

Expert Group Meeting and Workshop on Cooperatives

The Role of Cooperatives in Sustainable Development for All: Contributions, Challenges and Strategies

8-10 December 2014
UN Headquarters
Nairobi, Kenya

Aide Memoire



Overview

The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) and Capacity-building Workshop on **The Role of Cooperatives in Sustainable Development: Contributions, Challenges and Strategies** is an opportunity for the exchange of ideas on how cooperatives are helping to build sustainable societies, and also a good occasion for capacity-building of cooperative leaders/trainers in Africa. The results will serve to raise awareness as to how best to leverage the cooperative model as a viable means of sustainable living.

An initiative of the Division for Social Policy and Development in the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the event is a major contribution to the promotion of the formation and growth of cooperatives in the context of sustainable development.

The event will be held on 8–10 December, 2014 in Nairobi, Kenya

Background

Presently, the international community is engaged in a process of formulating Sustainable Development Goals that will comprise the post-2015 development agenda.¹ The implementation of these goals requires the input of all stakeholders including cooperatives.

Sustainable development has become a major area of focus of development efforts at the national, regional, and global levels.² This means that the critical problems of development demand that the formulation and implementation of development policies are done in a way that acknowledge the interconnectedness among the economic, social and environmental sectors. Sustainable development is multifaceted, intergenerational and long-term. It places emphasis on fairness, participation, equitable distribution of wealth, accountability, and inclusiveness.

Cooperatives have been contributing to sustainable development and have accumulated tremendous experience in this regard. They have strengthened the push for economic diversification and inclusive development. Cooperatives empower people while protecting the planet, and are an effective vehicle in delivering inclusive and sustainable development. They have demonstrated their power to provide livelihoods for people at the grassroots or local levels while showing concern for the community and its resources. There are 2.6 million cooperatives worldwide which employ 12.6 million people. They produce great wealth. For example, US\$20 trillion in cooperative assets generate US\$3 trillion in annual revenue.³ Sustainable development integrates the social, economic, and environmental sectors in a balanced manner. Cooperatives compliment this approach since they operate in each of those sectors with a people-centred perspective. They could be found in the financial, agricultural, housing, health, disaster preparation and response, education, energy, fisheries, transportation, housing, tourism, and other sectors.

The Expert Group Meeting and Workshop will make full use of this worthwhile experience of cooperatives by assessing the lessons learned and how these lessons could benefit the implementation process of the post-2015 development agenda in countries, including African

¹ <http://www.post2015hlp.org/the-report/>

² http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Post_2015_UNTTreport.pdf

³ United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs, Global Census on Cooperatives, 2014.

countries, as they address the challenges of sustainable development, especially economic diversification and social inclusion.

The role of cooperatives in fulfilling global mandates set by the United Nations has been recognized. The International Year of Cooperatives has raised awareness about the power of cooperatives in helping to address critical social and economic development issues. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) acknowledged the role of cooperatives in contributing to social inclusion and poverty reduction in particular in developing countries⁴.

The role of cooperatives in sustainable development has been recognized by the UN General Assembly⁵ and UN agencies such as FAO⁶ and the ILO⁷. They have expressed support for cooperatives and have embarked on initiatives to promote the contribution of cooperatives to sustainable development. The EGM and Workshop will build on the achievements of the IYC and will also build on the experience gained in partnership between the UN and cooperatives.

This EGM and Workshop comes at a time when the UN is about to adopt the post 2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. Cooperatives have been making their contributions known in the process leading up to these goals.⁸ During the implementation phase starting after their adoption in 2015 onwards, cooperatives will continue, even more, to make their contributions to reaching these goals in a practical and concrete manner. In this context, an enabling environment, including capacity building, a compatible policy or legislative framework and awareness-raising must become essential elements in realizing the full potential of cooperatives in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This EGM and Workshop will serve to address these issues related to an enabling environment

In the process leading to a new development agenda and its implementation, attention will be on Africa as one of the regions still struggling to overcome many development challenges. Africa has great potential to reach high levels of development. In fact, there has been economic, social and political progress in Africa. However, there is still much room for growth and development.⁹ Progress already achieved must be sustained while forging ahead to achieve more development goals. In this regard, the cooperative model has much to contribute in helping Africa to reach its full potential by sustaining development gains and setting new goals to eradicate poverty, reaching full employment with quality jobs, reducing inequality, and achieving more economic growth with equity, while protecting the natural environment.¹⁰ This EGM and Workshop will explore these issues and provide capacity building opportunity for African cooperative leaders and trainers.

⁴ United Nations (2012). *The Future We Want*. Outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 20-22 June 2012. Document No. A/CONF.216/L.1*. Available from https://rio20.un.org/sites/rio20.un.org/files/a-conf.216l-1_english.pdf.pdf.

⁵ United Nations General Assembly Resolution, A/RES/68/133

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/ap100e/ap100e.pdf>

⁷ http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:R193

⁸ See paper prepared by ICA entitled "Comments to the Focus Areas Document

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http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/fileadmin/uploads/aeo/2014/PDF/Chapter_PDF/01_Chapter1_AEO2014_EN.light.pdf

¹⁰ <http://social.un.org/coopsyear/documents/WanyamaCOOPERATIVESFORAFRICANDEVELOPMENT.pdf>

Objectives of the EGM and Workshop

The meeting will provide expert analysis that will become part of the report of the United Nations Secretary-General in 2015 which will discuss the role and potential of cooperatives in achieving social, economic, and environmental development. The report would contain assessment of cooperatives contribution, the challenges they face and the strategies that will enhance their contributions and address challenges. The Workshop will provide capacity-building opportunity for cooperative leaders and government officials in Africa.

The experts in the EGM and Workshop will address the following questions:

1. What are the contributions that cooperatives in Africa have been making to sustainable development?
2. What are the challenges that confront cooperatives and governments in the context of sustainable development for all?
3. What are the strategies for allowing cooperatives to grow and develop and make more and better contributions to sustainable development for all?
4. What kinds of capacity-building opportunities are required for cooperative leaders and trainers in Africa?

Outcomes

The EGM and Workshop will aim for the following outcomes:

1. Papers prepared by experts
2. A report of the meeting
3. Recommendations that will serve to enhance the role of cooperatives in achieving the goals of the post-2015 development agenda
4. Enhanced capacity of cooperatives leaders and trainers in Africa

Venue

The event will take place at UN Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya on 08 – 10 December 2014.

Format

The workshop will take the form of interactive dialogues and training sessions focused on the sharing of good practices and lessons learned, as well as on cultivating a relevant knowledge base and skill set for working in and/or with the cooperative model of enterprise. The workshop will be organised around three key themes: 1) understanding the cooperative model; 2) strengthening cooperatives; and 3) engaging cooperatives in addressing local, regional and global challenges. – See annex 1 draft agenda

Participants

15 experts and twenty (5 from each sub-region of Africa) African cooperative leaders and government officials will be invited to attend the EGM and Workshop. In addition, members of COPAC (FAO, ILO, ICA, WFO) will be invited to participate.

Documentation and the Language of the meeting

Each EGM session will include 2 presentations by lead experts who will present papers on the topics of the sessions.

Each Workshop session will include a presentation by a trainer and then participants will discuss issues connected with the presentation.

All inputs to the meeting will be made available as a resource guide on the website of DSPD <http://undesadspd.org/Cooperatives.aspx> as well as a summary of discussions.

The documentation of the meeting will comprise of relevant publications, documents, and materials related to the topics of the sessions. All documentation will be made available on the website of DSPD <http://undesadspd.org/Cooperatives.aspx>

The working language of the meeting will be English. Documentation for the meeting will be provided in English.

All relevant correspondences should be sent to:

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