



United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for Inclusive Social Development

**TRAINING WORKSHOP ON THE ROLE OF COOPERATIVES IN SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT:
Towards Universal Healthcare**





Cooperative Advantage

- The United Nations recognizes the potential of cooperatives for promoting the fullest possible participation in the economic and social development of all people, including women, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples¹.
- Cooperatives, defined as “autonomous associations of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise,²”
- Like the Sustainable Development Goals, cooperatives are people-centred and strongly committed to the communities they serve.
- In adopting the sustainable development goals, Member States of the United Nations said: “we acknowledge the diversity of the private sector, ranging from micro-enterprises to **cooperatives** to multinationals.⁵”
- The 2018 World Cooperative Monitor found that the world’s top 300 cooperative organizations operate in different sectors: insurance (32%), agriculture (35%), wholesale and retail trade (19%), banking and financial services (8%), industry and utilities (2%), health, education and social care (2%) and other services (2%).
- They report a total turnover of over two trillion USD.
- <https://monitor.coop/en>





General Assembly Resolutions on Cooperatives

The latest General Assembly resolutions on cooperatives makes the following specific requests:

1. Government support for cooperatives

- Governments to support cooperatives as sustainable and successful business enterprises that contribute directly to employment generation, poverty and hunger eradication, education, social protection and the creation of affordable housing options.

2. National Legal and Regulatory Environment

- Called for countries to review existing legislation and regulations on cooperatives and take actions to make the national legal and regulatory environment more conducive to the creation and growth of cooperatives.

3. Strengthening cooperatives

- Invited governments, in collaboration with the cooperative movement, to develop programmes for capacity-building of cooperatives, including by strengthening the organizational, management and financial skills of their members, while respecting the principles of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

4. Agricultural Cooperatives

- Invited Governments to strengthen efforts to enhance food security and nutrition and to focus efforts on smallholders and women farmers, as well as on agricultural cooperatives and farmers' networks, supported by measures to improve access to markets.





General Assembly Resolutions on Cooperatives (cont'd)

5. ICT and Cooperatives

Encouraged Governments to promote access to new technologies including information and communications technologies as a vital channel for collaboration and the expansion of cooperatives, especially in rural areas.

6. Cooperatives and Education

Requested the Secretary-General to continue rendering support to Member States, as appropriate, in their efforts to create a supportive environment for the development of cooperatives, integrating cooperative values, principles and business models into educational programming, including school curricula.

7. Communication and promotion of cooperatives

Requested the Secretary-General to promote an exchange of experience and best practices through, inter alia, conferences, workshops and seminars at the national and regional levels to share best practices.

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Outline – Secretary-General’s Report on “Cooperatives in Social Development”

- The overarching goal of the 2030 agenda is eradication of poverty. Growing concern about the rising levels of inequality within and between countries.
- Poverty often is a cause of ill health (cannot afford medical attention therefore minor illnesses go untreated and become major) or a consequence of ill health (having to take time off work or pay for expensive medical attention).
- UN in September this year will hold a high-level debate on universal health coverage often which is threatening progress towards achieving sustainable development goals. One major cause of inequality, and a major reason for people falling into poverty, is lack of access to quality affordable healthcare.
- Cooperatives have demonstrated resilience and capacity to serve their communities in many social and economic sectors. Cooperatives are also a major provider of healthcare services in many countries. The report will examine the cooperative role in social development through the provision of healthcare services.





Importance of Cooperatives in social and sustainable development

- a) Facts and figures and examples of cooperatives growing inequality within and between countries and potential for a breakup of the social contract.
- b) The cooperative model and its concern for community and sustainability making it the better choice.
- c) Examples of leading cooperatives that are both profitable and promoting sustainable development and reducing poverty and providing employment in many countries of the world.





Enablers for cooperative development

- Financing and the role of cooperative savings and credit associations
- Supportive legislation
- The importance of statistics
- Skills and capacity building
- Networking and sharing information





Key Messages and Policy Recommendations

(i) Create policies and programmes that support scaling-up the provision of cooperative healthcare services to cover a wider section of the population and for addressing the health needs of people without formal employment (informal sector).

(ii) Create more opportunities for cooperatives to learn from each other on the processes and benefits of providing cooperative healthcare

(iii) The role of Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisations (SACCOs) should be widened to undertake savings mobilization, investments and credit management and also participate national payment systems (like commercial banks).

(iv) Government incentives and support is often crucial to the growth and development of cooperatives, even though the key-drivers that make cooperatives sustainable must come from an engaged membership.

(v) Weak governance and corruption by leaders of some cooperatives is a major problem for financial security and sustainability. There needs to be more civic education of the members, and more training for the leadership in issues of ethics and accountability, that can make it easier to detect fraudulent activities early.

(vi) A clear legal framework is crucial, so cooperatives are not simultaneously treated as regular corporations but fall under separate cooperatives framework. Some models and good practices have been developed on cooperative legislation that can be promoted in other countries.

(vii) The United Nations system should continue to provide technical support and capacity-building assistance to cooperatives and national Governments.

(viii) There is an urgent need to develop and harmonize a statistical framework for the systematic collection of comprehensive data on cooperatives and to promote and disseminate evidence-based research on cooperatives.





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