



INTERNATIONAL
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Message from the International Co-operative Alliance

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Co-operatives Make Development Happen!

The contribution of co-operatives to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals

All over the world, millions of people have chosen the co-operative model of business enterprise to enable them to reach their personal and community development goals. Co-operatives create and maintain employment providing income; they are responsible for producing and supplying safe and quality food and services to their members, but also to the communities in which they operate. By putting the Co-operative Principles and ethics in practice they promote solidarity and tolerance, while as 'schools of democracy' they promote the rights of each individual – women and men. Co-operatives are socially conscious responding to the needs of their members whether it is to provide literacy or technical training, or to take action against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Through their varied activities, co-operatives are in many countries significant social and economic actors in national economies, thus making not only personal development a reality, but contributing to the well-being of entire populations at the national level.

Yet, many people still underestimate the scope and size of the co-operative movement and thus how it affects national economies and society in general. 760 million people around the world are members of co-operatives. In Kenya 20% of the population is a member of a co-operative, while in Argentina it is over 29%, 33% in Norway, 40% in Canada and the United States. Co-operatives also provide over 100 million jobs around the world and in some countries and areas are among the largest employers as in Colombia where a national health co-operative is the 2nd largest employer at national level. They are also leaders in their sectors, for example, in Benin, a savings and credit co-operative federation has provided USD 16 million in rural loans in 2002 and in Kuwait co-operatives handle 80% of the retail trade business. And even in countries where resources are scarce, co-operatives have been building communities as demonstrated by the sustained investment made by co-operatives in Côte d'Ivoire which invested USD 26 million in 2002 for setting up schools, building rural roads and establishing maternal clinics.

Co-operatives make development a reality for millions and in today's world where poverty and hunger are still touching billions of people, there continues to be room for significant co-operative development to enable people to rise out of poverty. The Co-operative Movement adds its support to the United Nations which has pledged to make the world a better place for all by setting to time-bound targets for combating poverty, hunger, disease including HIV/AIDS, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. These goals – United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - commit governments and the international community to halve the population of people living in extreme poverty; ensure that all children - girls and boys alike - receive a full primary education; halt the spread of HIV/AIDS and offer all young people the chance of decent work.

The ICA as the representative body of co-operatives will be highlighting best practices of how **co-operatives make development happen** at its General Assembly as it too focuses on democratic, social and economic development. It will also be launching a *Campaign against Poverty and Hunger* to promote the co-operative model of business enterprise as a means of helping people to help themselves. Co-operatives around the world can add their experiences and activities to the already long list of ways that they are contributing to the MDGs by celebrating this international day and sharing knowledge and best practice, by seeking out partners to further their activities, and to ensure that people have the opportunity to work through their co-operatives to improve their lives.

Co-operatives are truly making development happen on a daily basis allowing people to make dreams of a better life a reality.