



Transforming our world: A cooperative 2030

Cooperative contributions to SDG 11

*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 focuses on SDG 11 – making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

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.

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’.¹

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.

Cooperatives are a powerful economic and social force, present in most countries of the world and in most sectors of the economy. The cooperative movement counts more than a billion members.

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

The cooperative difference

Rapid growth in urban areas has created many challenges, including increased numbers of slum dwellers, air pollution and a need for more basic services and infrastructure. In 2014, an estimated 880 million urban residents lived in slum conditions, and nine out of ten people living in cities were breathing air that did not comply with World Health Organisation (WHO) safety standards.²

Cooperatives can contribute to making cities and human settlements safer, more inclusive, and more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Housing cooperatives offer secure and affordable housing to citizens, including students in university cities, who participate in the management of the property through the democratic governance structure that all cooperatives uphold. Environmental cooperatives keep urban areas clean through waste-picking, waste collection and recycling and maintenance of green spaces. Taxi cooperatives improve urban mobility for commuting workers, older persons and persons with disabilities. Many worker and social cooperatives help safeguard their communities' natural and cultural heritage by participating in sustainable tourism and upgrading deprived areas.

The following examples help illustrate the contribution of cooperatives to making cities and human settlements more sustainable.

From the field: How cooperatives contribute to sustainable cities and communities

In Pune, India, the waste pickers trade union KKPKP (Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat) supported the creation of a cooperative, **SWaCH (Solid Waste Collection and Handling)**. With its 2,688 waste picker members SwaCH secured in 2008 a formal contract with the local authority, Pune Municipal Corporation, to provide door-to-door waste collection service to residents of the city. For their services, resident users pay service fees and the municipal authority pays administrative expenses and provides equipment. SWaCH also offers other services such as composting and biogas generation and involves citizens in recycling and sustainable living. In 2016, SwaCH cooperative handled in total 865 tons per day (TPD) of which 170 TPD were redirected to recycling. The cooperative has improved the incomes, occupational safety, health conditions and formal recognition of its member waste pickers. It also contributes to the local economy, environmental sustainability, health and safety and cleanliness in cities.³

Haiti still shows the devastation of the earthquake that destroyed the island nation in January 2010. The poorest and the most populous country in the Americas, Haiti saw 1.5 million residents of Port-au-Prince, its capital, leave for camps. A small group of housing activists founded the Movement for Solidarity with Homeless People in Haiti (Mouvement de Solidarité avec les Sans-abri d'Haïti, or Mososah) to build a network of cooperatives for savings and housing. The first housing cooperative, called the **Southeastern Haiti Savings, Housing and Small Business Credit Co-op (CEL-CPME SE)**, was launched in Jacmel in December 2011. Its members consider their cooperative the first organized response to the housing crisis in the aftermath of the earthquake. With 100 members, the cooperative mobilizes the savings of its members to provide cheap loans to build homes. Construction projects must be approved by experts to ensure the safety of the site, quality building materials and compliance with earthquake and hurricane safety standards. CEL-CPME SE also lends funds for small businesses to move into the new villages and neighborhoods.⁴

In Kenya, the **National Cooperative Housing Union (NACHU)** was created in 1979 to provide affordable and decent housing to urban lower income communities. NACHU also engages in community mobilization and training (youth, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS), technical support services, housing finance, lobbying and advocacy. The members of NACHU include low and modest-income people in formal employment, rural cooperatives associated with agricultural marketing cooperatives, middle-income earners and informal settlement dwellers who often are self-employed and have irregular incomes. NACHU aims to improve members' quality of life, by working with informal settlements, conventional housing and commercial projects.⁵

² United Nations Economic and Social Council, *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General*, E/2017/66 (11 May 2017). Available from <http://undocs.org/E/2017/66>

³ <https://swachcoop.com/>

⁴ Mososah, "Koperativ Lojman Sidès", *Stories.coop*. Available from <http://stories.coop/stories/koperativ-lojman-sides/>

⁵ Co-operative Housing International, "About Kenya". Available from <http://www.housinginternational.coop/co-ops/kenya/>

Want to see more examples of
how cooperatives contribute to SDG 11?
Visit the Coops for 2030 campaign at
www.coopsfor2030.coop

Many social cooperatives in Italy are providing waste collection and urban sanitation services. Municipal governments contract with the cooperatives to collect waste and manage recycling. The cooperatives also work on private gardens and sanitize industrial services, known as 'hygiene services'. The census of social cooperatives conducted by the Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (ISTAT) in 2003 reported that approximately 400 such cooperatives operate in the 'green sector', which also includes agriculture and forestry.⁶

In the city of Pittsfield in the United States, public transport is limited in terms of routes and operating hours. Many people who do not own a car struggle to get to their 'off-route and off-hours' jobs. They usually rely on taxi services which are costly for low-income earners. To overcome the transportation challenges, the **Rose & Cole's Co-op Transport** was established in 2017 and provides affordable ride share and delivery services in the city. One of the founding members had been driving people in the area to work for years and had the idea to make a fairly priced transport service accessible to the wider community based on the cooperative model. The transport cooperative also participates in the Working Cities Pittsfield coalition which represents a diverse, cross-sector group of partners working in the interests of people in the community.⁷

Many urban poor in Brazil are engaged in informal economy jobs such as street vending or waste collection. In Belo Horizonte, the third largest city in the country, a network of cooperatives of waste pickers called **Redesol** was created in 2010 at the Municipal Waste and Citizenship Forum of Belo Horizonte (FMLC-BH) to solve issues related to the municipal recycling system and respond to high unemployment rates. The network's objective is to facilitate the collective selling of recyclables and increase revenues for the waste pickers by cutting out the middlemen. The network has also developed value adding opportunities by processing waste materials into reusable handicrafts or other products that can be used higher up the supply chain. Fourteen cooperatives and associations are affiliated to Redesol creating over 250 jobs. The inclusion of waste picker cooperatives in formal urban waste management schemes has generated benefits in the field of citizenship promotion, social inclusion, recognition of the importance of work performed by waste pickers, refined selection of recyclable materials, environmental education on how to recycle materials and cost reduction for municipalities having contracts with waste picker cooperatives.⁸

Housing prices are currently increasing faster in Sweden than in any other OECD country.⁹ It is estimated that around 213,000 young adults still live with their parents because they cannot afford to buy or rent their own homes despite being employed. **Riksbyggen**, a cooperative member of Housing Europe, provides a solution to the affordable housing shortage for young people and students in the city of Gothenburg. Riksbyggen aims to boost housing supply in the city and is planning to construct 250 small rental apartments in 2019 for young people aged between 18-30 years with limited financial resources. Young applicants are actively involved in the planning stages through citizen dialogue meetings concerning their housing needs. Partnerships are being built with construction companies, researchers, banks, government and other local stakeholders to ensure the feasibility and affordability of the initiative.¹⁰



6 International Labour Organization (ILO), *Cooperatives and the Sustainable Development Goals: A contribution to the post-2015 development debate* (Geneva, 2014). Available from http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/cooperatives/publications/WCMS_306072/lang-en/index.htm

7 Anca Voinea, "Transport co-op offering an alternative to Uber to people in Pittsfield, USA", 18 June 2018. Available from <https://www.thenews.coop/129494/sector/worker-coops/transport-co-op-offering-alternative-uber-people-pittsfield-usa/>

8 Sonia Dias, *The Municipal Waste and Citizenship Forum: A Platform for Social Inclusion and Participation* (WIEGO, 2011). Available from <http://www.wiego.org/publications/municipal-waste-and-citizenship-forum-platform-social-inclusion-and-participation>

9 OECD, *Promoting well-being and inclusiveness in Sweden* (OECD Paris, 2016). Available from <https://www.oecd.org/sweden/promoting-well-being-and-inclusiveness-in-sweden.pdf>

10 Housing Europe, "Cooperative solution to youth housing in Sweden", 30 October 2017. Available from <http://www.housingeurope.eu/blog-1016/cooperative-solution-to-youth-housing-in-sweden>



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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
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