

## **STRATEGY FRAMEWORK FOR EQUITABLE GENDER PARTICIPATION IN COOPERATIVES IN AFRICA**

One of the Forum expected outputs is the development of a Regional Gender Strategy (RGS) for African cooperatives, in line with the ICA Gender Equality Committee's approach at the global level. As a matter of fact, the ICA GEC encourages the establishment of Regional Gender Committees in each ICA Region, and the RGS will be a tool for the future Africa Gender Committee to pursue its goal which is the achievement of gender balance at all level in the African Cooperative movement.

The Forum participants were requested to get into groups to reflect on what should be the vision, the aim, the targets and actions of the contemplated Gender Strategy. The following is the synthesis of the proposals made by the participants and edited by the editorial committee.

### **VISION**

People in gender balanced communities are empowered and have improved their livelihoods by actively participating in cooperatives as members, leaders and employees by the year 2020.

**OR**

Gender balanced communities where women, men and youth are empowered and actively improving their livelihoods by participating equally as leaders, members and employees in co-operatives by year 2020

### **MISSION**

To ensure that gender equity is systematically taken into account in all co-operatives' policies and programmes, working environment, work practices, monitoring and evaluation systems and to establish the requisite structures, process and timeframes for achieving this.

### **BROAD AIM**

To work towards gender parity in all cooperative structures including boards, committees and programmes by strengthening capacity of females, youth and males for leadership positions.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. To have men, women and youth contributing equitably to the economic activities in their community.
2. Reduce income gap between men and women.
3. Remove cultural impediments hindering gender equality /equity in collaboration with all stakeholders.
4. Strengthen capacity of male and female for leadership position.
5. Afford equal education opportunities for all from childhood.

6. To have a situation where women and men are working harmoniously with maximum to help their efficiency in the performance of their cooperative so that the coop can yield the expected benefits.
7. Co-operatives as a tool for Economic and Social development reinforced.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The Gender Equality Strategy Framework will be guided by the ICA Statement on the Co-operative Identity. The co-operative values and principles shall be applied not merely on their face value, but on their capacity to shape an organizational culture that promotes women empowerment, and hence gender equality and equity. Because the values of co-operatives are viewed as capable of contributing to women's empowerment, co-operatives are, hence, considered an enabling environment and vehicle of women's empowerment. In the same way gender equity and equality are considered as a key factor to the success of co-operatives. Each co-operative will therefore endeavour to ensure proactive advocacy and serious actions to authentically actualize the co-operative values and principles.

## **PROBLEM**

- Inequitable proportion of Men, Women and Youth leading to gender imbalance in co-operatives.
- Conditions for membership that are beyond the capacity for women to fulfil can drive women away from joining co-operatives, or can make women's sustained membership difficult.

## **TARGETS**

Co-operative organizations' Staff, Elected officials, and Co-operative Members

- Sensitize 10% of staff in six months
- The minimum of 2% rise in the proportion of men, women youth currently available depending on the case in one year.
- Including gender item in all forums Agenda's in our cooperative societies.
- Income – 40% within 5 years
- Culture – Develop gender Policy and by- laws that contribute to change of attitudes.
- Leadership: Achieve optimal level within 10 years.
- Education- 5 yrs
- Job creation and involvement in income generation activities
- Entrepreneurship development
- Improved leadership

## **STRATEGIES**

- Sensitization of Staff
- Including gender item in all co-operative forums' Agenda
- Increase Income by at least 40% within 5 years

- Develop gender policies and by-laws to address cultural biases
- Develop Leadership programmes aimed at increased participation of women to optimal level within 10 years.
- Ensure Job creation and involvement in income generation activities
- Entrepreneurship development

## **ACTIONS**

1. Provision of resources for implementation
2. Education and training
3. Lobbying and advocacy
4. Setting up new generation co-ops that are innovative and appealing to young people e.g. Cyber café, spurs, message, etc
5. Briefing authorities about the problem (gender concern) just after this forum.
6. Develop programs for sensitizing staff and general public.
7. Seeking the resources to support actions
8. Formation of focus groups
9. Carryout awareness campaigns to the public
10. Developing questionnaires for data collection and analysis
11. Establish a reward /recognition system to appreciate performance of good cooperatives. For example recognition/certification
12. Development of women and youth's entrepreneurial skills
13. Setting-up income generating projects
14. Setting up employment Quotas in favour of the disadvantaged.
15. Legislation reforms
16. Lobbying & Advocacy

## **MONITORING**

1. Assigning staff members a desk with a task related to gender for data collection and analysis.
2. Data collection on gender participation should be done in every 3 months.
3. Feedback to the staff of cooperative society's member to encourage them on any shown importance.
  - Quarterly –Societies
  - Quarterly- Apex
  - Annually – ICA regionally.

Program managers should carry out continuous monitoring of activities to ensure that the actions are leading towards achieving the set objectives.

- Development of monitoring system with objectives, time frame, indicators etc

**Responsibility:** -Government agencies.  
 -Cooperative movement.  
 -NGOs.  
 -Development partners.