their work environment, but with these other issues in their households and in society as well. ”

Dr. Martha Chen – Harvard University Faculty and WIEGO International Coordinator (USA)

Interviewees shared that the **democratic processes** that take place within co-operatives help facilitate social interventions, as well as enable members to push for their needs to be met in the workplace. For instance, women’s associations that operate within co-operatives may assist members in better identifying their interests, organizing and advocating for improved conditions of work. In a similar vein, member control affords **flexibility and self-determination within the organization and with regards to the scheduling of work**. This enables women to balance participation in co-operatives with other commitments and responsibilities, such as childrearing.

The interviewees discussed that the experiential benefits for co-operative members have broad social and psychological impacts. Co-operatives lend women **respect and recognition** while developing their **confidence** to take on **leadership** roles within the workplace, family, and community at-large.

Many interviewees stated that co-operative members also gain **training, skills and experience** to which they would not otherwise have access. In some cases, co-operatives are at the forefront of innovation in the application of social, technological and institutional innovation. In joining co-operatives where such innovation exists, members gain access to new skills, which help to develop their competitive advantage in the labour market.

The examples on innovation in co-operatives extend from the case of Argentinian “empresas recuperadas” to green jobs and the care economy. In Argentina, workers took ownership of their workplaces which were facing bankruptcy and in the process they managed to save their jobs. Co-operatives have proven to be equally innovative in generating green jobs through the establishment of renewable energy co-operatives across communities from Germany and Denmark to Canada and the US. Even in traditional sectors such as social care, co-operatives have emerged as a model where they fill the gaps between what communities need and what governments provide. Co-operatives provide a wide range of services, from day-care for children to home-care for the elderly in countries as wide ranging as Italy, Turkey and Japan.

The co-operative difference

Achievements in gender equality by way of co-operatives stem from two defining characteristics of the co-operative movement:

- Co-operatives are owned and controlled by members, and
- Co-operatives are guided by values and principles that encourage democracy, education, concern for community, and open membership (see Co-operative Values and Principles, below).

By turning within for leadership and ownership and enacting these values and principles, co-operatives are more responsive to the needs and demands of their members, employees, and local communities. This explains both why co-operatives can be vehicles for women's empowerment and why they can be an effective type of social and economic organization.

Co-operative Values and Principles

Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. Their principles are as follows:

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Member Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training and Information
6. Co-operation among Co-operatives
7. Concern for Community

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

A majority of survey respondents from around the world stated that compared to other economic models, co-operatives are more effective in providing local development, community wealth, social inclusion, women's empowerment, and gender equality. They provided examples from different sectors. They noted, for instance, that co-operatives are increasingly providing a way for domestic workers to organize and help bring new work opportunities while protecting their terms and conditions of work. Many other respondents stated that they are involved in co-operatives because co-operatives are a more inclusive form of business than other private and government-owned models. They gave the example of the high number of women in leadership positions particularly in finance and insurance co-operatives. They also pointed out how women are the majority among the founders of housing, consumer and artisanal co-operatives among others.

80 per cent of survey respondents stated that co-operatives are better than other types of private business in advancing gender equality. Similarly, 70 per cent feel that co-operatives are better than government owned businesses in advancing gender equality.

When asked what features of co-operatives are most significant for the empowerment of women, about 65 per cent of survey respondents indicated that the opportunity to participate in governance and management is a highly important feature. About 50 per cent of respondents indicated that “one member, one vote” and member education and training are also highly important features. Over 40 per cent responded that member economic participation is highly important.

“ I think co-operatives might be more easily able to identify and incorporate human resource practices that recognize the fullness of the individual....recognition that it’s a good thing for women to take time and raise kids and bring that perspective into the workplace. I think their democratic structures facilitate that better. The pressure for a quick turn around and results is more acute in a publicly traded organization [regardless of the human consequences]. ”

Kathy Bardswick, President and CEO of The Co-operators, Board Member of ICMI

Respondents emphasized that member ownership and democratic control are advantages unique to the co-operative model. Respondents also shared that member ownership and democratic control underpin co-operatives’ egalitarian potential, as economic and political powers are distributed across members. The principle of “one member, one vote” ensures that all members have equal authority in decision-making, regardless of their ownership stake, and that ownership remains accessible, as membership shares are equitably and affordably distributed.

Other advantages of member ownership and democratic control are that co-operatives are inclined to invest in and support their members (as owners) through education and training, and are apt to consider the community concerns that impact members.

Co-operatives’ holistic approach to human resources also relates to the principle of open membership, which interviewees often discussed. Within the bounds of a co-operative’s by-laws, membership and associated benefits must be granted without discrimination. Consequently, co-operatives have the potential to attract and enfranchise diverse individuals and identities and are well poised to engage a broad array of perspectives and talents with which deeply embedded social and economic inequalities may be tackled.

“ Governance is the key that makes co-operatives different from anything else—worker control, governance from the bottom up. For us in the solidarity economy, that’s really what we’re trying to develop. ”

Pat Horn – International Coordinator, Streetnet International Alliance of Street Vendors (South Africa)

Progress to be made

Interviewees and survey respondents were generally positive towards the co-operative model and perceived co-operatives as being effective agents for women’s empowerment and gender equality. Nevertheless, interviewees mentioned threats that could impede progress towards gender equality within, and by way of, the co-operative movement. One of the chief threats that interviewees identified is the **pressure to maximize shareholder value to the detriment of social goals**. In this sense, co-operatives could become victims of their own economic success, and see their objective as market domination rather than member value.

Interviewees also discussed that co-operatives require member participation at a volunteer level, which can lead to **burnout or loss of faith** in the movement if gains are slow or difficult to obtain. Burnout may disproportionately affect women because they often undertake a greater share of unpaid labour than men. **Skills shortages** can also threaten the sustainability of gender equality achievements. With that said, co-operatives may provide mechanisms that help mitigate challenges, such as training programmes and co-operative networking. Overall, threats to gender equality and other social issues may be mitigated by co-operatives’ ability to use the workplace as a space to bring communities together around a social purpose.

Survey respondents and interviewees highlighted areas for further work toward gender equality in and by way of the co-operative movement. In particular, respondents pointed to opportunities in the areas of women in leadership, implementation of gender equality strategies, co-operation among co-operatives, and the role of government.



Cooperative Muszinianka (Poland) © Lydie Nesvadba

“Of course we can and must do much more to promote equal opportunities in terms of governance, access to resources, credit, land ownership, productive inputs, markets and trade, as well as access to leadership positions. What makes a difference first and foremost is the political will of the leadership. Then, all the policies, programmes, budgeting and tools have to follow.”

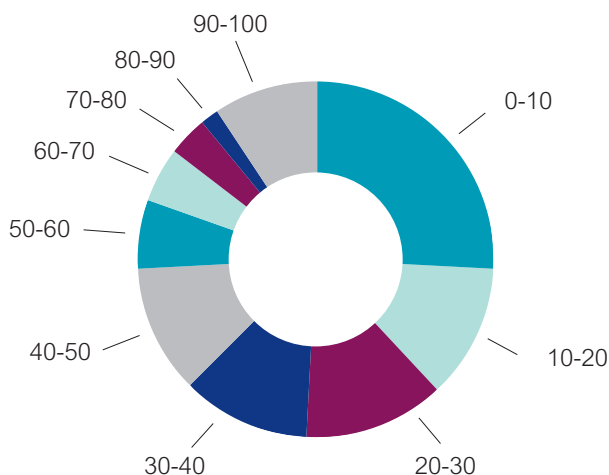
Stefania Marcone – Chief Officer International Relations and European Policies of LEGACOOP (Italy)

Women in co-operative leadership

Almost 75 per cent of survey respondents stated that among the co-operatives with which they are most familiar, **women comprise less than 50 per cent of the co-operative board**. A quarter of those same respondents reported that women occupy less than 10 per cent of the board. About 65 per cent of respondents estimated that **women occupy less than 50 per cent of management positions**. A quarter of all respondents estimated that women hold 10 per cent or less of managerial positions. Despite the scarcity of women in leadership roles, over half of all survey respondents stated that women comprise over 50 per cent of membership and over 50 per cent of the clientele.

As these figures suggest, women are among the most involved in and served by co-operative organizations, but among the least likely to hold high-ranking and decision-making roles. If co-operatives are truly to be guided by representative leaders and provide opportunities for women to develop their leadership capacities, more work must be done to improve the promotion of women from membership to governance and management levels.

Percentage of women on boards of co-operatives described by survey respondents



Regional distinctions

According to the survey data, women's participation in leadership is somewhat above average in Europe and in sub-Saharan Africa, and somewhat below average in North America and the Middle East. In Asia and South and Central America, participation in leadership seems to be significantly below average. However in South and Central America, the reported rate of gender equality-related training is well above average, which suggests that efforts to improve participation in co-operatives are underway in those regions. Although the survey data does not indicate the variation in women's participation in co-operative leadership across the globe, we may speculate that differences may be the result of diverse societal norms and stereotypes, historical trajectories and patterns of economic development across regions. Better understanding these reported differences is an important area for future research.

Sectoral distinctions

This study also considered the state of gender equity within consumer, financial, and agricultural co-operatives, the three largest co-operative sectors worldwide. The survey findings suggest that women's membership in consumer co-operatives is much higher than in financial or agricultural co-operatives. In the financial (i.e., banking and insurance) sector, respondents reported somewhat below average rates of participation of women in leadership compared to other cooperative sectors. However, in that same sector, respondents reported somewhat higher rates of women as members and a significantly higher rate of gender equality-related training, policies and strategies. Finally, the survey findings suggest that in every region of the world, women's participation in both membership and leadership in the agricultural sector is significantly below average.

Although the survey data does not provide concrete explanations for variations across sectors, we can speculate that the gendered nature of these diverse economic sectors may in part drive the results. Consumer co-operatives facilitate broader and larger membership because they offer services related to daily occupational activities, such as food shopping. These activities are traditionally undertaken by women, which may help to explain women's higher participation in consumer co-operatives. Finance and agriculture, on the other hand, are historically male-dominated economic sectors. This imbalance helps to explain women's low representation in co-operatives in this sector, particularly at the leadership level. However, agriculture has been increasingly feminized; women have a substantial presence as labourers and in self-employment. In theory, women's engagement in agricultural co-operatives should be on the rise.

Going forward, more work and research must be done to understand the ways in which gender equality can be achieved within these important sectors. To address the shortage of women in leadership roles, interviewees recommend that management reach out to women members to encourage their involvement and gender equality orientation. In addition, training should be extended to the current leadership of co-operatives. Interviewees also recommended that co-operative management create supportive mechanisms, such as on-site child care services, which would enable women to participate in delegate structures while balancing other commitments that would otherwise limit their participation.

Gender equality strategies

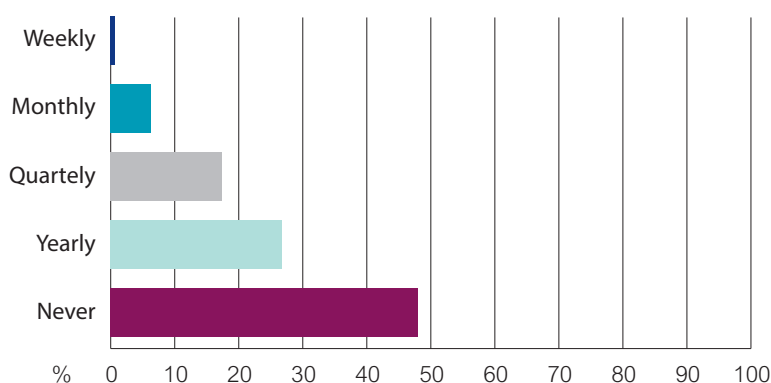
According to survey respondents, 60 per cent of the co-operatives with which they are most familiar have equality, inclusion and diversity policies or strategies in place. These extend from equal opportunity employment policies and procurement practices, to harassment procedures and affirmative action quotas on boards. Such strategies are necessary to actively improve women’s participation in co-operatives at all levels and across sectors. Furthermore, widespread institutionalization of gender and women-specific policies may contribute to raising consciousness around women’s issues across the co-operative movement.

“ When workers perceive that they are treated in a fair way, procedurally and economically, this has major impact on job satisfaction. ”

Carlo Borzaga – Chair, European Research Institute on Co-operative and Social Enterprises (Euricse) and a co-operative practitioner (Italy)

Training is a significant component of gender equality strategies. Survey respondents noted that most of the co-operatives with which they are most familiar offer yearly or quarterly training sessions on a range of topics, although not specifically on gender equality. However, respondents further shared that only 50 per cent of these trainings focus on issues outside the functioning of the co-operative. 27 per cent of respondents reported that yearly training sessions are held to address gender-based issues. However, **almost 50 per cent of survey respondents reported that training sessions relevant to women’s empowerment and gender equality are never held within the co-operatives with which they are most familiar.** Another 60 per cent stated that training sessions specifically for women members are never conducted. Thus despite positive signs of co-operatives being active in member education and training, there is room for improvement.

Frequency of women’s empowerment and gender equality training across co-operatives



Study participants explained that training and education are multifaceted tools that promote gender equality. Training and education enable women to take on multiple roles within co-operatives, as well as develop high-level skills, such as negotiating tenders or performing legal accounting procedures. Training and education can also promote knowledge of co-operative values, principles, and the identity of the movement. In addition, training and education help women engage in addressing the broader social constraints they face.

Interviewees recommended that gender equality training should particularly target co-operative leadership and management, but that it should also be mandatory for all co-operative members. Interviewees also suggested that gender equality training could be adapted to a variety of co-operative types, sectors and contexts, and stressed that training must be easily accessible.

Interviewees also discussed that gender equality strategies must extend beyond education and training components to encompass a variety of gender responsive activities, programmes and policies. Such policy and practice issues that interviewees found particularly important include traditional gender divisions of labour, efforts to support the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, and gender biases in the terms and conditions of work (e.g. the gender wage gap).

Interviewees called for action on a number of levels and initiatives across the co-operative movement. In particular, they recommended that co-operatives consider adopting the following gender equality measures:

- Equality action plans (revised every 3, 5 or 10 years)
- Internal gender equality committees with board representation
- Gender equality standards (such as codes of conduct) and resource personnel who support the implementation of those standards
- Gender-responsive policies that encourage affirmative action and the participation of women in leadership (e.g. by-laws that reserve seats for women on boards or induct households into membership)
- Women's associations to support the visibility of women members within mixed-sex co-operatives
- Clear product labelling (e.g. along the lines of Fair Trade) for organizations which actively support gender equality
- Facilitation of women's asset ownership, which has been identified as a barrier to women's participation in producer co-operatives
- Video testimonials on the participation of women in co-operatives
- Promotion of spaces and events that enhance the visibility of women and men in the co-operative (e.g. women's fairs, masculinity workshops, etc.)
- National and local co-operative committees on gender equality
- Subscription to national and international agreements on gender equality

It is important to remember that co-operatives are diverse in terms of industry and context, so many interviewees argued that a portfolio of strategies is required. Such strategies should include proven good practices and lessons learned, and should provide evidence-based policies with impact. The information should not only be collected by co-operatives and their support institutions, but also by research-institutions, policy-makers, and civil society organizations and academics.

In addition to the above-mentioned policy and practice recommendations, interviewees agreed that there is a lack of research in this area. Particularly lacking are evaluation studies on the impacts of gender equality strategies within co-operatives, participation of women at all levels within co-operatives, and other empowerment indicators from which the co-operative sector could learn and improve. In order to inform equality strategies, interviewees suggested that sex-disaggregated data and gender indicators should be regularly collected and analysed. Interviewees also recommended that co-operatives share results of measured successes and best practices with other co-operatives and actors in the co-operative movement.

“ Setting up co-operatives with discriminated and impoverished women who are working in the field of domestic work, homework, and childcare provision are areas for future work. ”

Nelien Haspels – Former Senior Specialist on Gender and Women Workers' Issues, Decent Work Team for East and South East Asia, International Labour Organization (Thailand)

Co-operation between co-operatives

Interviewees repeatedly called for a greater degree of systemic collaboration and networking between co-operatives to **support the development of new women owned co-operatives, the expansion of co-operatives in fields dominated by women, and the capacity of women to break into male dominated and higher margin industries.**

In particular, women's co-operatives that are small in size and co-operatives established by workers and entrepreneurs in the informal economy are in need of financial and technical support from the co-operative movement. Interviewees reported that all too often such women's and informal workers' co-operatives are marginalized without access to capital or know-how. Interviewees explained that international expertise is valuable in filling the knowledge gaps, but that the development of networks and support mechanisms for these groups should ultimately be regionally based. This will help ensure that knowledge is grounded in local contexts and appropriate to local conditions.

Interviewees also suggested that the co-operative movement at all levels should employ gender responsive budgeting, and that funds should be allocated to the empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming.

Cultural barriers

Gender equality and women's empowerment are challenges both within co-operatives, and in the environment in which co-operatives operate. A number of interviewees discussed ways in which cultural norms, social roles and expectations, economic factors, and political environments disadvantage women across the globe. Some of the factors which interviewees discussed include the on-going marginalization of girls and young women in accessing education and skills development, cultural biases concerning the role of women in the household and their suitability for leadership, the marginalization of women in the public sphere, and the structural exclusion of women from financial mechanisms.

According to 65 per cent of the survey respondents, cultural issues are among the most significant barriers to gender equality encountered by co-operatives.

Cultural barriers impose limitations on women in everyday life that hinder their access to (and exercising of) opportunities. Furthermore, cultural barriers extend beyond social spheres, oftentimes translating into legal restrictions that institutionalize women's marginality. As such, mitigating the cultural barriers that thwart gender equality is a critical target for co-operative action.

“ The whole socioeconomic status quo disadvantages women, so they don't have the same capacities necessarily in terms of education, or the same negotiation or advocacy skills. They may not have the same technical skills as far as technical vocational training goes. They may have restrictions on their movement or with family responsibilities, time, money, etc. ”

Grania Mackie – International Enterprise Development & Diversity Consultant (Ireland)

Interviewees explained that the contexts in which a co-operative operates will determine how (and by whom) cultural barriers are addressed. For example, in more restrictive patriarchal environments, women-only co-operatives provide unique opportunities for women to develop economic enterprises that may bypass imposition and restrictions from male relatives or community members. While such a structure may seem contradictory to the principle of open membership, forming women-only organizations may be a way to help redress gendered social inequalities.



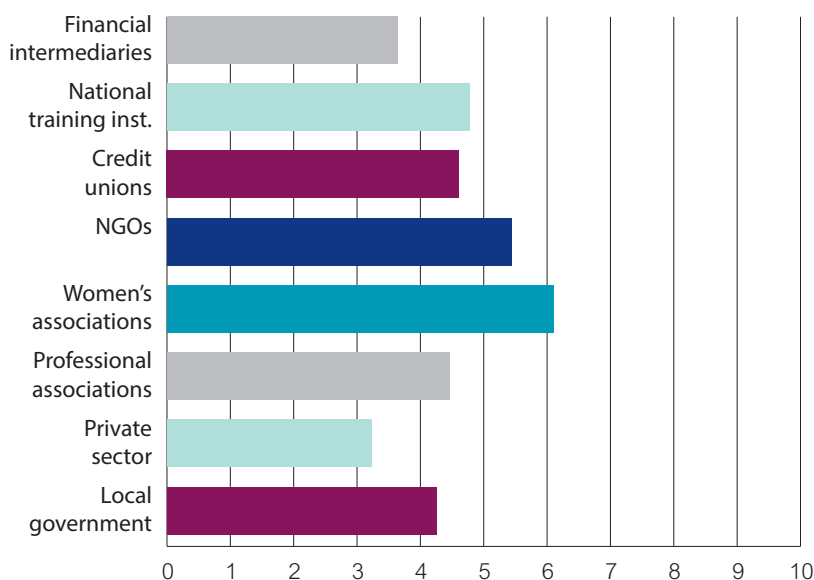
“ Barriers [to gender equity] include the formation of a belief system based on cultures grounded in stereotypes that limit the development of talent in both sexes, the blurring of the social essence of co-operatives in the face of neoliberalism and its market economy, and especially the orientation of individualism and competition, which opposes the human sense of co-operative values. ”

Verónica Sánchez Olgúin – Gender Equality Representative of the National Co-operative Federation of Diverse Activities of the Republic of Mexico with members of Cooperativa La Cruz Azul (Mexico)

Interviewees stated that because cultural barriers are deeply embedded in societies, co-operatives—women-owned or otherwise—cannot overcome them on their own. One recommended strategy is that co-operatives build alliances with other civil society actors and social movements (e.g. the women’s labour and environmental movements).

When asked what type of organization is most effective in promoting and strengthening women’s co-operatives, over 65 per cent of survey respondents indicated that women’s associations are highly effective. 35 per cent indicated that this type of partner is the most effective. Over 50 per cent of respondents suggested that NGOs can be highly effective partners, with almost 20 per cent finding them to be the most effective. 40 per cent of survey respondents noted that credit unions are highly effective, and 12 per cent indicated that they are the most effective. Finally, almost 40 per cent of respondents suggested that national training institutions are highly effective, but only 9 per cent identified these institutions as the most effective. As these findings suggest, co-operatives may work in concert with a range of other civil society organizations in an effort to impact gender equality. However, the effectiveness of those partners and partnerships varies across contexts and organizations.

Rank of effectiveness in promoting and strengthening women’s co-operatives (x axis = weighted average)



The role of government

Survey respondents expressed conflicting views about the effectiveness of government in promoting gender equity and, more broadly, co-operatives in general. However, the majority of the respondents (88 per cent) reported that the state has a major role to play in ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment across society, and in creating policies that support co-operatives (85 per cent). According to survey respondents, a distant third priority for governments is to provide support for female entrepreneurs.

“ [It is necessary to] create a comprehensive vision of economic development that recognizes models which promote equality. Current policies are generic and sometimes opposed to the co-operative model. ”

Verónica Sánchez Olguín – Gender Equality Representative of the National Co-operative Federation of Diverse Activities of the Republic of Mexico with members of Cooperativa La Cruz Azul (Mexico)

Interviewees asserted that the government should create a positive policy and legal framework for co-operative enterprises, but should not interfere in the day-to-day operations of co-operatives. Interviewees reported that in some parts of the world, the government has a history of creating co-operatives from the top down, at times even imposing the model on an unwilling population. If the government is to facilitate the work of co-operatives and their contribution to gender equality, building on the lessons learned from such a tumultuous past, by both the government and the co-operative movement, would be necessary.

Interviewees and survey respondents alike asserted that governments should create a level playing field for co-operative development and should legitimize the co-operative model. Respondents indicated that these tasks are most effectively realized by creating enabling policies and by enforcing a regulatory framework. In order to support co-operatives as a vehicle for women's empowerment, interviewees suggested that governments adopt the following practices:

- Revise, amend, or create co-operative laws to ensure that co-operatives can exist, are member controlled, and are accessible to women (e.g. reduce barriers for women to register property in their name)
- Improve service provision to co-operatives at local levels by employing co-operative experts
- Support co-operatives in coping with the changes and competition brought about by the open market economy, the process of globalization, and technological change
- Recognize co-operatives as a legitimate form of enterprise (e.g. include the co-operative model in educational curricula and entrepreneurship training programmes)
- Secure investment in co-operatives
- Assist with statistical data collection to inform government policies and programmes, the private sector and the co-operative movement itself
- Partner with co-operatives to advance work in the 12 areas outlined by the Beijing Platform²

² <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>

Conclusions

This report provides an overview of the effectiveness of co-operatives as platforms for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, as conveyed by a broad range of co-operative practitioners, civil society organizations, academics, and government workers. This report highlights a number of achievements and areas for strategic action while acknowledging that there are many contextual variables and areas for improvement.

The key findings of this preliminary research indicate that co-operatives have an increasingly positive impact on women and on their inclusion in economic activity and the labour force. The findings also suggest that co-operatives enhance their capacity to empower women by co-operating with civil society and gaining government recognition. Going forward, there are many opportunities for the co-operative movement to better achieve its potential to advance gender equality through internal measures. This is particularly the case with regard to women in leadership, gender equality strategies, and collaboration among co-operatives. However, the capacity of co-operatives to empower women also benefits decisively from the support of civil society and recognition by governments.

Summary of preliminary recommendations for the co-operative movement:

1. Develop and implement gender equality strategies, tools and resources more broadly to facilitate the equal participation of women throughout the co-operative movement;
2. Provide women in emerging and marginalized co-operatives with financial and technical support through co-operation among co-operatives;
3. Work with government and other partners to overcome cultural and structural barriers for women;
4. Gather and share more information about best practices and lessons learned; and
5. Track equality indicators such as women's participation in governance, management, membership, asset ownership and income parity on an on-going basis to ensure accountability.

Annex 1.

Survey questionnaire

Introduction / Introduction / Introducción

This survey is a part of an initiative of the International Labour Organization and the International Co-operative Alliance. It requires approximately ten minutes to complete. The main objective is to assess the impact of cooperatives on women's empowerment and gender equality globally. Twenty years after the Fourth World Conference on Women (held in Beijing) it is necessary to discover to what extent and in what areas cooperatives have succeeded in providing opportunities for women, and where there is room for improvement. You have been contacted because of your knowledge about cooperatives. The results of this research will be publicly available although individual respondents will remain anonymous. Your participation would be greatly appreciated. Please complete the survey by February 18, 2015.

Cette enquête fait partie d'une initiative de l'Organisation internationale du Travail et de l'Alliance coopérative internationale. Environ dix minutes sont requises pour répondre aux questions de cette enquête. L'objectif principal est de mesurer l'impact des coopératives sur l'accroissement du pouvoir d'action des femmes et l'égalité entre les sexes à l'échelle mondiale. Vingt ans après la quatrième Conférence mondiale sur les femmes (organisée à Beijing), il est nécessaire de découvrir l'étendue et dans quels domaines les coopératives sont parvenues à offrir des opportunités aux femmes, et où les secteurs dans lesquels il serait possible d'apporter des améliorations. Vous avez été contacté en raison de vos connaissances dans le domaine des coopératives. Les résultats de cette enquête seront rendus publics; cependant, les personnes interrogées resteront anonymes. Votre participation serait grandement appréciée. Veuillez remplir le questionnaire d'ici le 18 février 2015.

Esta encuesta forma parte de una iniciativa de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo y de la Alianza Cooperativa Internacional. Le advertimos de que el tiempo necesario para completarla será de unos diez minutos. El objetivo principal es evaluar la influencia de las cooperativas en el empoderamiento de las mujeres y la igualdad de género a escala mundial. Veintidós años después de la Cuarta Conferencia Mundial sobre la Mujer (celebrada en Pekín) surge la necesidad de averiguar en qué medida y en qué sectores han triunfado las cooperativas a la hora de brindar oportunidades a las mujeres y valorar si existe algún margen de mejora en este sentido. Nos hemos puesto en contacto con usted por sus conocimientos sobre el sector cooperativo. Los resultados de esta encuesta serán publicados, si bien se mantendrá el anonimato de los encuestados. Agradeceríamos muchísimo su participación. Por favor, complete este cuestionario antes del 18 de febrero del 2015.

Please select your preferred language:

Veillez choisir votre langue préférée:

Por favor, seleccione el idioma de preferencia:

- English / Anglais / inglés
- French / Français / francés
- Spanish / Espagnol / español

If you think that you are not the right person in your organization to complete this survey, please provide the email address of the correct contact.

Si vous ne croyez pas être la personne idéale au sein de votre organisation pour répondre à cette enquête, veuillez s'il-vous-plaît nous fournir l'adresse courriel de la personne à contacter.

Si considera que no es la persona más adecuada para completar esta encuesta dentro de su organización, le rogamos que nos envíe la dirección de correo electrónico de la persona de contacto que considere más capacitada para responderla.

Name / Nom / Nombre :

Company / Société / Empresa :

Email / Courriel / Correo electrónico :

The next six questions collect demographic information about survey respondents.

Les six questions suivantes recueillent des données démographiques au sujet des personnes sondées.

Las siguientes seis preguntas pretenden recopilar información demográfica sobre los encuestados.

With what type of institution are you primarily associated?

À quel type d'institution êtes-vous principalement associé?

¿A qué tipo de institución pertenece?

- Primary cooperative / Coopérative primaire / Cooperativa primaria
- Cooperative union / Union coopérative / Sindicato de cooperativas
- Cooperative federation / Fédération coopérative / Federación de cooperativas
- Cooperative support institution / Institution d'appui aux coopératives / Institución de apoyo de cooperativas
- Government Institution responsible for cooperatives / Institution gouvernementale responsable des coopératives / Institución gubernamental responsable de cooperativas
- Governmental organization / Organisation gouvernementale / Organización gubernamental
- Nongovernmental organization / Organisation non gouvernementale / Organización no gubernamental
- International or regional cooperative association / Association coopérative internationale ou régionale / Asociación internacional o regional de cooperativas
- Academic / Universitaire / Académica
- Other (please specify) / Autre (veuillez spécifier) / Otros (por favor, especifique)

What is your gender? / *Quel est votre sexe?* / *Por favor, indique su sexo:*

- Female / Féminin / Femenino
- Male / Masculin / Masculino
- Other / Autre / Otro

What is your age? / *Quel est votre âge?* / *¿Qué edad tiene?*

- 15-20
- 20-30
- 30-40
- 40-50
- 50-60
- 60+

■ *Where is your primary residence?*

● *Où se situe votre résidence principale?*

▲ *¿Dónde se encuentra su residencia habitual?*

- North Africa / Afrique du Nord / África del Norte
- Sub-Saharan Africa / Afrique subsaharienne / África subsahariana
- Middle East / Moyen-Orient / Oriente Medio
- Asia / Asie / Asia
- The Pacific / Le Pacifique / Pacífico
- North America / Amérique du Nord / América del Norte
- South America / Amérique du Sud / América del Sur
- Central America / Amérique centrale / América Central
- Europe / Europe / Europa

■ *With which cooperative sector are you most familiar?*

● *Quel secteur coopératif connaissez-vous le mieux?*

▲ *¿Qué sector cooperativo conoce mejor?*

- Banking / Bancaire / Sector bancario
- Insurance / Assurances / Seguros
- Agriculture / Agriculture / Agricultura
- Fisheries / Pêcheries / Pesca
- Health / Santé / Sanidad
- Industry & Services / Industrie et services / Industria y servicios
- Retail / Vente / Minorista
- Housing / Logement / Vivienda
- Other (please specify) / Autre (veuillez préciser) / Otros (por favor, específico)

■ *With which type of cooperative are you most familiar?*

● *Quel type de coopérative connaissez-vous le mieux?*

▲ *¿Qué tipo de cooperativa conoce mejor?*

- Producer / Producteurs / De productores
- Consumer / Consommateurs / De consumidores
- Worker / Travailleurs / De trabajadores

The remainder of the survey asks you to provide answers based on your best knowledge or perception of the topic.

Le reste de l'enquête nécessite que vous répondiez aux questions en vous basant sur vos connaissances ou votre perception du sujet.

En el resto de la encuesta deberá responder a las preguntas en base a sus conocimientos o a su percepción del tema de que se trate.

■ *Within the sector with which you are most familiar, to what extent has women's participation in cooperatives increased over the past 20 years?*

● *Au sein du secteur que vous connaissez le mieux, dans quelle mesure la participation des femmes au sein des coopératives a-t-elle augmentée au cours des 20 dernières années?*

▲ *Por lo que respecta al sector que mejor conoce, ¿en qué medida ha aumentado la participación de las mujeres en las cooperativas en los últimos 20 años?*

- It has decreased / Elle a diminuée / Ha disminuido No change / Aucun changement / No ha cambiado
- Increased a little / Augmentation minime / Ha aumentado un poco Increased a lot / Augmentation marquée / Ha aumentado mucho
- I do not know / Je ne sais pas / No sabe

■ *Do the government policies and programmes of the country in which you reside adequately...*

● *Est-ce que les politiques et programmes du gouvernement du pays dans lequel vous vivez sont adéquats pour...*

▲ *¿Las políticas y los programas del país en que reside han contribuido a... ?*

- Support creation and development of cooperative enterprises in rural areas? / Soutenir la création et le développement d'entreprises coopératives dans les régions rurales? / Respaldar la creación y el desarrollo de empresas cooperativas en zonas rurales?
- Support creation and development of cooperative enterprises in urban areas? / Soutenir la création et le développement d'entreprises coopératives dans les régions urbaines? / Respaldar la creación y el desarrollo de empresas cooperativas en zonas urbanizadas?
- Support creation and development of small scale or subsistence cooperatives specifically? / Soutenir la création et le développement de coopératives à petite échelle ou de subsistance particulièrement? / Respaldar la creación y el desarrollo de pequeñas cooperativas o cooperativas de subsistencia?
- Facilitate women's equal access to and control over cooperative structures at management and leadership levels? / Faciliter l'accès et le contrôle des femmes au niveau de la gestion ou du leadership au sein de la coopérative? / Facilitar a las mujeres el acceso y el control, en términos de igualdad, a puestos directivos y de responsabilidad en estructuras cooperativas?
- Encourage institutions that enable women's cooperatives and women entrepreneurs? / Encourager les institutions qui facilitent le développement de coopératives de femmes et de femmes entrepreneurs? / Fomentar aquellas instituciones que permiten la creación de cooperativas de mujeres y emprendedoras?

■ *Rank the following in order of effectiveness (with 1 being the most effective and 8 being the least effective) in terms of promoting and strengthening women's cooperative enterprises:*

● *Classez les institutions suivantes par ordre d'efficacité (1 étant la plus efficace et 8 la moins efficace) pour ce qui est de promouvoir et renforcer les entreprises coopératives des femmes:*

▲ *Clasifique los siguientes elementos según su grado de eficacia (1 para el más eficaz y 8 para el menos eficaz) con vistas a promover y consolidar las cooperativas de mujeres:*

- Financial intermediaries / Intermédiaires financiers / Intermediarios financieros
- National training institutes / Instituts nationaux de formation / Institutos nacionales de formación
- Credit unions / Coopératives de crédit / Cooperativas de ahorro y crédito
- Non-governmental organizations / Organisations non gouvernementales / Organizaciones no gubernamentales
- Women's associations / Associations féminines / Asociaciones de mujeres
- Professional associations / Associations professionnelles / Asociaciones profesionales
- Private sector / Secteur privé / Sector privado
- Local government / Gouvernement local / Administración local

■ *To what extent do you think that governments have an important role to play in...*

● *Dans quelle mesure pensez-vous que les gouvernements ont un rôle important à jouer dans...*

▲ *En qué medida cree que los gobiernos desempeñan un papel importante para...*

Not at all Pas du tout En ninguna medida	A minor role Un rôle mineur Un papel minoritario	A major role Un rôle majeur Un papel importante	The most significant role Le rôle le plus important Un papel fundamental	No opinion Aucune opinion Sin opinión al respecto
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■ Ensuring gender equality generally?

● Le renforcement du pouvoir d'action des femmes et l'égalité entre hommes et femmes en général

▲ ¿Garantizar la igualdad de género en general?



	Not at all Pas du tout En ninguna medida	A minor role Un rôle mineur Un papel minoritario	A major role Un rôle majeur Un papel importante	The most significant role Le rôle le plus important Un papel fundamental	No opinion Aucune opinion Sin opinión al respecto
<p>■ Ensuring gender equality in cooperatives</p> <p>● Le renforcement du pouvoir d'action des femmes et l'égalité entre hommes et femmes au sein des coopératives</p> <p>▲ ¿Garantizar la igualdad de género en las cooperativas?</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>■ Creating policies that support cooperatives?</p> <p>● La création de politiques visant à l'appui des coopératives?</p> <p>▲ ¿Elaborar políticas que respalden las cooperativas?</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>■ Providing support for women entrepreneurs?</p> <p>● L'appui aux femmes entrepreneures?</p> <p>▲ ¿Apoyar a las emprendedoras?</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>■ Providing access to markets and trade?</p> <p>● Fournir l'accès aux marchés et au commerce?</p> <p>▲ ¿Proporcionar acceso a los mercados y al comercio?</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>■ <i>Rank the following features of cooperatives in order of importance for women's empowerment (with 1 being the most effective and 8 being the least effective):</i></p> <p>● <i>Classez les caractéristiques suivantes des coopératives par ordre de leur importance pour le renforcement du pouvoir d'action des femmes (1 étant la plus efficace et 8 étant la moins efficace):</i></p> <p>▲ <i>Clasifique las siguientes características de las cooperativas por orden de importancia para el empoderamiento de las mujeres (1 para la más eficaz y 8 para la menos eficaz):</i></p>					
<input type="checkbox"/> One member, one vote / Un membre, une voix / Un miembro, un voto					
<input type="checkbox"/> Member economic participation / Participation économique des membres / Participación económica de los miembros					
<input type="checkbox"/> Member education and training / Éducation et formation des membres / Educación y formación de los miembros					
<input type="checkbox"/> Dividend from the cooperative / Dividendes provenant de la coopérative / Dividendos de la cooperativa					
<input type="checkbox"/> Affordable goods and services / Biens et services abordables / Bienes y servicios asequibles					
<input type="checkbox"/> Access to goods and services / Biens et services disponibles / Acceso a bienes y servicios					
<input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities to participate in governance / Opportunités de participer à la gouvernance / Oportunidades de participación en la administración					
<input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities to participate in management / Opportunités de participer à la gestion / Oportunidades de participación en la dirección					

- *In your experience, are cooperatives better than other types of private businesses in advancing gender equality?*
- *Selon votre expérience, les coopératives sont-elles supérieures à d'autres types d'entreprises privées pour ce qui est des progrès en matière d'égalité entre hommes et femmes?*
- ▲ *Según su experiencia, ¿las cooperativas son mejores que otros tipos de empresas privadas a la hora de promover la igualdad de género?*

Yes / Oui / Si No / Non / No

- *In your experience, are cooperatives better than government-owned businesses in advancing gender equality?*
- *Selon votre expérience, les coopératives sont-elles supérieures à d'autres types d'entreprises privées pour ce qui est des progrès en matière d'égalité entre hommes et femmes?*
- ▲ *Según su experiencia, ¿las cooperativas son mejores que las empresas públicas a la hora de promover la igualdad de género?*

Yes / Oui / Si No / Non / No

- *In your experience, which type of economic organization provides the following most effectively?*
- *Selon votre expérience, quel type d'organisation économique contribue le plus efficacement aux domaines suivants?*
- ▲ *Según su experiencia, ¿qué tipo de organización económica asegura los siguientes elementos de manera más eficaz?*

	Private business Entreprise privée Empresas privadas	Cooperatives Coopératives Cooperativas	Government Gouvernement Gobierno	Other Autre Otros
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Local development ● Développement local ▲ Desarrollo local 	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Regional development ● Développement régional ▲ Desarrollo regional 	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Community wealth ● Richesse communautaire ▲ Riqueza de las comunidades 	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Private wealth ● Richesse individuelle ▲ Riqueza privada 	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Social inclusion ● Inclusion sociale ▲ Integración social 	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Private business Entreprise privée Empresas privadas	Cooperatives Coopératives Cooperativas	Government Gouvernement Gobierno	Other Autre Otros
<p>■ National economic development</p> <p>● Développement économique national</p> <p>▲ Desarrollo económico nacional</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>■ Gender equality</p> <p>● Égalité entre hommes et femmes</p> <p>▲ Igualdad de género</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>■ Women's empowerment</p> <p>● Renforcement du pouvoir d'action des femmes</p> <p>▲ Empoderamiento de las mujeres</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This survey intends to identify cooperatives that are concerned with women's empowerment and gender equality. This can include women only cooperatives, cooperatives that are focused on delivering services that specifically support women and girls (e.g. healthcare for women), and any gender equality initiative within mixed gender cooperatives. Please identify three cooperatives that you believe are models for women's empowerment or gender equality, and provide their contact information if you can.

Cette enquête vise à identifier les coopératives les plus sensibles aux questions liées au renforcement du pouvoir d'action des femmes et l'égalité entre hommes et femmes. Ces coopératives peuvent inclure les coopératives réservées aux femmes, les coopératives qui sont dédiées à la prestation de services spécifiquement pour les femmes et les filles (ex: services de santé pour femmes) et toute initiative promouvant l'égalité entre hommes et femmes au sein de coopératives mixtes. Veuillez s'il-vous-plaît identifier trois coopératives que vous croyez être des modèles dans le domaine du renforcement du pouvoir d'action des femmes ou de l'égalité entre hommes et femmes et fournir leurs coordonnées si possible.

Esta encuesta pretende identificar aquellas cooperativas concienciadas con el empoderamiento de las mujeres y la igualdad de género. Entre ellas podemos encontrar cooperativas solo para mujeres, cooperativas que tienen por objeto la prestación de servicios de apoyo específicos para mujeres y niñas (ej. asistencia sanitaria para mujeres), así como cualquier otro tipo de iniciativas a favor de la igualdad de género en cooperativas mixtas. Por favor, indique tres cooperativas a las que usted considere un modelo de referencia para el empoderamiento de las mujeres o para la igualdad de género y, si es posible, indique sus datos de contacto.

Cooperative / coopérative / cooperativa 1:

Cooperative / coopérative / cooperativa 2:

Cooperative / coopérative / cooperativa 3:

■ *Think of the cooperative with which you are most familiar, within the sector with which you are most familiar. Where is it located?*

● *Réfléchissez à la coopérative que vous connaissez le mieux au sein du secteur qui vous est le plus familier. Où se trouve-t-elle?*

▲ *Piense en la cooperativa que mejor conoce, dentro del sector que mejor conoce. ¿Dónde se encuentra?*

- o North Africa / Afrique du Nord / África del Norte
- o Sub-Saharan Africa / Afrique subsaharienne / África subsahariana
- o Middle East / Moyen-Orient / Oriente Medio
- o Asia / Asie / Asia
- o The Pacific / Le Pacifique / Pacífico
- o North America / Amérique du Nord / América del Norte
- o South America / Amérique du Sud / América del Sur
- o Central America / Amérique centrale / América Central
- o Europe / Europe / Europa

■ *Consider the barriers to gender equality encountered by cooperatives in your region of the world. Rank the following barriers from 1 to 9, with 1 representing the most significant barrier.*

● *Pensez aux obstacles rencontrés par les coopératives dans votre région en matières d'égalité entre hommes et femmes. Classez-les de 1 à 9, 1 représentant l'obstacle le plus significatif.*

▲ *Piense ahora en las barreras a la igualdad de género que afrontan las cooperativas en la región donde usted reside. Clasifique dichas barreras del 1 a 9 (siendo el 1 la barrera más importante).*

- National state policy / Politique nationale d'État / Políticas públicas a nivel nacional
- Local state policy / Politique locale d'État / Políticas públicas a nivel local
- Cultural issues / Enjeux culturels / Temas culturales
- Poverty / Pauvreté / Pobreza
- Lack of education for women / Manque d'éducation pour les femmes / Falta de acceso a la educación por parte de las mujeres
- Limited options for women to actively participate in cooperatives currently exist / Des options limitées pour la participation des femmes au sein des coopératives existantes / Escasas oportunidades para las mujeres de participar de form
- Access to capital for women entrepreneurs / L'accès au capital pour les femmes entrepreneurs / Acceso al capital para emprendedoras
- Access to markets for women entrepreneurs / L'accès au marché pour les femmes entrepreneurs / Acceso a los mercados para emprendedoras
- Other (please, specify) / Autre (veuillez préciser) / Otros (por favor, especifique)

■ *To the best of your knowledge, what are the gross annual sales of this cooperative (in US dollars)?*

● *Selon vos informations, quelles sont les ventes annuelles brutes de cette coopérative (en dollars US)?*

▲ *¿Según su información, ¿cuál es el volumen anual de ventas de esta cooperativa (en dólares estadounidenses)?*

- o < 100,000
- o 100,000 - 500 000
- o 500,000 - 1 million
- o 1 million - 10 million(s)
- o > 10 million(s)
- o > 100 million(s)

■ *What percentage of its board positions do women occupy?*

● *Quel est le pourcentage de femmes ayant un poste au conseil d'administration?*

▲ *¿Qué porcentaje de puestos del consejo están ocupados por mujeres en dicha cooperativa?*

- o 0 – 10
- o 10 – 20
- o 20 – 30
- o 30 – 40
- o 40 – 50
- o 50 – 60
- o 60 – 70
- o 70 – 80
- o 80 – 90
- o 90 – 100

■ *What percentage of its management positions do women occupy?*

● *Quel est le pourcentage de femmes ayant un poste de gestion dans cette coopérative?*

▲ *¿Qué porcentaje de puestos directivos representan las mujeres en dicha cooperativa?*

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 0 – 10 | <input type="radio"/> 50 – 60 |
| <input type="radio"/> 10 – 20 | <input type="radio"/> 60 – 70 |
| <input type="radio"/> 20 – 30 | <input type="radio"/> 70 – 80 |
| <input type="radio"/> 20 – 30 | <input type="radio"/> 80 – 90 |
| <input type="radio"/> 30 – 40 | <input type="radio"/> 90 – 100 |
| <input type="radio"/> 40 – 50 | |

■ *What percentage of its membership is female?*

● *Quel est le pourcentage de femmes membres de la coopérative?*

▲ *¿Qué porcentaje representan las mujeres entre los miembros de dicha cooperativa?*

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 0 – 10 | <input type="radio"/> 50 – 60 |
| <input type="radio"/> 10 – 20 | <input type="radio"/> 60 – 70 |
| <input type="radio"/> 20 – 30 | <input type="radio"/> 70 – 80 |
| <input type="radio"/> 20 – 30 | <input type="radio"/> 80 – 90 |
| <input type="radio"/> 30 – 40 | <input type="radio"/> 90 – 100 |
| <input type="radio"/> 40 – 50 | |

■ *What percentage of its clientele is female?*

● *Quel est le pourcentage de femmes clientes de la coopérative?*

▲ *¿Qué porcentaje de sus clientes son mujeres?*

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 0 – 10 | <input type="radio"/> 50 – 60 |
| <input type="radio"/> 10 – 20 | <input type="radio"/> 60 – 70 |
| <input type="radio"/> 20 – 30 | <input type="radio"/> 70 – 80 |
| <input type="radio"/> 20 – 30 | <input type="radio"/> 80 – 90 |
| <input type="radio"/> 30 – 40 | <input type="radio"/> 90 – 100 |
| <input type="radio"/> 40 – 50 | |

■ *Does this cooperative have gender equity policies or strategies in place?*

● *La coopérative a-t-elle des politiques ou des stratégies en place promouvant l'équité entre hommes et femmes?*

▲ *¿Esta cooperativa está implantando políticas o estrategias para promover la igualdad de género?*

- Yes / Oui / Si No / Non / No

■ *As compared to other cooperatives, do you perceive the rate of women's participation in this cooperative to be...*

● *En comparaison avec d'autres coopératives, percevez-vous que le taux de participation des femmes au sein de cette coopérative est...*

▲ *En comparación con otras cooperativas, usted considera que el porcentaje de participación de las mujeres en dicha cooperativa es...*

- Very low / Très faible / Muy bajo
- Somewhat low / Plus ou moins faible / Bastante bajo
- Average / Moyen / Dentro de la media
- Somewhat high / Plus ou moins élevé / Bastante alto
- Very high / Très élevé / Muy alto

- *As compared to other forms of business with which you are familiar, do you perceive the rate of women's participation in cooperatives generally to be...*
- *En comparaison avec d'autres types d'entreprise que vous connaissez, considérez-vous que le taux de participation des femmes au sein des coopératives est généralement...*
- ▲ *En comparación con otras formas de empresa que conoce, usted considera que el porcentaje de participación de las mujeres en las cooperativas en general es...*
- o Very low / Très faible / Muy bajo
- o Somewhat low / Plus ou moins faible / Bastante bajo
- o Average / Moyen / Dentro de la media
- o Somewhat high / Plus ou moins élevé / Bastante alto
- o Very high / Très élevé / Muy alto

- *How often does the cooperative with which you are most familiar hold training sessions for members?*
- *À quelle fréquence la coopérative que vous connaissez le mieux tient-elle des formations pour ses membres?*
- ▲ *Con respecto a la cooperativa que mejor conoce, ¿con qué frecuencia organiza esta cooperativa sesiones de formación para sus miembros?*
- o Weekly / Chaque semaine / Semanal
- o Monthly / Chaque mois / Mensual
- o Quarterly / Chaque trimestre / Trimestral
- o Yearly / Chaque année / Anual
- o Never / Jamais / Nunca

- *Do the training sessions for members focus only on the functioning of the cooperative or do they also focus on broader issues (e.g. gender based violence)?*
- *Ces formations pour les membres sont-elles limitées au fonctionnement de la coopérative, ou se préoccupent-elles également d'enjeux plus larges (ex: violence sexospécifique)?*
- ▲ *¿Las sesiones de formación para los miembros se centran solo en el funcionamiento de la cooperativa o también se abordan otros temas (ej. violencia de género)?*
- o Only the cooperative / Seulement la coopérative / Solo en la cooperativa
- o Broader issues / Enjeux larges / Otros temas

- *How often does this cooperative hold training sessions for members on topics concerning women's empowerment or gender equality?*
- *À quelle fréquence cette coopérative tient-elle des formations pour les membres en rapport avec le renforcement du pouvoir d'action des femmes ou l'égalité entre hommes et femmes?*
- ▲ *¿Con qué frecuencia organiza esta cooperativa sesiones de formación para sus miembros sobre temas relacionados con el empoderamiento de las mujeres o la igualdad de género?*
- o Semanal Monthly / Chaque mois / Mensual
- o Quarterly / Chaque trimestre / Trimestral
- o Yearly / Chaque année / Anual
- o Never / Jamais / Nunca

■ *How often does the cooperative with which you are most familiar hold training sessions for women members specifically?*

● *À quelle fréquence la coopérative que vous connaissez le mieux tient-elle des formations spécifiquement pour ses membres féminins?*

▲ *¿Volviendo a la cooperativa que mejor conoce ¿Con qué frecuencia organiza sesiones de formación exclusivamente para mujeres?*

- o Weekly / Chaque semaine / Semanal
- o Monthly / Chaque mois / Mensual
- o Quarterly / Chaque trimestre / Trimestral
- o Yearly / Chaque année / Anual
- o Never / Jamais / Nunca

Please provide the contact information of anyone else you believe has knowledge of this subject and may be able to complete this survey.

Veillez s'il-vous-plaît fournir les coordonnées de toute autre personne que vous croyez avoir des connaissances sur ce sujet et pourrait être en mesure de compléter ce sondage.

Le rogamos que nos indique los datos de contacto de quienes considere que sean expertos en esta materia y que pudieran completar esta encuesta.

Name / Nom / Nombre:

Company / Société / Empresa:

Email / Courriel / Correo electrónico:

Thank you for your participation. If you wish to have the results of this research sent to you please provide your email address here:

Merci de votre participation. Si vous souhaitez que les résultats de cette recherche vous soient envoyés, veuillez fournir votre adresse courriel ici:

Le agradecemos su participación. Si desea recibir los resultados de este estudio que le hemos remitido, por favor, indique aquí su dirección de correo electrónico:

Email / Courriel / Correo electrónico:

Annex 2.

Interview questions

1. Please state your current position and your experience with co-operatives.
2. Briefly describe how your work in the co-operative sector has engaged with gender equality issues.
3. Can you identify a co-operative that is significantly advancing women's empowerment and gender equality, and describe how it's doing that?
4. In what ways, if any, would you say that co-operatives are facilitating women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade, or strengthening women's economic capacity and commercial networks?
5. Describe any best practices that you think are or should be employed at management and at governance levels to support gender equality throughout co-operatives.
6. Are you aware of any strategies that have been adopted by co-operatives to address one or more of these 12 themes from the Beijing Platform (the Fourth World Conference on Women)?
If so, please provide some examples.
 - Women and poverty
 - Education and training of women
 - Women and health
 - Violence against women
 - Women and armed conflict
 - Women and the economy
 - Women in power and decision-making
 - Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
 - Human rights of women
 - Women and the media
 - Women and the environment
 - The girl child
7. Do you think that co-operatives have had a noticeable impact on women's empowerment and gender equality over the past 20 years specifically? If yes, please explain why.
8. If you have seen co-operatives achieve progress with regard to women's empowerment and gender equality, do you perceive any threats to the sustainability of that progress?
9. Could co-operatives do more for the advancement of women than they have already?
If so, please explain.
10. What barriers to women's empowerment within the co-operative sector do you perceive? (For instance, membership demographics or training or a business focus on economic rather than social goals.)
11. Can you envision any strategies for overcoming these barriers? If so, please provide some examples.
12. In your opinion, how does the capacity of co-operatives to promote gender equality compare to other business forms?
13. Does government (at any level) have a role to play in ensuring that co-operatives foster gender equality or women's empowerment? If yes, how might it play that role? If no, why not?
14. Do you have any further points to add about co-operatives and gender equality or women's empowerment?
15. We are undertaking a literature review for this project. In your opinion, what are the best and/or most influential sources of information concerning women and co-operatives? Could you share any relevant reports with us?



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