



COOPERATIVE FACILITY FOR AFRICA Coop^{AFRICA}

Guidelines for Coop^{AFRICA} Challenge Fund

2011

In partnership with:



Introduction

In order to respond to poverty reduction challenges, and to address inclusive growth in Africa, the Cooperative Facility for Africa, Coop^{AFRICA} - a technical cooperation programme of the ILO, principally financed by DFID from 2007 to 2010 – was set up focusing on rural and agricultural development beyond food security to include institutional, socio-economic and environmental sustainability where equity and human goals stand at the core. Coop^{AFRICA} phase I focussed on nine countries in Eastern and Southern Africa. Working in priority in the agriculture sector and the informal economy, the programme has targeted local cooperatives and groups; business development services (BDS) institutions; and cooperative apex organizations. Coop^{AFRICA} has been built on a mandated supply-driven approach, providing services, policy and technical advice, and a demand-driven approach by running a Challenge Fund scheme. Through the latter, funds were made accessible through a competitive mechanism and transparent selection of the best initiatives proposed by organisations. Since its inception in June 2008, the Coop^{AFRICA} Challenge Fund has funded about 70 projects in Eastern and Southern Africa.

In 2011, the Coop^{AFRICA} Challenge Fund aims at strengthening the capacity of existing local structures providing services to cooperative enterprises and other similar self-help organisations. Private sector support organizations also called ‘Centres of Competence’ (e.g. cooperative colleges, cooperative federations and unions, workers and employers’ organizations, consultancy firms, NGOs, etc.) can be supported to provide services to cooperatives and cooperative-like organisations, the final objective being to improve working and living conditions of **women** and/or **youth**.

The focus on women and youth as end beneficiaries is underpinned by the need to address the gender and poverty-related challenges as well as decent work deficits which are often felt disproportionately by these two groups, in particular in rural areas, and which adversely affect development at the level of both cooperatives and society at large. Only projects which respond to the objective of improving working and living conditions of women and/or youth, and integrate their achievement into their project strategy, will be considered for this call.

What is a Challenge Fund?

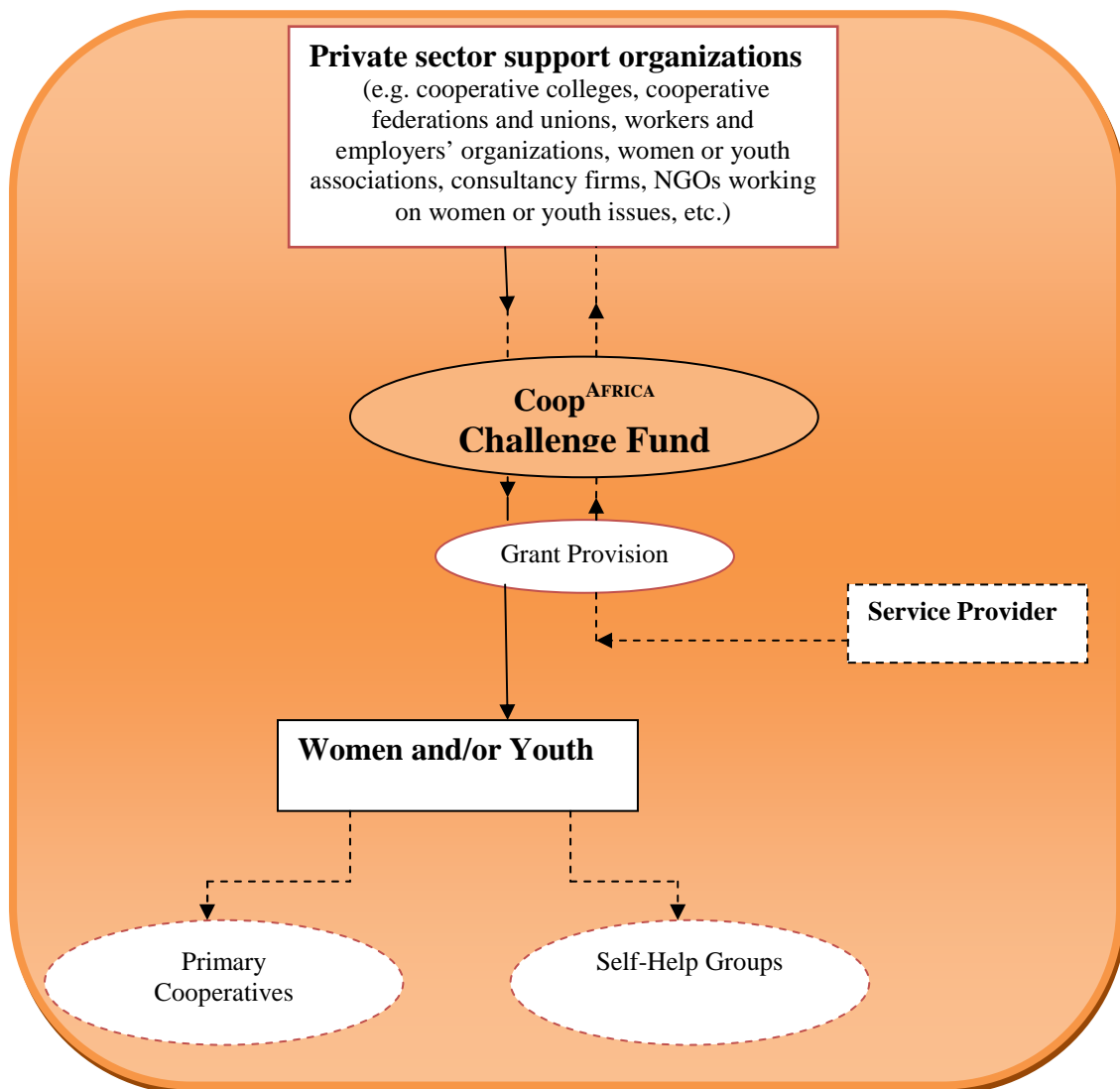
A challenge fund is an open financing mechanism that allocates grant funding through a competitive process. Challenge funds are set up to meet specific objectives. Bids are assessed against transparent criteria, and successful bidders must match the grant amount. A Selection Committee then awards grants to those projects that best meet the aims of the Fund.

Who can apply?

All organisations or institutions with the capability to provide technical support on cooperative-related activities such as training, guidance, advocacy, etc. can apply to

the Coop^{AFRICA} Challenge Fund as Service Providers ('Centres of Competence'¹). These centres are institutions that are reliable, recognised and high quality business service provider that offer relevant services that strengthen cooperatives' identity as well as management and entrepreneurial capacities. In 2011, the Coop^{AFRICA} Challenge Fund aims at making their expertise available to cooperative and cooperative-like organisations that need expertise in a given area. Eligible applicants include cooperative unions, federations, cooperative colleges, workers' and employers' organisations, women entrepreneur and youth associations, youth and women's entrepreneurship funds, NGOs dedicated to women's or youth issues, among others. Projects can also envisage strengthening the capacity of the applicant through support provided by a Service Provider to enable it to deliver better services to its members for the benefit of women and youth.

The following chart illustrates the overall process leading to the achievement of Coop^{AFRICA} Challenge Fund's main objective i.e. the **improvement of working and living conditions of women and/or youth** in the informal economy and rural areas.



¹ For more information, please refer to the Guidelines on Centres of Competence, Coop^{AFRICA}, 2009

What can Coop^{Africa} fund?

Coop^{AFRICA} supports the provision of support services by Business Service Providers to cooperatives or cooperative-like organisations in order to improve their access to quality and affordable Business Development Services. This aims at matching the demand for services from cooperatives with the supply of services by Private sector support organizations. Support services include among others:

- Technical expertise on production and technology;
- Guidance on market information and market access;
- Audit or financial services;
- Management and development strategies;
- Business planning;
- Policy and institutional environment, advisory services;
- Information and communication technology;
- Member development/member empowerment
- Institutional capacity building in addressing the needs of women and/or youth

The following are some examples of services that can be facilitated through this Challenge Fund:

- Technical assistance by a Cooperative College and Agricultural Development Centre to a rural women's cooperative through training on poultry keeping, marketing, and value addition to agricultural products;
- Joint initiative between a National employers' organisation and a cooperative union to strengthen the capacity of young/women leaders of cooperatives in entrepreneurship and cooperative enterprise management;
- Technical assistance by a Dairy Cooperative Union to advise a women's dairy primary cooperative on meeting export standards.

These are just examples and applications relating to a wide range of service activities are welcome. Note that **all projects** must aim to improve working and living conditions of **women** and/or **youth**.

What are the application requirements and selection criteria?

All projects must fulfil the following **requirements**:

- Follow the Coop^{Africa} application procedures and templates (see www.ilo.org/coopafrika);
- Provide the required co-financing (cf. next section);
- Cover an eligible country (in 2011, eligible countries are Kenya, Rwanda Tanzania Mainland, and Uganda), be within the budget range (max. 20,000 USD) and an appropriate timeframe (max. 6 months).

Proposals will be assessed and selected on the basis of the extent to which they satisfy the following **criteria**:

- Contribute to the improvement of working and living conditions of women and/or youth;
- Strengthen the capacity of cooperative enterprises or cooperative-like organisations;
- Demonstrate gender-responsiveness through gender-mainstreaming in design (see Checklist in Annex 1) and by ensuring that at least 40% of final beneficiaries are women for projects for youth; for projects for women, at least 80% of final beneficiaries should be women;
- Be in compliance with principles concerning international labour standards of the ILO²;
- Demonstrate a sustainability in terms of lasting impact especially after Coop^{AFRICA} withdraws;
- Demonstrate the capacity and expertise to implement the project;
- Be replicable as far as possible, so other organisations may learn from the project.

Why the focus on women...

In most societies, the situation of women and men differ considerably in terms of their roles and responsibilities, access to and control over social, political and economic resources and opportunities for participation. In Africa, women's educational attainment lags behind men's, and illiteracy rates of women are far higher than those of men in most African countries. In employment, women are found more often than men in informal and precarious work, with particularly pronounced inequalities in some sectors. As concerns cooperatives, women are becoming increasingly cooperatively organized in agriculture, and there is solid evidence that cooperative membership enhances productivity, incomes and the quality of life for both the members as well as the community at large. At the same time challenges persist, notably women's relative under-representation in the cooperative movement, especially at leadership levels.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) promotes economic empowerment for women and girls because gender equality and women's economic empowerment are key development goals in themselves, as asserted in international conventions, and by the Millennium Development Goals. The Challenge Fund call's focus on women's empowerment is guided by the premise that ensuring gender equality is not just the right thing to do, in terms of respect of rights and following the cooperative principles, but also makes good business sense - as shown by the numerous studies which demonstrate that investing in women has high returns at both the level of the individual enterprise as well as at the macro level in terms of poverty reduction and development.

...and youth?

Youth represent the largest majority of un- and under-employed people on the labour market. At the same time, their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior are of vital importance in the implementation of sustainable agricultural and rural development

² In 1998, the International Labour Conference adopted the *Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*. This declaration identified four "principles" as "core" or "fundamental". The core labour standards reflected in the Declaration concern freedom of association and collective bargaining, discrimination, forced labour, and child labour.

programmes, and the importance of their contribution to the sectors' future development cannot be understated.

Youth face many challenges and overcoming these challenges are more likely when pooling human and financial resources, technical knowledge, networks and entrepreneurship skills. Youth are more inclined to change and to jointly embark on new and innovative opportunities. Youth in rural areas regularly need to be prepared to take over farming activities. However, agricultural cooperatives often suffer from old-style management and generate little income for their members, which make them not attractive for the young generation. Especially for these cooperatives, youths' dynamism and skills can be of vital importance.

...and how should the projects reflect this?

In this call, the projects must specifically result in improved living and working conditions for either 1) women or 2) youth, via cooperative approaches. This means that this objective must be central to the project purpose, its target group and activities. See box on page 3 for examples of project ideas.

Note that all Challenge Fund applicants, including those applying for youth focused projects, are called upon to ensure that the project design responds to the needs and interests of both women and men, and takes them into account in planning the project's objectives, activities and resource allocation as well as monitoring and evaluation efforts (see Checklist in Annex 1).

Are there any tools available to help in developing proposals?

COOPAfrica's *Project Design Manual. A step-by-step tool to support the development of cooperatives and other forms of self-help organizations* manual provides cooperatives and other types of self-help organizations with practical guidance to formulate project proposals that are economically, socially, politically and environmentally viable. It covers all the steps of project design: from the identification of the main problem to be addressed, to the planning of the project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and should be used by applicants in formulating their proposals. The tools can be downloaded from:

[http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/ent/coop/africa/download/coopafri
cprojectdesignmanual.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/ent/coop/africa/download/coopafri
cprojectdesignmanual.pdf)

For more specific guidance on how to ensure gender-responsiveness in your project design, please see the ILO's *Gender Mainstreaming Strategies in Decent Work Promotion: Programming Tools* kit, and in particular its Section 5 'GEMS in project design and implementation' and associated Checklist 5.3.1 'Is GEMS included in your project design?' (of which an adaptation is included in Annex 1 of these Guidelines):

[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-
bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_143849.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-
bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_143849.pdf)

How much funding can Coop^{AFRICA} Challenge Fund provide?

Range	Applicant Contribution (Min.)	
	In cash	In kind
Up to USD 20,000	10%	20%

What is the timetable?

The application deadline, by which all relevant documents must reach Coop^{AFRICA} by email (coopafrica@ilo.org), is **20 March 2011**.

All projects must start not later than 7 days after receiving the grant which will most likely not be at disbursement stage before mid May 2011³. The project timeframe should range from a few days (for a consultancy) to several months. The maximum project duration is **6 months**. No funding will be provided after the termination of the programme and therefore all projects need to be finalized by **31 October 2011**, including evaluation and final progress reports.

What is the application procedure?

Applicants must submit a full-fledged proposal (comprising 1) Application Form, 2) Budget Form, 3) Workplan Form, as well as other documentation specified in section 10 of the Application Form) to Coop^{AFRICA} in soft copy at coopafrica@ilo.org by 20 March 2011. Application forms are available upon request and can be downloaded from the following website: www.ilo.org/coopafrica.

What is the selection procedure?

- Proposals are collected by Coop^{AFRICA} at coopafrica@ilo.org;
- A review is made by Coop^{AFRICA} in consultation with stakeholders from the cooperative movement, and experts selected according to issues addressed by the project;
- Final decisions are taken in about three weeks by Coop^{AFRICA} after the submission deadline (20 March 2011).

³ To be considered in designing the project workplan

Annex 1: Checklist: Is your project design gender-responsive?⁴

Problem analysis	Yes	No	Not sure
1. Are the available statistics disaggregated by sex and other relevant variables such as age, ethnicity, income, etc.?			
2. Do the problems identified by the project represent the views and priorities of both men and women (or just by men only or women only)?			
3. Has a gender analysis been conducted?			
4. Have the practical and strategic needs of male and female beneficiaries been identified?			
Strategy development	Yes	No	Not sure
5. Is the outcome of gender analysis used when developing the strategy?			
6. Are there clear strategies and/or institutional mechanisms identified to ensure that women and men will equally participate in and benefit from the project?			
7. If gender inequalities exist, are any gender-specific strategies and practical measures built into the project (that will address the practical and strategic needs of women and men and reduce the gaps)?			
Target groups	Yes	No	Not sure
8. Have the key characteristics and the differences among the target groups been clearly identified by sex, age, type of work, income, ethnic origin, and position, etc.?			
9. Are the ways in which the potential project benefits will be distributed to the target groups clearly identified?			
Institutional framework	Yes	No	Not sure
10. Has an assessment been made on the capacity of the implementing agency to address the needs of men and women and to promote gender equality?			
11. Are both women and men represented in project advisory or steering committees or other decision making bodies?			

⁴ Adapted from 'Checklist 5.3.1 Is GEMS included in your project design?' in ILO (2010), *Gender Mainstreaming Strategies in Decent Work Promotion: Programming Tools*, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific–Bangkok. For the original checklist, and additional tips on gender mainstreaming, please download the tool from: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_143849.pdf

Objectives & Outcomes	Yes	No	Not sure
12. Do the objectives reflect priority concerns and respond to the practical and strategic needs of male and female beneficiaries?			
13. If there are pronounced gender inequalities to be addressed by the project, is this reflected in one or more of the project objectives (and corresponding indicators)?			
Activities	Yes	No	Not sure
14. Are there means to ensure that men and women can participate equally in the project activities?			
15. Are communication channels identified that will effectively reach specific target groups, in particular women and girls?			
16. Due to household chores and family care responsibilities often assigned to women and girls, they tend to have less time to participate in project activities. Is this concern taken into account when organizing activities?			
17. If women and girls, or men and boys, cannot or will not speak freely in mixed groups, are separate events planned for women/girls only and men/boys only with facilitators of the same sex to run the events?			
Indicators, monitoring and evaluation	Yes	No	Not sure
18. Are the baseline data disaggregated by sex and gender-specific?			
19. Are the indicators (milestones or targets) disaggregated by sex and gender-specific in order to assess the programme impact on the situation of women and men, girls and boys?			
20. Does the monitoring and evaluation plan call for all data to be systematically disaggregated by sex to measure the gender effects and impact of the project?			
Inputs	Yes	No	Not sure
21. Is there an understanding and commitment among all staff and partners to contribute to gender equality in the project?			
22. Have sufficient human and financial resources been allocated for the gender components of the project?			
23. Has a gender budget analysis been made to assess and analyze the possible different impact of project expenditures on female and male intended beneficiaries?			
24. Has an assessment been made to what extent gender expertise is required in personnel inputs?			
25. If women and girls cannot be effectively reached by male staff, have steps been taken to recruit female staff required, and vice versa for men and boys?			