



Cooperatives and Mutuels in International Development – How Can We Do More and Better Together?

10th October 2016, Quebec, Canada

The pre-Summit activity “Cooperatives, Mutuels and International Development – How Can We Do More and Better Together?”, co-organised by ICA and OCDC, took place on 10 October 2016 in Quebec, Canada, within the framework of the International Summit of Cooperatives. Its aim was to better connect cooperative organisations active in international development, identifying and supporting partnership opportunities between them, this time at the global level. It welcomed over 100 participants from across the globe with a keen interest on international cooperative development work. The event had valuable outcomes, whose highlight was the launch of a Global Cooperative Development Platform.

1st Round table – Impact of the Cooperative Model on Poverty Alleviation

The morning’s opening session started with remarks from Dame Pauline Green and OCDC Director Paul Hazen, before moving to a round table session between panellists of diverse backgrounds, and opening the floor for a dialogue with the audience.

The **opening remarks** emphasised the fact that now is the right time for the cooperative movement to become a major player on the global stage by collaborating more effectively and more powerfully to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The **round table** focused on **the impact of the cooperative model on poverty alleviation**. It benefited from the insight of six speakers from different organisations and countries, who shared their experience on international cooperative development achievements. Exchanges highlighted in particular the contribution of cooperatives towards:

- Promoting **stability** in fragile regions,
- Creating **equal opportunities** through the **empowerment of women and youth**,
- Providing **decent jobs**,
- Promoting **food security** by strengthening value chains,
- Generating **sustainable economic growth**.

Moreover, the panellists **stressed** the challenges that are hindering cooperatives from harnessing their full potential towards the achievement of SDG 1- Poverty alleviation. The importance of visibility and supportive public policies creating an enabling environment for cooperatives to “bloom” was emphasised, along with the need to improve the cooperative governance by modernizing their image.



Discussions with participants showed that the cooperative movement needs to leverage its true value at the global level by creating visibility on its impact at the local level, to further succeed in its ambition to advance the SDGs.

The session was followed by a Cooperative Development Networking Lunch, sponsored by OCDC, to build on previous exchanges between participants.

2nd Round table - Joint development programs and the strength of networks

The afternoon, which was by invitation only and welcomed 37 participants, centered on the role of networks in advancing international cooperative development. It started with a roundtable highlighting examples of collaborations' successes and failures, continued with workshops collecting participants' suggestions for improvement, and ended by sharing these recommendations in plenary, followed by conclusions.

The **round table on joint development programs and the strength of networks** gathered five speakers with extensive experience in partnerships in different regions. Building on past achievements such as the Cooperatives Europe Development Platform (CEDP) and OCDC, their discussions concluded on the idea of creating a Global Cooperative Development Platform facilitated by the ICA as an efficient tool for the cooperative movement. This Platform will allow pooling expertise and creating visibility, to get a stronger voice vis-à-vis political institutions and implement joint projects.

It was followed by a **workshop on how to benefit from the added value of networks**, divided in three working groups, who exchanged on the following themes: a) Knowledge sharing, b) Joint projects and c) Advocacy and donor approach.

The outcomes of the discussions were then shared in plenary, and included the following recommendations:

Knowledge sharing

Create an open trusting environment. Building trust among the members of the GCDP was highlighted as one of the critical elements that would support the accuracy, relevance and completeness of information and knowledge to be shared amongst them.

Create a database. It was suggested to set an online database showcasing development projects implemented by the cooperative development organisations. Its aim would be to foster a more efficient and operational use of existing data, both within the network and for further partnerships. This would in turn highlight the impact that cooperatives have at the local, regional and global level, and enhance visibility vis-à-vis political institutions and other global development actors.

Establish key performance indicators. Participants stressed the benefits of developing protocols and using baseline data indicators, to not only measure good governance but also demonstrate the effectiveness of cooperatives at the local level.



Joint projects

Share Human & Financial resources. Representative cooperative organisations engaging with the GCDP would have to commit time and invest financially to achieve their goal – operational joint projects.

Share strategy and vision. Sharing methodologies with other development actors would create an added value on the network, highlighting the complementarities between organisations. A common framework and methodology could then be elaborated to facilitate the up scaling of joint projects.

Engage in participative decision-making. The GCDP should constitute a key tool for cooperatives active in development to share knowledge, pool their expertise together and encourage them to proactively look for potential projects.

Advocacy & Donor approach

Engage in political dialogue with multilateral actors. Cooperatives need to use as leverage their impact at the local level in order to raise their visibility vis-à-vis political and financial institutions. By segmenting their audiences, depending on the context – cooperative networks can focus on promoting the cooperative model as a great tool to attain the Sustainable Development Goals better than other forms of organizations.

Build capacity to access funding. The increasing funding allocated to European Delegations at country level highlights the need to build capacity of partners to access direct funding.

Adopt a bottom-up and top-down approach. The grassroots element is critical to the stream of advocacy. It proves particularly relevant to depict the importance of cooperatives for local communities when addressing local policy stakeholders. At the same time, it fuels advocacy towards high-level decision makers, key allies in supporting cooperatives to engage further with political and financial institutions.

Conclusions

The event was concluded by a statement from Dame Pauline Green, on the need to **put high in the agenda the creation of a global interlinked cooperative development network.**

The day was concluded by closing remarks from Paul Hazen who mentioned that the engagement of cooperative networks in a Global Cooperative Development Platform could position them as a major global actor on international development.