



# Transforming our world: A cooperative 2030

*Cooperative contributions to SDG 1*

*This brief is part of the **Transforming our world: A cooperative 2030 series** produced by the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC). Through a series of 17 briefs, one for each Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), COPAC hopes to raise awareness about the significant contributions of cooperative enterprises towards achieving the 2030 Agenda in a sustainable, inclusive and responsible way, and encourage continued support for their efforts.*

*This brief in the series focuses on the first SDG on ending poverty in all its forms everywhere.*

## About the Sustainable Development Goals

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development were adopted by world leaders in September 2015 during a historic summit at the United Nations. The SDGs set out a vision for countries to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

For more information, visit [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment).

## About cooperatives

Cooperatives are 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'.<sup>1</sup>

All cooperatives subscribe to a set of values and principles that support the social and people-focused nature of their activities. They are operated democratically by their members. Whether customers of the business, workers or residents, members have an equal say and a share of the profits.

The top 300 cooperatives and mutuals in the world have a combined annual turnover of 2.16 trillion USD.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> International Co-operative Alliance (1995). *Statement on the Co-operative Identity*. Manchester. Available from <https://ica.coop/en/whats-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles>

<sup>2</sup> Euricse and the International Co-operative Alliance (2017). *World Co-operative Monitor: Exploring the Co-operative Economy, Report 2017*. Available at <http://www.euricse.eu/publications/world-co-operative-monitor-2017/>

## The cooperative difference

As one of the overarching Sustainable Development Goals, ending poverty is an essential outcome in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda.<sup>3</sup> While extreme poverty rates have been cut by more than half since 1990, one in five people in developing regions still live on less than 1.90 USD per day, and the situation remains precarious for millions of others who survive on little more than this.<sup>4</sup>

Cooperatives are uniquely placed to eradicate poverty, as people-centred businesses that exist to meet the needs of their members. In Europe, the first modern cooperative was established in 1844 in Rochdale, England by a group of 28 artisans working in the cotton mills. To overcome indecent working conditions and low wages, the weavers decided to pool their scarce resources and open a shop selling basic goods at a lower price. Every customer who shopped there became a member of the cooperative, giving them a democratic say in how the business was run.

Today's cooperatives operate in a similar way. They subscribe to the seven cooperative principles that ensure open and voluntary membership, democratic control, autonomy and independence and concern for their community. People living in poverty can create their own economic opportunities by coming together in a cooperative. Through the power of the collective, cooperators can share risk, make decisions together about the cooperative's future, strengthen and hone their own skills and reinvest in their communities.

Cooperatives count more than a billion members around the world and provide or organise work for at least 279.4 million people – a considerable contribution towards achieving SDG 1.<sup>5</sup>

## From the field: How cooperatives contribute to the eradication of poverty

Because cooperatives exist in all regions of the world and all sectors of economy, there are many examples of how they contribute to the achievement of SDG 1 on eradicating poverty.



The Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) has more than 36,000 member cooperatives, with a reach of more than 55 million farmers.<sup>6</sup> In addition to manufacturing and selling fertilizer, IFFCO helps improve the living conditions and livelihoods of small-scale producers by providing essential services, such as product marketing, rural telecommunications and insurance.

3 General Assembly resolution 70/1, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1 (21 October 2015), available from [undocs.org/A/RES/70/1](http://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1)

4 <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/>

5 CICOPA (2017). *Cooperatives and Employment: Second Global Report*. Brussels. Available from <http://www.cicopa.coop/Second-Global-Report-on.html>

6 [www.ifco.coop](http://www.ifco.coop)

**Want more examples of how  
cooperatives help eradicate poverty?**  
*Visit the Coops for 2030 campaign at  
[www.coopsfor2030.coop](http://www.coopsfor2030.coop)*

Worker cooperative Pipinas Viva is contributing to the revival of the small town of Pipinas in Argentina.<sup>7</sup> The community of 1,000 inhabitants went into decline when the cement factory around which it was founded closed down. Faced with a local unemployment rate of 65 per cent and a dwindling population, a group of young people pooled their resources, skills and knowledge and set out to restore the local hotel with a vision to preserve the local cultural heritage. Because of this vision, the hotel renovations and an effective marketing strategy, the cooperative was able to renew interest in the town, drawing tourists and contributing to flourishing of other micro and small enterprises in the local economy.

Since 1975, CIC Insurance Group in Kenya has been a market leader in providing insurance and other financial services to cooperatives and low-income Kenyans.<sup>8</sup> The cooperative also invests in young people, enrolling and supporting ten students in need to complete their secondary education.

In Istanbul, Turkey, the shop Nahil, an Ottoman word for “prosperity, unity and solidarity”, provides over 600 home-based women workers with an outlet to sell their crafts.<sup>9</sup> The store also showcases products made by cooperatives, including soap, dried fruit and olive oil. The cooperatives affiliated with the shop are trained in how to write business plans and develop other professional skills.

Coopermondo is the non-profit arm of the Confederation of Italian Cooperatives (Confcooperative) in international development.<sup>10</sup> Its mission is to enhance the social and mutual character of Italian cooperatives by promoting economic and social sustainable development around the world. To this end, Coopermondo is working to facilitate the creation of at least ten new cooperatives led by youth, women or indigenous people in developing countries by 2020. Coopermondo and its partner cooperatives have a network of 113 projects in 42 countries, including ongoing projects in Mozambique, Colombia and Romania.



<sup>7</sup> [www.pipinas.com](http://www.pipinas.com)

<sup>8</sup> <https://cic.co.ke>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.nahil.com.tr>

<sup>10</sup> [www.coopermondo.it](http://www.coopermondo.it)



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International  
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## About COPAC

COPAC is a multi-stakeholder partnership of global public and private institutions that promotes and advances people-centered, self-sustaining cooperative enterprises, guided by the principles of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – in all aspects of its work. The Committee's current members are the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Co-operative Alliance and the World Farmers' Organisation.

For more information, please visit  
[www.copac.coop](http://www.copac.coop).

