

A MATTER OF  
PRINCIPLE:  
CO-OPERATIVES  
IN DEVELOPMENT

#coops4dev



International  
Co-operative  
Alliance



Cofunded  
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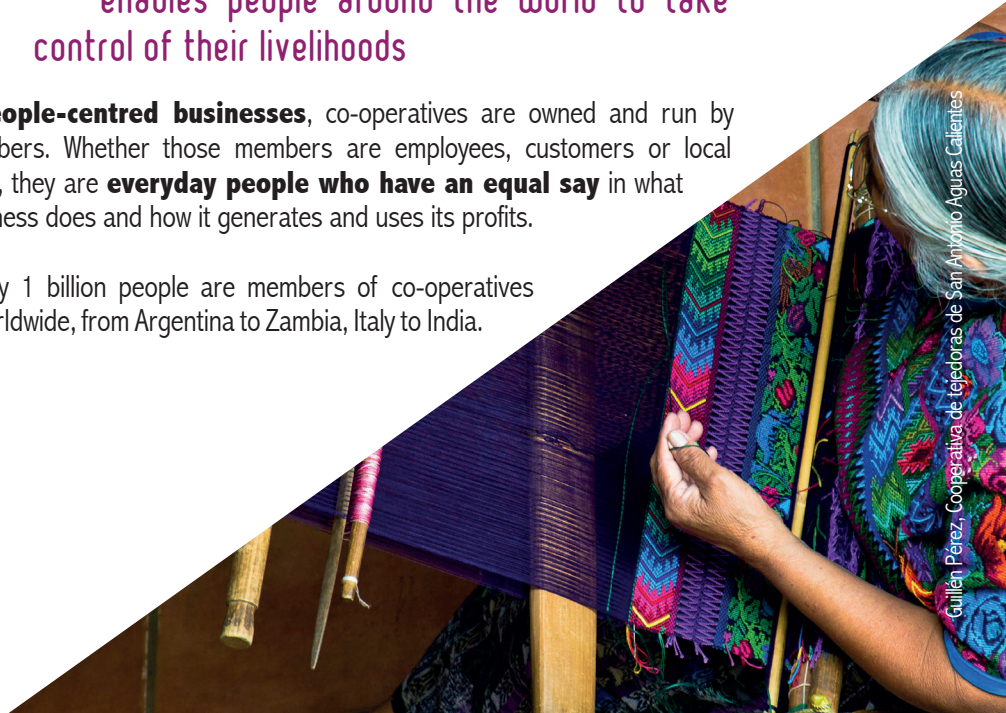


# WHAT IS A CO-OPERATIVE?

A tried and tested business model which  
enables people around the world to take  
control of their livelihoods

As **people-centred businesses**, co-operatives are owned and run by their members. Whether those members are employees, customers or local communities, they are **everyday people who have an equal say** in what their business does and how it generates and uses its profits.

Nearly 1 billion people are members of co-operatives worldwide, from Argentina to Zambia, Italy to India.



Guillen Perez, Cooperativa de tejedoras de San Antonio Aguas Calientes



Co-operatives come in all shapes and sizes, and they operate in **all parts of the economy** : from healthcare to housing, farms to pharmacies, supermarkets to sports clubs, banks to bakeries.

A strong network spanning local and global organizations, the co-operative movement is a vital part of **civil society** that works together to build a better world.



A photograph of a man wearing a turban and a light-colored jacket, carrying a large, full sack on his shoulder. The background is a blurred outdoor setting. A large yellow diagonal banner is overlaid on the top right of the image.

# CO-OPERATIVES AND DEVELOPMENT

Supporting the start-up and growth of co-operatives is an established way to enable people to take charge of their own development

As confirmed by the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, effective and sustainable development needs to be a process led by local people which is firmly anchored in civil society.

With a conducive legal and economic environment, **co-operatives provide an effective business model for inclusive development.**

Co-operatives are a reminder to the international community that it is possible to pursue both economic viability and social responsibility.

Ban Ki-moon - United Nations Secretary-General

# WHY SUPPORT CO-OPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT?

With a track record stretching back over 150 years, and guided by the seven international co-operative principles, the co-operative model is widely acknowledged

Policy recommendations from the International Labour Organization on decent jobs and from the Food and Agricultural Organization on food security, as well as leading economists such as Joseph Stiglitz, all point to the **important role co-operatives play in development.**

Co-operatives empower all people of all abilities and ages through access to resources and opportunities. We at the United Nations work closely with co-operatives as partners in transforming our world for the future we want where no one is left behind.

Daniela Bas - Director, Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD), UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)



SOCODEVI, FEDECOVERA



A woman with dark hair, wearing a blue apron over a white patterned top, is smiling and holding a black tray containing several small green seedlings in white mesh pots. She is standing in a field with other plants and a wooden structure in the background. A large yellow diagonal banner is overlaid on the top left of the image.

# THE 7 PRINCIPLES IN DEVELOPMENT

We should learn from coops. If we do, we can reshape our economy, reshape globalisation and who we and our children are.

Joseph Stiglitz, at International Summit of Cooperatives

## 1. Voluntary and Open Membership

Co-operatives are open to all persons, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination, which makes them a safe space for more vulnerable groups, such as women, minorities, and refugees, to **create their own opportunities**.

The Federación Uruguaya de Cooperativas de Vivienda por Ayuda Mutua (FUCVAM), allows low income locals to have access to dignified and durable housing, a model that has already expanded to 15 countries in Latin America, and includes other amenities such as community farms or day care.



## 2. Democratic member control

In co-operatives, workers are given a voice regarding their own trajectory, they are **empowered** and united and can achieve more than they would on their own in the global supply chain.

The Co-operative Alliance of Kenya (CAK) ensures that there are elections every year, presenting an enabling environment for effective participation where each member has a right to speak in meetings and stand for any elective position in the co-operative.

### 3. Member economic participation

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative and **receive benefits in proportion** to their transactions. They allocate surpluses for developing their co-operative, setting up reserves, and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

In Kerala, the Uralungal Labour Contract Co-operative Society started way back in 1925 for the benefit of 14 marginalised labourers who lost their livelihood due to their active participation in Indian Freedom Movement. Today, they are the leading co-operative society in the country uplifting standard of living of over 5.000 workers directly contributing to the development of the society.



## 4. Autonomy and Independence

Co-operatives are a resilient self-help business model with a social purpose which puts **people before profits**.

Caminos (Roads) is a Uruguayan Co-operative formed by a group of mainly female health professionals in 2002 when the mutual for which they worked closed. Currently, Caminos provides quality employment to more than 100 people committed to self-management.



## 5. Education, Training, and Information

Co-operatives decrease the chances of desertification in remote areas by building **local expertise** through capacity-building.

Moshi Co-operative University (MoCU) is the oldest training institution in Tanzania, and it's committed to the promotion of equal opportunities and constructive involvement in community development. Current university enrolment stands at more than 4.000 students in the fields of co-operative accounting, management, and rural development.

## 6. Co-operation among co-operatives

Co-operatives are an international movement with a strong network that enables workers in different parts of the world to **share knowledge**, work together, and improve conditions at the local level.

In 2010, Palestinian farmers in Jordan Valley decided to make their co-operatives work together to overcome the region's restrictions on movement and access to resources, markets, and services. The Seedling Nursery in Jordan Valley now is run by three different co-operatives: The Northern Jordan Valley Agriculture Co-operative, Ein Al Beda Agriculture Co-operative and Al Khadra Agriculture Co-operative, whose 245 farmers benefit from the nursery's quality, prices, and seed compatibility.



## 7. Concern for the community

Co-operatives keep wealth at the **local level** and contribute for **peace** and **political stability**, offering dignified ways out of poverty and empowering the community.

In Mexico, since 2008, “Caja Popular Mexicana”, a savings and credit co-operative, has been running a big program of social responsibility for their 2 million members. Their scholarship program has benefited over 56.000 students.

# THE INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE ALLIANCE

The International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) is the apex organization for co-operatives worldwide. It represents co-operative enterprises across 100 countries, giving voice to 300 member organizations which link around 1 billion individuals, promoting the importance of a values-based business model.



ICA Global Office  
[ica.coop](http://ica.coop)

Cooperatives Europe  
[coopseurope.coop](http://coopseurope.coop)

Co-operatives of the Americas  
[aciamericas.coop](http://aciamericas.coop)

ICA Asia and Pacific  
[ica-ap.coop](http://ica-ap.coop)

The Alliance Africa  
[icaafrica.coop](http://icaafrica.coop)



# THE #COOPS4DEV ICA-EU PARTNERSHIP

The partnership between the ICA and the European Commission has been signed in 2016 to promote and give visibility to co-operatives working in international development. #Coops4dev aims at strengthening the co-operative network by involving all four regions of the ICA in the areas of research, advocacy, and visibility.

# THE INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT PLATFORM

The International Co-operative Development Platform (ICDP) is a **network of co-operative organisations** working on **international development** across the globe, including the Cooperatives Europe Development Platform (CEDP), the Overseas Cooperative Development Council (OCDC), and other co-operative member federations.

The ICDP was launched during the International Summit of Co-operatives in 2016, and represents a **joint commitment** towards the promotion of the co-operative model in development processes.

## Work with us

Co-operatives are key partners for organisations interested in human, social and economic development.

By giving local people ownership, creating jobs and security on the ground and by harnessing the power of international networks, co-operatives offer a tried and tested model for development.

Find out more about the role co-operatives play in international development by visiting **[www.ica.coop](http://www.ica.coop)**

Discuss ways of working with us by emailing **[coops4dev@ica.coop](mailto:coops4dev@ica.coop)** or calling **+32 2 743 10 33**

Follow the hashtag **#coops4dev** on social media to see the latest updates from around the globe.





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