

ICA Gender Equality Committee's Statement on the International Women's Day 2024

Accelerating progress in gender equality through cooperatives

Under the theme “Invest in women: Accelerate progress”, the 2024 International Women’s Day focuses on the need to provide the necessary and appropriate resources to ensure the success of gender equality policies and measures. It also stresses the importance of expenditure with gender focus, so that it truly mitigates gender inequalities.

According to the [latest report on gender equality progress](#) by UN Women and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), “lackluster commitment to gender equality is to blame for limited progress across Sustainable Development Goal 5”. Expanding women’s participation in leadership and decision-making and right-sizing investments in gender equality at the national, regional and global levels, are among the concrete actions mentioned in this report to substantially accelerate progress by 2030.

Cooperatives, grounded in values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity, offer unique opportunities for women to gain ownership, raise their voices, and participate actively in their communities. This active participation leads to positive ripple effects across multiple spheres of their lives, benefiting not only themselves but also their communities.

Progress in gender equality can only take place with reduced poverty rates among women and girls. The [above-mentioned report](#) by UN Women and UN DESA affirms that “today, 1 in every 10 women is living in extreme poverty. If current trends continue, over 340 million women and girls will still live in extreme poverty by 2030”. This alarming figure would represent 4% of the projected world population in 2030. A radical shift is, thus, urgently needed if we want to revert this trend and contribute towards more equal, peaceful, and prosperous societies.

The cooperative movement shares the vision of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development of a world free of poverty, where human beings “can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment” ([Declaration on decent work and against harassment](#), 2018).

The Gender Equality Committee of the International Cooperative Alliance strives for the progress of women’s participation and leadership in economic and social spheres. We will keep working to give visibility and support to women in the cooperative movement. We believe that cooperatives are a valuable driver for gender equality. By offering opportunities for economic independence and for participation in collective action, cooperatives are not only benefiting women but the whole community - these dynamics can transform the collective mindset in a way that impacts next generations.

About the ICA Gender Equality Committee

The [Gender Equality Committee of the International Cooperative Alliance](#) (ICA GEC) is a catalyst for change to make gender equality a reality in all cooperatives and serves as a forum for the discussion and exchange of experiences and ideas on issues related to gender equality.