Rebuilding and realizing a resilient global society through cooperatives

Paper for the Expert Group Meeting on "*The role of cooperatives in economic and social development: Recover Better from The Covid-19 Pandemic*"

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Build Back Better, the cooperative way

It goes without saying that the COVID-19 pandemic has put great stress on every human individual, and the whole social, economic, and political fabric; locally, nationally, and globally. But whilst it affects all people and all societies, it does so more profoundly and painfully for the most vulnerable, for poor people, and communities.

As is the case for every crisis, the pandemic has to be dealt with through a collective effort. This time around, the global crisis needs a global effort. And as is the case with every crisis, ironically, it is also a challenge and it also produces opportunities. Individual cooperatives and the cooperative movement as a whole have reacted in that sense. They have, as always, tried to *correct* the current harsh situation for their members and their communities. But they have also tried to *provide prospects* for an alternative way of organisation and mobilisation that make people and communities more resilient to potential future identical or similar crises. Cooperatives also help to *redress* the malfunctioning of the health system in this acute crisis and are key actors to *re-orient* health care policies, so that they are better prepared for future pandemics.

In this way, the cooperatives have taken the first steps towards *Building Back Better*, to cooperate in writing a new page, or even a new chapter, in human history through a *New Social Contract* as suggested by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. This *New Social Contract* can only be realised through a *whole-of-society approach* involving all stakeholders, big and small, public and private, local and global. It also needs to put sustainable development, qualitative growth, and the economy of wellbeing as an ultimate goal. This implies that commitments must be made and the appropriate arrangements taken for *social protection for all*. As we shall argue, this is exactly what cooperatives are striving for.

Social protection, health and the environment have often been viewed as external costs on the economy and for society. The pandemic has shown that they are the *very foundations* of a sound and durable economy and of a healthy society. Cooperatives have always tried to reconcile economic objectives with the well-being and the quality of life of people and communities. Sometimes they were successful in this; sometimes less or even not.

The pandemic calls for a rethink of our dominant economic and social model. The current model is facing existential challenges. It defies natural and environmental boundaries. The pandemic shows that there cannot be a sustainable economy without respect for nature; even without *giving rights to nature*. But it also shows that there cannot be a sustainable economy without respect for every human being and for every community; without giving *rights to human beings and all communities*. COVID-19 is an airborne disease with a probable link to air pollution (Katoto, 2021). We live in an environment where the air does not know borders and in a society where mobility is increasingly a global phenomenon without frontiers. We are thus facing a crisis without borders, for which we must find *responses without borders*.

The cooperative movement has reflected on its role in the crisis, its role in solving the crisis and its role in rebuilding and realising a resilient global society. A number of key reflections can be found in the most recent World Cooperative Monitor (2021), the paper on European Cooperatives and the Recovery published by Cooperatives Europe (2020) and the recent paper on Gender produced by the Gender Equality Committee of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA, 2021). These documents formed a basis for *the recent internal consultation organised by the ICA*. The present paper provides a short synthesis of the outputs and documents to what extent this unprecedented global crisis is a challenge but also an opportunity for each individual cooperative and for the cooperative movement as a whole.

Digitalisation; Digitisation & Technology

The role of digital technologies in promoting social development and well-being for all has been a key topic highlighted within the 99th Commission for Social Development. The document itself recognises the challenges of COVID-19 in "*widening the digital divide*" and "*polarising the labour market*". Such impacts have resulted from enforced lockdowns and closure of contact-facing businesses, as well as a switch from office to home working. Inequalities have been sharpened between those who have access to digital technology and can afford to isolate themselves, and those who cannot, with many key workers facing increased risks and everyday dangers.

Despite the immediate divides created by these changes, increasing digitalisation in the world of work will also have significant long-term impacts, including more teleworking, more independent work, changes to rural and urban divides, sub-contracting, and greater isolation for workers. A just recovery should ensure *sufficient social protection for workers and access to digital technologies for all*. At the institutional level, the European Union (EU) has been gathering data on the impact of COVID-19 and its implications on fundamental rights, with a focus on social rights, including work and education, and has been developing a position on the recognition of access to internet as a fundamental right for all citizens across the globe (FRA, 2020).

Where they have access to digital technologies, *cooperatives provide online services and social protection*. They also facilitate the digital democratic participation of members. They can offer an alternative response to the challenges of a digital divide, democratising the online space, bringing networks of cooperators together around the globe, and ensuring collective and participatory responses in the digital arena (ICA Coops4dev, 2021). The internal consultation discussed, among other points: the role of worker cooperatives; the role of cooperatives as agents of social protection in the labour market; cooperative solutions to the changing world of work; and cooperative responses to protect professionals and patients.

In terms of labour markets, it is imperative to explore the various *opportunities* that such challenges are bringing *for the promotion of cooperative governance*. Universal social protection is a key for a just recovery, with the "ILO Innovative approaches for ensuring universal social protection for the future of work" already acknowledging the potential of worker cooperatives for a just recovery, stating that:

> *"…worker cooperatives can play an important role in facilitating social security coverage for workers active on digital platforms, particularly with regard to "platform cooperativism", where cooperatives of workers operating on digital platforms provide a model for strengthening workers' rights and facilitating access to social protection (Scholz 2016, cited in ILO, 2018)."*

Cooperative development organisations also highlighted that in particular, remote areas and the region of Africa have been impacted by these challenges in numerous ways. Many people could not access their offices and therefore had to invent new ways of working effectively. This raised the issue of the power of the internet, connectivity, accessibility to the internet, and the issue of engaging with each other from a distance. During lockdowns, cooperatives and their members could not interact with the members and the clients in a direct, in-person, way; in-person meetings could not be held. Further, as also has been seen with the Ebola outbreak (Shomba & Develtere, 2020) the fact that: *"there was also increase of pregnancy of school-going children because most of them were not able to go to school"*. These broad and wide-ranging social and economic impacts highlighted within the consultation are non-exhaustive, yet they demonstrate the challenges of the digital divide and how they are impacting rich and poor countries alike.

The COVID-19 pandemic also had an immense impact on key workers. With the aim of guaranteeing the safety of professionals and patients, *cooperatives developed digital and telemedicine solutions* to address these challenges.

"Digital transition, we see how much technologies and access to digital solutions were important for cooperatives to survive during this crisis"

Cooperators noted how digitalization has become a fundamental element in their everyday work and the tension and stress that this has brought to different members. Teleworking has become a fundamental tool. There has been previous discussion of the industrial revolution 4.0 and how to reach that point, but the pandemic brought it closer and has accelerated an ongoing transition.

Key examples of innovative digital responses were also shared. *Cooperatives have been very creative* in using new technologies to connect with staff, with members and the outside world. Meetings of Boards of Directors or staff meetings were conducted through WhatsApp sessions. Cooperatives reached out to members and carried out additional work with webinars or radio shows. One Italian network of tourism cooperatives, the Association of Responsible Tourism, launched an original campaign during this period of zero tourism. With the campaign, labelled '*Turisti Solidali'*, virtual trips were organized to offer a valuable activity to the cooperatives' staff, to entertain their members and the public at large, to involve partners in other places and other countries, and to generate some income for their cooperative partners in over 20 Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

For cooperatives, capacity building on teleworking topics, technological tools and how we can implement them in different working contexts, are key focus areas. Cooperatives should also work to implement digital education and training programmes for their members. Through

innovative communication and outreach tools, many cooperatives have managed to show their members and partners the great work that they have been doing for years. Aroundtheworld.coop, for example, has been employing action research and videomaking to support cooperatives showcasing their economic, social and environmental impact. Technology worker-owned cooperatives have been also deploying their skills to digitize the services of their cooperative ecosystem. One key example is the case of Cambà, based in Argentina, a technology cooperative that has been developing custom software (web & mobile apps) for cooperatives in need of digitization and online outreach to members, by promoting free software and open knowledge.

Although cooperatives follow the urgency of developing an online presence and acknowledge the importance of online governance, they are highly sensitized on the issue of the digital divide. It is evident that there is a need to reimagine and standardize the *physical meeting* processes once the pandemic is over. This is *essential* because cooperatives are not only enterprises with a profit imperative, but they are also voluntary associations of people to meet joint needs and aspirations. Such associations of people need people connectivity, including face-to-face and digital encounters.

A rights-based approach for a gender-just recovery

The consultation also addressed the topic of a gender-just recovery. Polarized economies have amplified existing gender inequalities and increased violations of women's human rights, especially cases of domestic violence. It has been estimated by the UN, that in 2020, 243 million women and girls aged 15 to 49 were subjected to sexual and/or physical violence by an intimate partner (UN Women, 2020). During the COVID-19 crisis, isolation, hard lockdowns, and financial insecurity have aggravated abuses towards women.

Implementing their commitment to "*defend the basic principles of dignity and equality in the new and emerging forms of employment*" (ICA, 2018), many cooperatives have been proactive in designing strategies and taking measures to respond to the increased risk of domestic violence, acknowledging that during confinement, abusers have a greater chance of harassing their victims, causing physical, sexual, or psychological harm.

Cooperators have shared key measures in addressing gender-based violence as employers. Considering the increased reports of domestic violence, cooperatives have launched awareness raising campaigns on women's rights, on the increase of domestic violence and its prevention to empower their workers. They have been providing capacity building for women and girls on how to respond and proceed legally against their abusers to avoid impunity, by handling material on legal norms that offer them protection. Recognising and assessing the degrees of vulnerability of their employees, cooperatives have been providing legal, economic and health support to the domestic violence survivors, while guiding them with referral information towards the appropriate services that have been integrated within the cooperative to support those who experience violence.

Cooperatives and their representative organisations continued to encourage participation through different actions and in respect to existing protocols, creating a sense of ownership in combating different types of challenges this crisis has brought upon women workers. They continued operating as safe spaces where women could communicate regularly and build trust with their team members.

The right to food

Another human right that has been significantly impacted by COVID-19 is the right to food. According to the FAO, 690 million people encounter food shortages, with women and girls more likely than men to be affected by moderate or severe food insecurity (FAO, 2021). The correlation between women's rights and the right to food has been strongly expressed during the 22nd session of the UN Human Rights Council. Gendered social stereotypes and weak bargaining power are some of the identified characteristics that restrict women's decision-making power both at household and community level and results in violations of the right to food (UN OHCHR, 2012).

Cooperatives have a proven track record of non-discriminatory and gender-just economic empowerment, facilitating the dissolution of harmful stereotypes holding back women. During the pandemic, technology was utilised to pass information between female members and provide extension services, especially around the diversification of crops, in order to avoid loss of livelihoods and food shortages. Measures were also taken by cooperative organisations to *ensure food security and access to food aid* towards their members. In many places around the world, cooperatives have set up solidarity mechanisms to provide food to those in need. In Sri Lanka, food packs have been distributed to tea plantation workers to enable them to continue their production. In Italy, the Italian Cooperative Alliance has ensured through its membership that food reaches remote rural areas, leaving no one behind. From Latin America, the examples of solidarity have been also encouraging. Coomeva, a Colombian cooperative member, subsidised 350 000 monthly markets organized for high-risk populations. Notably, groceries were purchased from peasant organizations and cooperatives that are responsible for supplying local value chains, further economically empowering the local farmers in rural areas.

The impact of the pandemic for women in the care economy as well as in the informal economy has also been devastating. Women are overrepresented in *the informal economy* where it is more difficult for micro-entrepreneurs, workers and clients to respect preventive measures and to maintain social distance. They are more likely to partake in unpaid labour and are disproportionally excluded from decent work. The pandemic has accentuated the inequalities faced by domestic workers, informal workers and caretakers, showing the importance for recognition and investment in the care economy. *Care cooperatives* have been providing improved services for care recipients and better working conditions for care workers, while also supporting the transition of care workers from the informal to the formal economy (ILO, 2018).

The testimonies of cooperators, including those discussed above, show that cooperatives across the world have already started integrating a *gender transformative approach*, by addressing and changing the norms and structures which reinforce inequalities. Cooperatives have realised that women should be empowered and understand their own rights both at the household level and at the workplace, whenever they encounter harassment and violence or any other form of women's rights violation. They address the need of a truly egalitarian recovery strategy that encompasses a human rights approach and recognizes the importance of cooperatives and their effectiveness in generating jobs, enabling economic democracy and agency for women and girls, and boosting leadership and management experience.

Defending and developing civil society

The recent monitor developed by Civicus (**https://monitor.civicus.org/**) has shown that the current pandemic and crisis has limited many civil society organisations and movements in their

ability to speak out, to mobilise or to organise. Prior to the pandemic, the relationship between many governments and civil society organisations was already laden with hidden and overt tensions. Scholars and activists spoke of a '*shrinking space*' for civil society or a '*policy neglect*' of their role and potential contributions (Anheier & Toepler, 2019). Cooperatives, as market-based civil society organisations, often face similar problems of repression and neglect. This is exacerbated by the fact that cooperative enterprises are less vocal and visual than many other civil society organisations like NGOs and trade unions (Develtere, Wanyama & Pollet, 2008). In addition, in recent years many countries have opted for legislative reforms that homogenise the entrepreneurial landscape and have pushed cooperatives in the strait jacket of conventional businesses giving a higher premium to shareholder value than to stakeholder active participation and benefits.

While facing similar pressures as the other civil society actors, cooperatives have also shown that they have a number of characteristics that make them *more resilient* during this crisis. The flexibility of the cooperative model has allowed many cooperatives to adapt very quickly. Some have managed to create new production lines. For example, in the textile sector cooperatives started to produce PPE that was required for sanitary reasons. The same can be said for health cooperatives as their flexibility facilitated the extraordinary measures that had to be taken to meet the growing needs of patients and the increased workload of health professionals. Financial cooperatives oftentimes shifted their priorities. While they were used to primarily provide starting capital for new cooperatives and other start-ups, they had to shift very quickly to emergency interventions and made loans and other financial support available to solve or mitigate cash flow problems faced by cooperatives and other businesses.

The global economic crisis has put a strain on global value chains that dominate the globalised economy in the pre-pandemic period. Cooperatives, as member-based enterprises are well placed to formulate and realise *alternatives to* these *global value chains*. Since many of these value chains were broken or disrupted, this resulted in increased food insecurity and poverty through loss of livelihoods. *Near-sourcing* and *local sourcing*, the preferred choice of many cooperatives, is not only saving time and money, but is also more environmentally sustainable and gives added economic and financial value to the cooperative members.

Worker buy-outs through cooperatives are another example of resilience. In many countries we have seen that the bankruptcy of many conventional businesses was avoided due to the practice of worker buy-outs or through cooperative or mutually based employee shareholding schemes. These solutions allow workers to meet their needs for work and income in a collective way. It also offers a route for the democratic control of their enterprise and truly involves them in management. Not only is it important to highlight the maintenance of jobs for the employees of those enterprises, but also the benefits that accrue to the local community, especially for local authorities. The mobilisation of domestic resources avoids economic desertification of local territories and promotes their self-sustenance (Wangwe & Prosper, 2004).[1]

In view of all these benefits, in early 2021 the Italian cooperative apex organisations (Agci, Confcooperative, and Legacoop) have signed a historical agreement with Italian trade union organizations (Cgil, Cisl and Uil) to promote the establishment and consolidation of cooperative worker buyouts (CICOPA, 2021).

[1] From the guide La reprise d'entreprise par les salariés en coopérative. Guide transnational www.les-scop.coop

In many countries there are still *too many barriers* to the establishment and functioning of worker cooperatives. Within the region of the Americas, it has been reported that in several countries, worker cooperatives are not eligible for governmental measures that are supporting and compensating enterprises that have suffered from the COVID-19 crisis. More precisely, two thirds of the countries in the CICOPA Americas' region report that the national COVID-19 measures for enterprises are not accessible to worker cooperatives. The removal of any restrictions on eligibility for cooperative enterprises to crisis support packages should be a priority.

The cooperative (f)actors – An effective collective ecosystem for resilience

In addition to worker ownership and their role as development and civil society actors, cooperatives possess specific design factors which contribute to their resilience. An ecosystem, by its very nature, requires diversity to remain dynamic and buoyant as well as to withstand the impacts of systemic shocks. Cooperatives and their cooperative networks can be viewed both as an ecosystem on its own, with diverse and interconnected groups of members who manage risks, but also as tools for the diversification of the world of enterprise in the global economy. In this setting, the cooperative model can provide social and economic diversity as a tool of resilience, collective security, and problem solving, acting as a *genuine alternative* to the economic homogenisation of enterprises under shareholder capitalism. Two key factors that contribute to resilience are the role of *networks*, and secondly the *flexibility and adaptability* of cooperatives in acting and responding to crisis. Both factors have proved crucial during the pandemic. Prior to the current global crisis, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) had already highlighted a number of important elements of the cooperative model:

> *"Cooperatives remain one of the best kept secrets in the Sustainable Development Goal toolbox. Cooperative enterprises are based on ethics, values, and a set of seven fundamental principles that keep people, rather than profit, at the centre of their businesses. Cooperatives can be a self-help tool for people to create their own economic opportunities through the power of the collective and pull themselves out of poverty. They re-invest in the communities in which they operate, securing not only the livelihoods of their members but also increasing the wealth of the community as a whole. By being sources of decent work, spaces for democracy and peace building, and an economic force, cooperatives are truly a partner in transforming our world." (UNDESA, 2017)]*

Further, participants of the consultation highlighted the importance of networks and their impact on cooperative members:

> *"The fact that we have a network, that there are thousands of cooperatives and millions of cooperative members, is a great opportunity for exchanges, for giving people access to vaccines but also to prepare ourselves for maybe next pandemics and other major crises.*
>
> *The fact also that as cooperatives we are close to the population, sometimes much closer to communities than the authorities or the conventional businesses, it is a plus we have – we need to share this advantage and promote much more the fact that we are flexible."*

The specific power and potential advantages of networks has been reiterated by several colleagues during the internal consultation, who mentioned that:

> "*I would say that we could use a cooperative network for the outreach of the vaccines, so that more members can be vaccinated and more people in local communities can be supported*".

In addition to networks, a further point highlighted within the consultation relates to the ways in which cooperatives do business, which have become and continue to be a valuable asset in times of global crisis. As many national governments were forced to respond with large fiscal stimulus packages to support businesses and workers, shifting their economic rational towards policies of survival and support, cooperatives continued to do what they have been doing all along. They *empower* their members, involve them in *democratic decision-making* and offer *support and solidarity* to them and their communities. This essential and permanent characteristic of cooperatives, which has become an asset in times of crisis, has been highlighted by scholars including Ian McPherson, who noted:

> "*The essential characteristic of a cooperative is that it is a democratic organisation engaged in the market place, providing goods and services. It is nevertheless based on people, not on capital or government direction. In its essence it can never escape, even if it wanted to, the capacity of members to exercise control whenever they wish to do so*". (McPherson, 1994)

With respect to the health sector, governments have experienced increasing difficulties in managing the greater demand for health services, which have arisen as a result of ageing populations and the prevalence of chronic communicable and non-communicable diseases. On the other hand, citizens have higher expectations of the quality and personalisation of health services. There is now a need to manage the complex balance between improving the quality of health services and ensuring equitable access to care.

In terms of responses, health cooperatives around the world have been working to remove some of these pressures and support public healthcare. In different places, cooperatives have been instrumental in dealing with COVID-19. *Health cooperatives have experimented*, more than ever before with telemedicine; have offered free medical care to the neediest; have engaged in awareness raising campaigns downwards towards their members and the communities and upwards towards the pharmaceutical industry and policymakers. They have also allied with other civil society organisations to advocate for *vaccine equity*.

The flexibility and adaptability of the cooperative business model has therefore been instrumental in facilitating the extraordinary measures that had to be taken to meet the growing needs of patients and the increased workload of health professionals.

In this sense, we can see that the structural characteristics of cooperatives, such as their networked membership and their ability to adapt, have meant that they are well placed to respond to, and remain resilient in the face of different economic, social and health related challenges.

Global and local responses: the cooperative way

Health is a public good that neither the state, the private sector nor not-for-profit actors can provide alone. Covid-19 has laid bare the risks of underinvestment, public sector cuts to the

health system, and neoliberal economic austerity. Health and social care must be a social construction based on solidarity, complementarity, and collaboration. The recovery policies must consider the *coexistence* of and *collaboration* between public and private healthcare, including cooperatives.

Cooperatives can be a powerful economic and social partner in rebuilding national health systems and provide essential services where otherwise unavailable. In this way they help saving public resources as well as with the redistribution of income and wealth.

The old, North-South based, international development cooperation paradigm has been dealt a blow with the COVID-pandemic. The old model started from the idea that there was a gap between the resource-rich North and the poor South. The deficits in the South had to be compensated with aid as well as technology and know-how transfer from North to South. The new model (Develtere, Huyse & Van Ongevalle, 2021) rejects this vertical view on international cooperation and proposes a *more horizontal and reciprocal way of co-development.* Opportunities and challenges, not deficits, are the point of departure. Partners from all over the globe interact with each other because they have mutual interests and are looking for *win-win-win operations*, in which the more vulnerable and less-resourceful win most.

Cooperative enterprises are well placed to engage in the new global frames of collaboration. They easily detect opportunities, have appetite for new challenges and are less risk-averse than many other actors. *Cooperating for win-win-win situations is part of their DNA.*

This is also what we have witnessed during the current crisis. Cooperatives have not tried to escape the swamp in splendid isolation. The *principle of cooperation among cooperatives* has shown its essence and its strength as it is the practical expression of the cooperative value of solidarity. Cooperatives from all over the world have shown solidarity with each other in multiple forms. For example, cooperatives involved in Fairtrade operations have activated their existing mutualistic funds or have created new solidarity funds. In May 2020, fair trade cooperatives launched the COVID19 Producer Relief Fund. In the meantime, the Fund already supported more than 900 producers' organizations in 59 countries and as such reached out to over 540,000 farmers and workers. Another example of international cooperation amongst cooperatives is the collaboration between the Italian and Bulgarian consumer cooperatives. By working together, Coop Italia and the Central Cooperative Union of Bulgaria managed to serve and protect consumer-members and their local communities by providing much-needed key protective goods, such as disinfectants and cleaning detergents.

There are also plenty of examples of national collaborative arrangements between cooperatives. The Italian Cooperative Alliance, in conjunction with the Italian Banking Association, intervened to solve liquidity problems that cooperatives and other micro, small and medium-sized enterprises faced because of the health crisis.

In October 2020, the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) of India from its side launched, together with the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, the Ayushman Sahakar initiative. This is a unique scheme to assist cooperatives that want to play a role in the expansion of existing and the creation of new healthcare infrastructure in the country.

All of the above illustrates how cooperatives and the cooperative movement have reflected deeply on the origins of the current crisis and the way out, by starting to carve out new avenues for a post-COVID-19 world. *They did not wait* for the end of the pandemic to begin *building*

back better. Many cooperatives have identified new opportunities and utilised the moment of crisis to serve their creativity and urge for innovation. It is important to recognise that cooperatives have been instrumental in emergency responses and meeting the immediate needs of people in crisis, yet they also have a central role to play in setting the new structural parameters for our society after the pandemic. They want it to be constructed in a participatory and bottom-up manner. *A just recovery must be people-centred, committed to economic and social justice, with respect for nature and the planetary boundaries*. Business as usual, with its negative social and economic externalities, exploitation of the earth's natural resources, environmental destruction and degradation, and unchecked economic growth, is no longer an option. Cooperatives, as community entrepreneurs that know the needs of their members and are embedded in their social and natural environment, can therefore be actors at the forefront of this just recovery, and of a new cooperative economy, that puts people before profit. They can work in *partnership* with all social and economic stakeholders, in a *whole of society approach*, in order to build back better, re-invent themselves in new contexts and settings, and contribute to solving social and economic challenges whilst imagining new alternatives for the future.

Recommendations for a coop-centred recovery strategy

- Acknowledge the role of cooperatives as well as the importance of the cooperative identity (principles and values) in a global strategy for a human-centred and environmentally just recovery

- Promote international cooperation between cooperatives in line with the new international development cooperation paradigm that stresses the importance of win-win-win arrangements for mutual benefit of all stakeholders.

- Focus the support instruments for the private sector on economic actors, such as cooperatives, that promote inclusion and ensure resilience and self-sustenance of local communities.

- Foster a supportive and enabling environment for cooperatives by engaging them in policy dialogue, acknowledging their specificities and addressing their specific identity.

- Dedicate funding for technical assistance and capacity-building to support the development of adequate legal and regulatory frameworks for cooperatives to thrive.

- Lift the regulatory and administrative barriers for cooperatives, especially worker cooperatives, to access support or recovery funds issued by donors

- Organise effective collaboration and coordination with the cooperative movement to strengthen the organizational and management skills of their members in the virtual world

- Enable cooperatives and cooperative organisations to integrate a gender transformative approach in their recovery actions ensuring equity for all, especially for women and girls.

- Improve policy coherence to foster development and growth of cooperatives so that they increase their impact as economic actors.

- Promote partnerships with global and regional networks of cooperatives and enable synergies with CSO actors, including women's organisations and youth to ensure collective action

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