

▶ Access and Inclusion

The Role of cooperatives and the SSE in achieving
the Sustainable Development Goals

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The Argument



▶ Leaving no-one behind

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2000 – 2015) have been achieved to a large extent;

However, progress had been uneven throughout the developing world, and the UN's final MDG report acknowledged that *the poorest and most vulnerable people and countries had been left behind*;

Therefore, when adopting the 2030 Agenda in 2015, the world leaders declared: “As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge *that no one will be left behind*. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the Goals and targets met *for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society*. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first.”

▶ Cooperatives and the 2030 Agenda

Three approaches have been adopted to illustrate the relationship between the 2030 Agenda and cooperatives:

1. **The comprehensive approach: Cooperatives have the potential to contribute to *each and every* of the 17 SDGs;**
2. **The thematic approach: Cooperatives can play an important role in certain thematic areas, for example the extension of social protection or the formalization of the informal economy;**
3. **The target-oriented approach, i.e. selecting “Cooperative-friendly” targets among the 169 SDG targets;**

My paper proposes an extension of the third approach, by focusing on those SDG targets that call for better access and greater inclusion.

► Why access and inclusion?

1. The term “access” appears 56 times in the 2030 Agenda; creating access through collective action is precisely the role and *raison d’être* of cooperatives: they provide access (to markets, to finance, to rights etc.) in situations where individuals are powerless, and excluded from services rendered by the state and the private sector.
2. The term “inclusion” or “inclusive” appears 45 times in the 2030 Agenda; it means “the social, economic and political inclusion of all irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status”. Cooperatives are, by nature, identity and conviction, better suited to foster inclusivity than other forms of business and social organization.

Therefore...

...it is proposed that cooperatives should focus on 23 out of 169 SDG targets: those 23 that seek to facilitate access and inclusion

▶ Example 1: Access (SDG target 2.3)

“By 2030 double the agricultural productivity and the incomes of small-scale food producers, particularly women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal **access** to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets, and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment”.

This would apply to agricultural marketing and supply cooperatives, rural credit unions, and a variety of SSE organizations that are active in rural areas.

▶ Example 2: Inclusion (SDG target 16.7)

Ensure responsive, **inclusive**, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

This would refer to the societal and political role of cooperatives and other types of SSE organizations, for example those that represent the interests of marginalized population groups. A good example are the self-help groups, trade unions and voluntary associations of migrant domestic workers.

▶ Next steps

As cooperatives are not adequately reflected in the 2030 Agenda it will be important to influence the periodic SDG review process to gain greater visibility. The review process consists of three streams:

- 1. Thematic reviews of clusters of SDGs by the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF);**
- 2. Voluntary national reviews of the implementation of the SDGs at the national and sub-national levels; and**
- 3. The preparation by the UN Secretary-General of an annual Sustainable Development Report**