



Transforming our world: A cooperative 2030

Cooperative contributions to SDG 6

*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 in the series focuses on SDG 6 – ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

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

The cooperative difference

Safe water and sanitation are integral to achieving global health. Though billions of people around the world have gained access to clean drinking water and sanitation services, 663 million people still do not have access to drinking water, 1.8 billion people still use a contaminated drinking water source, and 2.4 billion people do not have basic sanitation facilities such as toilets or latrines.²

Access to clean water and sanitation services is a challenge for both rural and urban areas in both developed and developing countries. It is particularly an issue for people living in low-income, informal or illegal settlements. And water scarcity will exacerbate this challenge, with half of the world's population expected to be living in water-stressed areas by 2025.

Cooperatives can play an important role in the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation. In the United States, 89 per cent of the population using public water systems is served by either a publicly owned, municipal water system or a cooperative utility.³ As organizations that exist to meet their members' needs and work for the sustainable development of their communities, cooperatives can offer a model for people in a community to pool their resources and find solutions for improving water and sanitation, particularly in areas where other public and private entities are unable or unwilling to invest in providing such services.

From the field: How cooperatives ensure available and sustainably managed water and sanitation

SAGUAPAC in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia is the world's largest urban water cooperative in the world, providing clean water and safe sewage services to 1.2 million out of a total population of 1.6 million people. A study scored the city's water quality as 99.3 out of 100, one of the purest in Latin America. In addition to employing 525 people with competitive salaries, SAGUAPAC also manages its business with a people-centred and values-based approach. During Bolivia's economic crisis, the cooperative offered courses to women and young people to help them undertake income-generating activities. SAGUAPAC also developed a project under the Kyoto Protocol to capture and burn biogas generated by its wastewater treatment plants, in order to increase the environmental sustainability of its activities.⁴



² <http://www.who.int/topics/water/en/>

³ University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives, *Research on the Economic Impact of Cooperatives* (Madison, Wisconsin, 2009).

Available from <http://reic.uwcc.wisc.edu/water/>

⁴ <http://stories.coop/stories/clean-water-cooperative-principles/>

**Want to see more examples of
how cooperatives contribute to SDG 6?**
*Visit the Coops for 2030 campaign
at www.coopsfor2030.coop*

There are more than 5,000 water cooperatives in Austria serving people in rural areas. The Wassergenossenschaft Gramastetten (Water Cooperative of Gramastetten) has provided drinking water to about 2,000 people since 1947 and has more than 500 members (all property owners). By using local water sources and volunteer work for administrative tasks and functioning as a non-profit, the cooperative is able to offer below average prices. It regularly shares information with the public about its activities and makes important decisions through the general assembly of all members.⁵

In India, an alliance between the National Slum Dwellers Federation, Mahila Milan (savings cooperatives formed by women slum and pavement dwellers) and the Society for the Promotion of Area Resources Centres (SPARC) have implemented a large-scale programme to improve provision of sanitation and washing facilities through building and managing toilet blocks in urban zones. In order to ensure ownership and sustainability, the programme involves the communities and trains them in the construction and management of the toilet blocks. The programme has three phases: 1) a survey to identify the lack of sanitation facilities, 2) community contracting and construction, and 3) community maintenance and management systems. The alliance has been responsible for around 500 community-designed and managed toilet blocks that serve hundreds of thousands households in Pune and Mumbai.⁶

The Kuapa Kokoo is a cocoa-growing cooperative established in 1993 in West Ghana. Its members are predominantly small-holders highly reliant on cocoa income and living in remote and deprived villages that lack access to healthcare, clean drinking water or electricity. Kuapa Kokoo was Fairtrade-certified in 1995 and has established a partnership with Fairtrade to improve the livelihoods of its members. The projects undertaken by Kuapa Kokoo at the community level have resulted in improved water access and sanitation thanks to the provision of pump wells, the drilling of 348 bore holes for drinking water and the construction of six KVIPs (Kumasi Ventilated Improved Pit latrines) in three different communities.⁷



⁵ David Hachfeld, Philipp Terhorst and Olivier Hoedeman, Progressive Public Water Management in Europe. In search of exemplary cases (Transnational Institute and Corporate Europe Observatory, 2009).

⁶ United Nations Human Settlements Programme, Meeting Development Goals in Small Urban Centres – Water and Sanitation in the World's Cities 2006 (Earthscan, London and Sterling, Virginia, 2006). Available from <http://mirror.unhabitat.org/pmss/getElectronicVersion.aspx?nr=2057&alt=1>

⁷ <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/Farmers-and-Workers/Cocoa/Kuapa-Kokoo>



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC
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**International
Co-operative
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**Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations**

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
www.copac.coop.