



**Cooperatives and Peace:  
Strengthening Democracy,  
Participation and Trust.**

**A Case Study  
Approach.**



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## Editorial team

### Produced by:

Dr. Amanda Benson and Dr. Sarah Alldred  
from The Co-operative College  
Emiliano Composta and Camilla Carabini  
from Coopermondo-Confcooperative  
Dr. Elsa Brander from Kooperationen  
Arielle Romenteau from Cooperatives Europe and  
Jeffrey Moxom from the International Cooperative Alliance

### Graphic Design

Valentina Frare - [www.valentinafrare.com](http://www.valentinafrare.com)

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# Cooperatives and Peace: Strengthening Democracy, Participation and Trust.

## A Case Study Approach.

**A Thematic research produced by Cooperatives  
Europe and supported by the Cooperatives  
Europe Development Platform (CEDP)**

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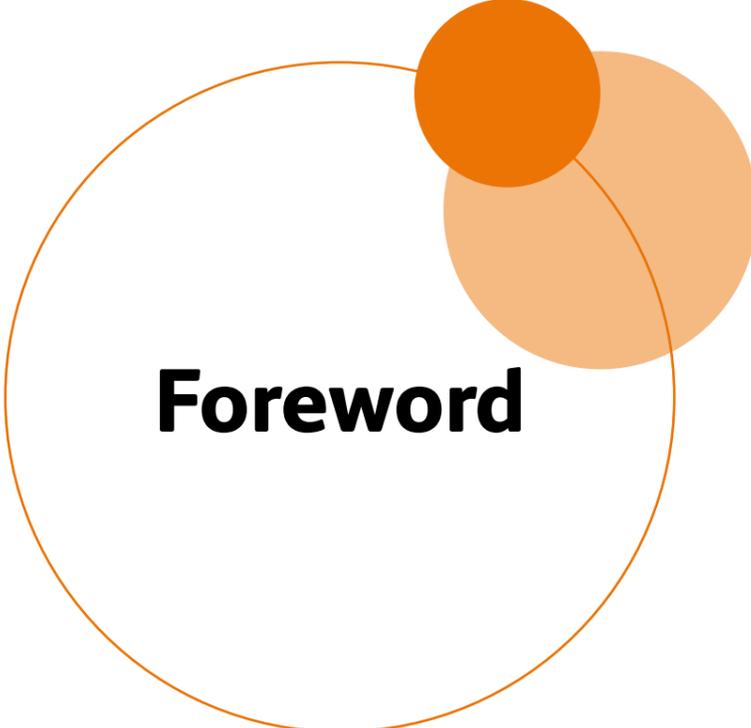
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**Foreword**

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**Agnès Mathis,  
Director,  
Cooperatives  
Europe**

As Cooperatives Europe's Director, I am delighted to introduce this publication led and produced by Cooperatives Europe, alongside the Co-operative College, Kooperationen and Coopermondo. Following previous joint publications on knowledge sharing in international cooperative development, this report draws on findings elaborated from case studies and interviews with key stakeholders active in the field of peacebuilding, conducted throughout 2018.

This thematic research, carried out within the ICA-EU partnership for international development, demonstrates what cooperatives around the globe are doing in favour of peacebuilding and conflict resolution, in particular how they can be a tool for change. They also remind us of the core values of the cooperative movement, in which partnerships and community ties are fundamental to cooperation.

To reinforce cooperatives' recognition as strong players for sustainable development at the global and regional levels, the research showcased here is a valuable step forward in demonstrating the potential of the cooperative model with regard to peace, a key prerequisite for development. We therefore welcome these findings as a positive step forward in the peacebuilding debate, and a way to highlight cooperatives' contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals.

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**Stelios  
Kouloglou,  
Vice-Chair,  
Committee on  
Development  
(DEVE),  
European  
Parliament**

The European Union plays a global and active role in peacebuilding and is also committed to justice and the development of strong institutions under the SDGs. However, there is always more to be done, and this latest addition from the cooperative movement makes a valuable contribution to the discussion, by highlighting the different intersections between conflict mitigation and long-term development strategies.

With the negative impacts of conflict so often falling on those who are least able to bear it, supporting local communities in fragile contexts has been one of the Union's key aims. The new ideas and innovative community practices discussed here give a welcome respite from a traditional discourse on peacebuilding and are a positive step forward in addressing the persistent and interlinked structural challenges facing communities.

Political and institutional actors need constructive partnerships with those on the ground, and the role of these partnerships will be of particular relevance for decision-makers, who can look to international cooperative development as an additional strategy for peacebuilding.

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**Peter van Sluijs,  
Coordinator,  
Civil Society  
Platform for  
Peacebuilding  
and  
Statebuilding  
(CSPPS)**

As CSPPS, we welcome this paper on cooperatives as a key example of how synergies and collaboration between various civil society actors can be instrumental to further peacebuilding processes, an important priority for the CSPPS network. It is clear that the cooperative movement can be a key catalyst for building trust and understanding between different stakeholders, and within the communities in which they are active, as the case studies in this paper describe.

It is important to remind policymakers that inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships and meaningful collaboration with other actors, such as local CSOs or wider regional platforms, can lead to effective participatory community development. Combining strategic community actions with the added economic benefit of the cooperative difference can positively impact in solidifying livelihood opportunities for those now left behind, and through that contribute to societal resilience.

Initiatives like these that bring together different stakeholders are pivotal to advance policy dialogues towards impact. Sustaining peace should be an objective at the forefront of meaningful action through civil society actors, working closely alongside one another.

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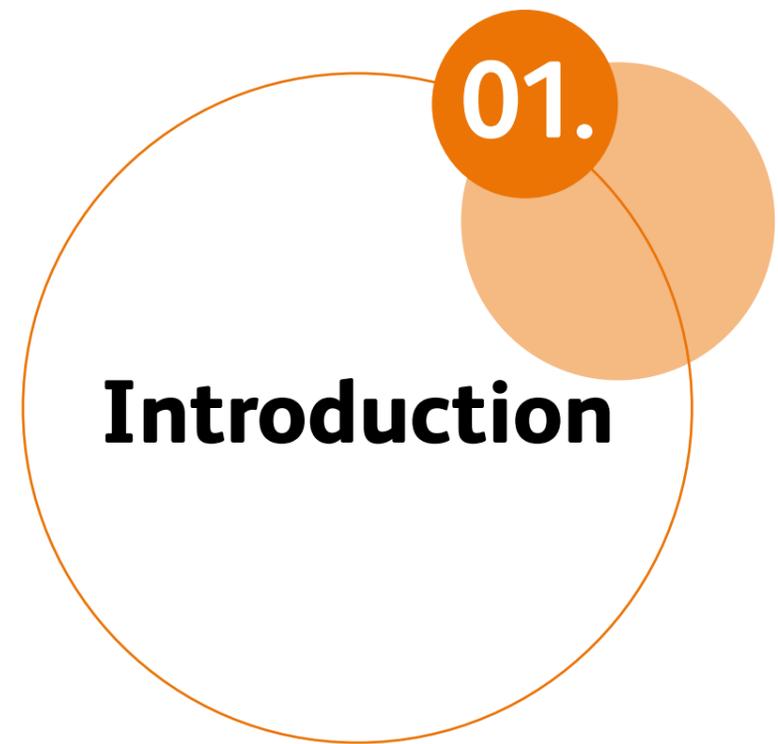
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**Marlène  
Siméon,  
Director,  
PLATFORMA**

This research helps us to grasp the importance of involving different stakeholders in peacebuilding processes around the globe. In an increasingly fragmented and insecure world, the examples showcased here are important demonstrations of participatory and collective responses to the challenges facing communities.

The diverse best practices showcased by the report's case studies illustrate how cooperatives can actively contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and be effective in many different contexts, including at the grassroots level.

They also clearly demonstrate the impact of collaborations between cooperatives and other actors such as local and regional governments. These partnerships, building upon each actor's strengths, are a crucial way to create platforms for dialogue and find synergies between different initiatives, in order to develop joint activities and strategies in favour of conflict mediation, mitigation, or post-conflict reconstruction, paving the way to more peaceful and trusting communities.



# **Introduction**

# 1.BACKGROUND CONTEXT

## 1.1 Why cooperatives and peace?

### 1.1.1 A historical perspective on the role of cooperatives in peacebuilding

There is a wealth of information to suggest that since their very creation, cooperatives and the cooperative movement have played an important role in the pursuit of peace, and across the spectrum of peacebuilding activities (Paz, 2007a). In the 2007 seminal book on the subject, MacPherson, I. & Emmanuel, J. (eds.) 'Cooperatives and the pursuit of peace: Cooperatives & peace series Volume 1', MacPherson (p. 51) illustrates that there are "powerful traditions of cooperative engagement with peace issues" and suggests that the cooperative movement has often been able to work across seemingly insurmountable boundaries that other organisations cannot. In 2009 the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) passed a resolution that reasserted its commitment to having promoted, and continuing to promote, peace for more than a century, and focussing on the role that cooperatives play in creating links between divided people and supporting social inclusion and conflict mitigation. As Parnell (2001) points out, a large number of influential cooperatives that exist today grew out of times of crisis and as a response to the needs of vulnerable people living in difficult conditions. MacPherson (2007b, p. 36) pointed out that it is important not to restrict describing the benefits of cooperatives in terms of purely financial terms, as the early pioneers of the movement were very much focussed on their social role and their "capacity to reach out over differences and bring people who are estranged from each other closer together." However, the fact that the cooperative movement has traditionally viewed itself as a peacebuilder, from the white poppies and active campaigning of organisations such as the Cooperative Women's Guild to the ICA partnership with the UN, cannot be accepted without question and must be backed up by sound evidence.

### 1.1.2 A need for more evidence on cooperatives' role in peacebuilding

Parnell (2001, p. 17) argues that "the collective effort and the active participation of people from different factions involved in the act of practical cooperation can help to create more cohesive communities." However, there is discussion around a need for specific studies that investigate the particular roles that cooperatives play in the process and whether this can be attributed to the 'cooperative difference', to highlight that cooperatives are an effective development tool. According to Weihe (2004, p. 1), "While anecdotal and historical information confirms these cooperative impacts, more empirical data is needed to better identify traits that mitigate against violence and to make the case that cooperatives in such circumstances should be preferred development options." Ramnarain (2013, p. 28) also underlines that there are few studies into approaches that focus on "building an alternative economics of peace from the ground up" and argues community-based organisations, like cooperatives have the potential to "form the nucleus of an alternative political economy of peacebuilding." This can be viewed as particularly important in light of the fact that "Cooperatives have come back into prominence with donor agencies working in rural areas in conflict countries of the region as a strategy for local economic development" (Esim & Omeira, 2009, p. 11).

### 1.1.3 Outline and aims of the research

There is much anecdotal and actual evidence of how cooperatives as member organisations can help towards peacebuilding by providing a collective platform for divergent groups to come together to pursue collective economic goals. This research explores how, through the application of their values and principles, cooperatives connected to the Cooperatives Europe Development Platform (CEDP) illustrated below have contributed, both directly and indirectly, to managing conflict and/or promoting peace. There are those who believe that by providing the opportunity for small-scale democratic practices, this then provides a basis for democratic civil society to develop and for people to become more aware of their agency, in effect creating "the building blocks of what could become a democratic economy on a society-wide scale" (Caspary, 2007, p. 342).

The research aims to form a better understanding of the international cooperative movement's contribution to peace, particularly through the work of CEDP members and their partners by illustrating examples of cooperative colleagues' involvement in peacebuilding activities, either directly or indirectly.

Specifically, the group aimed to give clear examples of how cooperatives are contributing to peacebuilding and peace strengthening in a range of settings, particularly focussing on how they can bring about change, whilst taking into account the different types of conflicts present across the globe today. The publication, which builds on a range of existing literature and resources, is specifically focussed on case studies. The group took this approach in order to showcase

good practices in each case, reach out with collective and context-specific knowledge to external stakeholders, and produce tangible conclusions and recommendations for stakeholders and decision-makers. The main focus and material of this research is drawn from the activities of the CEDP, its members and their own networks.

## 1.2 Key stakeholders concerned by the research

### 1.2.1 What is the CEDP and who are its members?

The CEDP is a network of European cooperative organisations<sup>1</sup> active in international cooperation, members of Cooperatives Europe and working on issues of development policy and development implementation. Coming from diverse sectors, cooperative partners share their expertise in complementary fields such as cooperative financing, agricultural cooperative development, or cooperative law. The CEDP has been active since 2008, and its activities are currently supported by the ICA-EU partnership for international development (cf. box below).

#### The ICA-EU Partnership for international development

At the global and regional level, cooperatives do not yet receive full recognition of their ability to be strong players in international development. The recent Framework Partnership Agreement signed between the European Commission and the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) for the period 2016-2020, entitled “Cooperatives in Development - People centred businesses in action”, is designed to enhance the profile of cooperatives in development. In coordination with its four regional offices, Cooperatives Europe being one of them, the ICA, as the global apex for cooperatives, is working hard to demonstrate and communicate the relevance of the cooperative model for sustainable development, through diverse activities towards visibility, advocacy, networking and knowledge building. By raising the profile of cooperatives as actors in this field, the cooperative movement can become a key player in implementing the SDGs.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1 for details of CEDP members.

### 1.2.2 The European Union and Peace

The decision to focus on cooperatives and peace for the present CEDP research was taken not only based on the interest of the group for the theme, but also due to its importance for key policy discussions in particular at the European Union (EU) level.

Uniting European countries either politically or economically has long been a goal of various leaders and thinkers across the continent, but after the end of World War II, integration in Europe was perceived to be a solution to the divisive nationalist agenda that had ravaged the region. The European Union’s origins as a normative project and a symbolic defender of peace<sup>2</sup> are well known, and many have argued that the European Union has had a positive transformative effect on a Europe which was previously violent and fragmented.<sup>3</sup>

Today, the EU also plays an active role in peace and security. This commitment to peace is enshrined in the Treaty of Lisbon (Article 3 & 21 TEU), which has led some to argue that this is a key feature of the EU’s identity, “The promotion of global peace and security, following the model of its own peace project, is a fundamental goal and central pillar of the external action of the European Union” (Lazarou, 2018, p. 1). This was further underlined by EU High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini in her speech at the Hessian Peace Prize award ceremony, Brussels, 20 July 2017:

*“...we achieved security through cooperation. We built peace with multilateralism. And this is the real vocation of the European Union. We are a cooperative force for peace and security. We have a long history of violence that has taught us that our national interests are much better served through cooperation with our neighbours. This is the strength of the European Union experience.”*

The European Union has also recognised the contribution of cooperatives in peace and international development. This continues to be an important priority for CEDP members, supported through the ICA partnership with the European Commission (co-signed by Cooperatives Europe), and has led to a number of political recognitions within the relevant EU development policies. For example, in 2012, cooperatives were formally recognised as important civil society actors by the EU, covering areas such as social inclusion and economic empowerment, and this research aims to further that recognition by clearly demonstrating cooperatives’ role in promoting peace.

<sup>2</sup> The Nobel Peace Prize 2012 was awarded to European Union “for over six decades contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe.”

<sup>3</sup> See for example: Leonard, M. (2005) ‘Europe’s Transformative Power’, Bulletin Article, Centre for European Reform.

### 1.2.3 The UN Sustainable Development Goals

In addition to this, the EU makes key references to peace in its recent political declarations on development, such as the 2017 European Consensus on Development (ECD)<sup>4</sup> that focusses on conflict-affected countries, such as those where many of the cooperatives showcased in this research are active, and where cooperatives are highlighted as being “instrumental partners in reaching the most vulnerable” (p.16). Lazarou (2018, p. 45) points out that development cooperation is highlighted in the ECD as “a pivotal instrument for preventing violent conflicts, mitigating their consequences, or recovering from them”, as this research seeks to demonstrate through its case studies. In addition, the research aims to keep a strong focus upon the Sustainable Development Goals, a key topic of focus at the European and global level.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), negotiated in light of the missed targets of their predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals, are unique in committing all countries to contribute toward their achievement, rather than just low to middle income nations. Through a large number of indicators, the SDGs cover all components of economic activity (agriculture, industry, housing, health, education, production, consumption etc.), and address a wide range of major global concerns (poverty, equality, employment, gender, climate change, peace building, etc.).

Cooperatives can contribute to all the SDGs, both because they are involved in very diverse economic sectors, and because their values and principles place them in a good position to act along what International Labour Organization (ILO) has termed a ‘triple-bottom line’: as social organisations, environmental actors, and economic agents, cooperatives can meet these sustainability goals at the same time. In addition, cooperatives can also address challenges of governance, by fostering member economic participation and facilitating education and training. Through such actions, they can solve common problems and enable people to take charge of their own development.<sup>5</sup>

A number of SDGs may be particularly well suited to the cooperative model, for example SDG 1 on reducing poverty, in line with the cooperative endeavour to meet members’ social and economic

<sup>4</sup> European Union Statement (2017) The New European Consensus on Development - ‘Our world, our dignity, our future’, Joint Statement by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States Meeting Within the Council, The European Parliament and the European Commission, June 2017. p.16.

<sup>5</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Cooperative Alliance (2014) Joint Paper, Cooperatives and the Sustainable Development Goals: A Contribution to the Post-2015 Development Debate.



needs. SDG 5 on gender equality is aligned with the principle of open and voluntary membership, whilst today we witness an increase in the number of women’s cooperatives.<sup>6</sup> SDG 8 on decent work is supported by cooperatives’ democratic and member-based approach, coupled with their concern for community. In addition, as demonstrated by some of the present report’s cases, cooperatives have a strong role to play with regard to SDG 12 on responsible production and consumption, as well as SDG 13 on climate action. SDG 17, which addresses partnerships, is upheld among others by the principle of cooperation between cooperatives and concern for community, and consistent with the numerous multi-stakeholder partnerships they conduct with other civil society organisations (CSOs) and global or regional institutions. As peace forms the core focus of this research, the box below describes the working links between SDG 16 and the cooperative model.

#### Cooperatives and SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

SDG 16, Peace, justice and strong institutions, aims to provide access to justice and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at every level of governance. Despite initial progress for the SDGs in several areas, such as in SDG 5 (Gender) or SDG 3 (Health), after three years of implementation the results for SDG 16 are mixed. The number of violent conflicts in the world today is actually on the rise. High intensity armed violence in a number of countries, fuelled by arms sales and the military industrial complex, is causing large numbers of civilian casualties. Ensuring that peace and justice is effective, with accountability and trust in institutions, remains a huge challenge across and within regions. Journalists, environmental defenders and trade unionists are targeted with impunity across continents, whilst CSOs suffer a shrinking space in many countries, where their activities are often impeded.

Peace is one of the five ‘Ps’ or pillars of sustainable development, the remaining four being People, Prosperity, Planet, and Partnership. Therefore, peace, justice and inclusive societies are critical to achieving the SDGs, being a strong supporting condition to kick-start other development objectives.

The relevance of the cooperative model to peace can be established through the impact of the cooperative values and principles, such as concern for community and voluntary open membership, demonstrating a strong commitment to tolerance and to social inclusion. Furthermore, the cooperative values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity are interlinked, meaning that cooperatives can help to

<sup>6</sup> ILO (2015) ‘Guideline advancing gender equality the cooperative way : gender survey’, International Labour Office, Enterprises Department, Geneva.

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## 1.2.4 A theme of particular interest for other CSO and LA partners

implement SDG 16 in a number of different ways. These include trust building, setting mechanisms for dialogue, and ensuring service provision, among others. We discuss in the conclusions and recommendations of the present report further ways in which cooperatives are well placed to support SDG 16 and other SDGs relevant for peace.

Sources: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 2018 RSF World Press Freedom Index and the UN Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018.

The expression local authorities (LAs) refers to all administrative bodies, as defined by the respective national laws: those at regional level, at local level (such as municipalities) and at intermediate level (such as provinces and metropolitan cities). Civil society organisations (CSOs), on the other hand, can be defined as “the wide array of nongovernmental and not-for-profit organisations that have a presence in public life and express the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations. This definition of civil society, which has gained currency in recent years in academic and international development circles, refers to the sphere outside the family, the state, and the market”.<sup>7</sup> In regard to cooperatives, though numerous interpretations of the concept exist, in 2012 the European Union defined CSOs as “a wide range of actors with different roles and mandates”, and includes cooperative enterprises among them as membership-based and service oriented organisations.<sup>8</sup>

LAs and CSOs contribute significantly to reducing poverty, promoting human rights and democracy, good governance and sustainable local development, and they also play an important role in conflict prevention, management and resolution.<sup>9</sup> LAs are on the front line when a crisis breaks out. Thanks to their proximity to the grassroots they can call upon known stakeholders as a first response, to rapidly assess damage and needs, to provide emergency actors with all information necessary to effectively operate. Moreover, LAs can ensure the transition from emergency to development by placing greater emphasis on actions linked to crisis prevention and preparedness.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> World Bank, (2007), ‘Consultations with Civil Society. A sourcebook working document’, New York, World Bank.

<sup>8</sup> European Commission (2012) EC Communication ‘The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe’s engagement with Civil Society in external relations’, Brussels, September 2012.

<sup>9</sup> OECD (2009) ‘Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness - Findings, Recommendations and Good Practice’, Better Aid Series.

<sup>10</sup> Lucie Alex-Billaud (2015), What role can local governments play in fragile or crisis-stricken States? The case of the Syrian crisis, PLATFORMA.

But preventing conflict, sustaining and building lasting peace require partnership and inclusivity. Where state-society relations are weak or where institutions lack capability, the ongoing involvement of CSOs hold a pivotal key to ensuring whole-of-society ownership and implementation of the SDGs. CSOs, which include among others Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), have access to the parties involved in the conflict and can foster a dialogue between them, together with inducing local populations to get involved in long-term reconciliation efforts. By working directly with local populations on the ground, similarly to LAs, CSOs are able to assess the situation more effectively.<sup>11</sup>

Partnerships between cooperatives and external stakeholders, such as NGOs and LAs, are indeed a recurrent feature in the examples showcased in the main body of the report, as the next pages demonstrate.

<sup>11</sup> Rupesinghe, K and N. Anderlini (1998), Civil Wars, Civil Peace: An Introduction to Conflict Resolution, Pluto Press: London.

## 2. FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

### 2.1 Types of conflict addressed

Conflict has always played a role in human existence, from small-scale local disputes to civil, regional or global wars. The causes have often resulted from ethnic, religious, political or economic divisions, however in recent times climate change has also emerged as a major cause of conflict, leading to environmental degradation and mass global migration. Conflict in itself is not problematic, it is how it is managed and resolved that makes the difference.

### 2.2 Definitions of the stages of conflict

For the purposes of this research, it is important to define what is meant by the different stages of conflict that we use to categorise our case studies, in terms of conflict prevention, mitigation and post-conflict reconstruction. This is, in part, due to there being a variety of different interpretations of what conflict is and what it consists of, from the micro to the macro level. Many people interpret conflict as wholly negative or damaging in nature, however this study

acknowledges that conflict is an inevitable part of life and does not always lead to violence or destruction - how it is managed is the key factor.

It is also important to note that our case studies may not be explicit in their goals of conflict prevention, mitigation or post-conflict reconstruction – these ‘added benefits’ may in fact appear as a by-product of the main business objectives or activity the cooperative undertakes. However, understating these ‘added benefits’ and examining if they can be attributed to some sort of ‘cooperative difference’ is a central aim of this study and will add weight to the significance of promoting cooperatives as a valuable tool for development and force for positive change. It is also essential to consider that it is very difficult to classify the cases in this study as falling uniquely into one or more categories as there is a certain fluidity of boundaries between the definitions, and some of the work in one will affect other areas. As pointed out by Havers (2007, p. 309), according to recent research it is difficult to categorise a given situation so definitively, so it is best to refer to “conflict environments” as a more all-encompassing description that more effectively portrays contemporary conflict situations.

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#### 2.2.1 Prevention (preventing conflict from occurring)

According to Swanström & Weissmann (2005, p. 19), “Conflict prevention means different things to different people and there is no single definition that is agreed upon.” In broad terms, it refers to a range of activities that aim to forestall, manage and therefore avoid the flare-up of conflict, and includes processes aimed at averting the occurrence of a threat and preventing the threat from causing harm. Conflict prevention refers to a variety of activities aimed at anticipating and averting the outbreak of conflict and is usually categorised as either structural prevention or direct prevention:

- **Structural conflict prevention:** focusses on long-term actions that are needed to address the underlying causes of a potential conflict, as well as the factors that may contribute to exacerbating or sparking the conflict. These trigger points may be political, economic, social, cultural or personal.
- **Direct conflict prevention:** focusses on short-term actions that are needed to prevent an imminent conflict or the intensification of a potential conflict.

The strength of cooperatives lies in their ability to operate in both the structural and direct spheres, and backs up what Kumar (2011, pp. 396-7) identifies as the need to strengthen the capabilities of national and local actors “to resolve conflicts, prevent violence, and build consensus over contentious issues in an inclusive and credible manner.” The participatory nature of cooperatives addresses some of the issues that Nascimento et al. (2004, p. 19) argue are the key

drivers of peace building, using methods that “pay particular attention to local resources for peaceful change, focussing on those strengths, capacities and best practices which are present in every society and culture and that should be more actively mobilised.”

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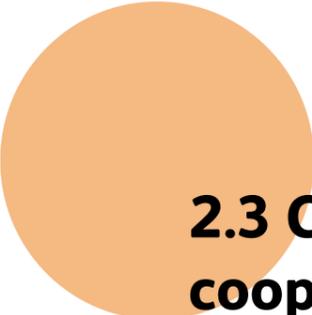
### 2.2.2 Mitigation (mitigating an ongoing conflict)

In his definition, Parnell (2001, pp.viii-ix) refers to mitigation as “A collective term used to encompass all activities undertaken in anticipation of the occurrence of a crisis.” In this sense, mitigation approaches are very broad and can be employed in conflict prevention as well as in ongoing conflict and post-conflict situations. For the purposes of this research, mitigation consists of actions that aim to positively transform the causes of conflict through addressing the structural, behavioural and attitude aspects of conflict, and makes efforts to limit the damage, by containing and reducing the potential harm by setting up and carrying out processes to settle the dispute. This often takes the form of using activities that address the causes of conflict and changes the way those involved perceive and act upon the issues. In this sense, it is a valuable process through which activities can be evaluated for their contribution to building longer-term options by creating stability, reducing tensions and working towards lessening sources of conflict.

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### 2.2.3 Reconstruction (post-conflict reconstruction)

Tzifakis (2013) acknowledges that “Post-conflict reconstruction is broadly understood as a complex, holistic and multidimensional process”, that covers not just physical rebuilding and renovation of damage, but also economic, social, cultural and political restoration. It focusses on processes that bring groups/individuals who have been party to a conflict together to build relationships and address the circumstances that led to the conflict. Reconciliation initiatives are used to nurture positive attitudes and alleviate mistrust through capacity building and through bolstering both the processes used to bring the different parties involved in the conflict together as well as the institutional infrastructure that surrounds them. In this way, post-conflict reconstruction is not merely about responding to the immediate aftermath of a conflict, but aims to improve systems and processes, economic, social and political, to create an enduring stability and prevent future manifestations of conflict.



## 2.3 Conditions required for cooperatives to be effective peacebuilding institutions

Cooperatives can be an important actor, within a multi-stakeholder approach, to peacebuilding. Many authors discuss the fact that cooperatives provide an opportunity to build more sustainable and authentic environments on the ground. As argued by Ramnarain, (2013, p. 30) “Cooperatives potentially articulate a grassroots political economy of peacebuilding that builds the basis for more sustainable forms of peace, based on social justice, not simply the absence of violence.” In addition, Parnell (2001, p. 21), states that “Any actions that can be taken to promote genuine cooperation and to contribute towards developing a culture of cooperation must be helpful in the process of reconciliation.” However, the fact that working through cooperatives automatically creates the right conditions for peace cannot be taken for granted as there are inevitably certain conditions that need to be in place to be effective peacebuilding actors. Havers (2007) argues that this is best achieved by supporting activities that already have social links or a base in the given community, such as the existing cooperative infrastructure. Ramnarain (2013) emphasises that the evidence from her research in Nepal demonstrates that building economic prosperity relies on conflict mitigation by creating the right conditions for social unity. One of the strengths of this tactic, she argues, is that by linking economic and social objectives, people are able to tackle the structural injustices that cause conflict rather than merely using a ‘sticking plaster’ approach to cover the symptoms of conflict.

Some observers have also referred to the importance of cooperatives as “bridging institutions” between opposing sectarian and ethnic groups; the process of pursuing shared economic goals enables integration to occur, but in order for cooperatives to play a transformational role, the membership needs to be mixed (Weihe, 2004, p. 22). Havers (2007, p. 311) refers to the “wide array of examples for the use of cooperatives providing livelihoods in conflict-stricken environments” and gives the examples of cooperatives showing a “remarkable resilience” in these circumstances, thereby helping to alleviate some of the negative impacts of conflict.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Brief description of research methodology

The research was conducted in two stages. Firstly, in addition to building on existing literature and conducting background research, a data collection template was jointly developed by the CEDP research working group and disseminated to partner organisations, who provided a variety of cases. After an initial analysis, semi-structured interviews were carried out with a number of stakeholders at headquarter (HQ) and field level, to consolidate the information and identify wider trends regarding the cooperative factor in peacebuilding. Where appropriate, extracts from our interviews are included in the report – but are only directly attributed to named individuals where requested.

The research team conducted 20 interviews with a variety of stakeholders directly working on the ground or those administering the various projects at headquarter level. The interview questions focussed on the specific features of their contributions, including motivations for cooperatives to act in a peacebuilding context, the key outcomes including successes and difficulties experienced, as well as the links with other partners and the community.

When conducting research in areas affected by conflict, it is very important to engage in ethically informed decision-making. With regard to ethics, throughout the entire research process the primary rule that the research group sought to follow is to 'do no harm'. In the context of the interviews, this required informed consent, and further that the questions were developed in such a way as to consider the security and psycho-social concerns of all involved – to avoid putting anyone at risk or reviving tensions within fragile communities. While the data collection should follow a certain structure, with several core issues to address, it was crucial to also pose gentle and open-ended

questions that allowed interviewees to choose how much they would like to share.

The work also explored a number of interlinked themes aligned with the SDGs, such as gender, the sustainable management of natural resources, and the contribution of young people in a peacebuilding context. Many of the cases touched upon several themes, although they were only showcased under one main theme in the final report's structure for readers' convenience. Case studies were collected from around the world, in all regions denoted by the ICA. Due to the international development mandate of the CEDP, the group decided to focus on cases outside of EU Member States; but do include a selection of cases from the European continent.

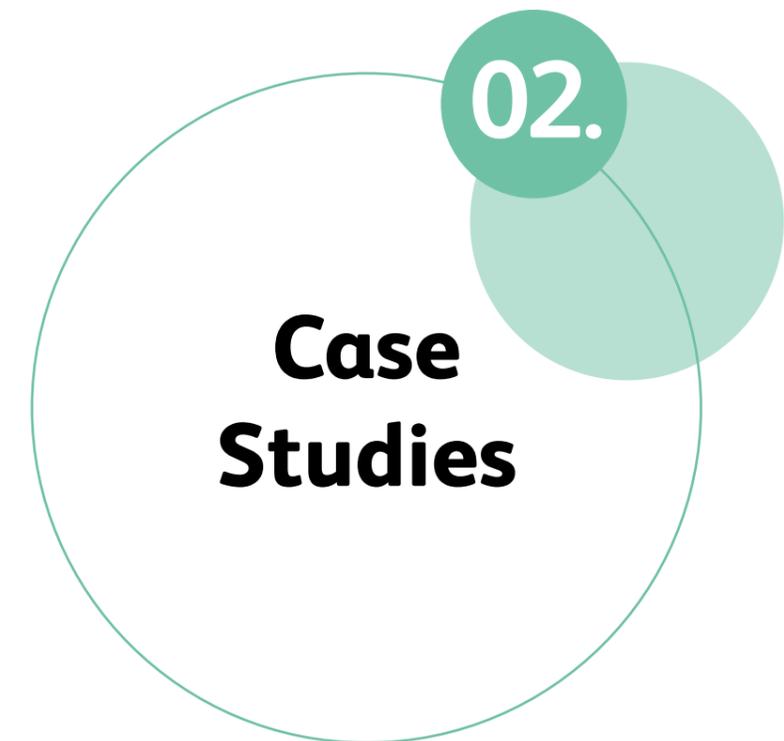
### 3.2 Limitations of this study

Like any piece of research, this study suffers from limitations that are important to note. This research does not claim to offer a full and exhaustive look at the role of cooperatives in peacebuilding, which would unfortunately not be possible given the capacities of the research group. There is already a substantial existing literature giving examples of case studies on cooperatives and peace (see for example MacPherson & Paz, 2013), and this report in no way seeks to 're-invent the wheel'. What it does aim to do is shed light on a range of new and interesting cases to further investigate how cooperatives perform in spaces of conflict, particularly those that members of the CEDP have either worked with directly or indirectly. In order to look in detail at the cooperative factor, we have taken a qualitative approach to the research questions, and therefore we aimed to cover a sample of diverse case studies from different CEDP partners.

This choice was due in part to the experience and expertise of the CEDP network, which has been active for more than a decade in a wide variety of sectors, such as agricultural cooperative development, cooperative education, finance (micro-finance or savings and credit), and cooperative law. Considering that interlinked activities between CEDP network organisations and partners had a clear relevance for the topic, including toward the policy priorities of the European Union and the UN SDGs, this gave an excellent starting framework through which to conduct the research.

In addition, there are many inspiring cooperative activities beyond the CEDP working group worthy of mention, and we hope that future work can analyse these contributions. In this study however, we have kept the focus solely on activities taking place within the CEDP network.

The following chapters, divided into thematic sections, provide a closer look at the different ways in which cooperatives are contributing to peace around the world. Following this, we discuss the conclusions and recommendations in the final section.



# 1. EMPOWERING MINORITY GROUPS AFFECTED BY CONFLICT

This section aims to demonstrate how cooperatives can provide an important vehicle to overcome inequalities in cases where vulnerable groups are more adversely affected by conflict due to their minority status. In the case of women, there is significant evidence that lends weight to the fact that women tend to be disproportionately affected by conflict,<sup>12</sup> not only due to sexual violence, but also due to the fact they are frequently left as the sole providers for families and communities post conflict. In terms of ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, as well as migrant communities in conflict settings, secondary disputes can arise over differences in social norms, language barriers and pressure on scarce resources (environmental, economic, or health for example) between the different communities.

In a key study published by the ILO in 2015<sup>13</sup> evidence suggests that the cooperative movement is increasingly focussing on: i) gender issues; ii), increasing percentages of women into leadership roles; iii) a growth in the number of women-owned cooperatives. Research lends weight to the fact that there are strong links between women's involvement in cooperatives and poverty reduction.<sup>14</sup>

In times of conflict and post-conflict reconstruction, studies tend to focus on women and minority groups as victims, passive aid targets. The cases we present in our research, on the other hand, are based on the concept of peacebuilding as an active process in which greater economic participation by women and minority groups in cooperatives leads to stronger and more integrated communities.

<sup>12</sup> Woman Kind (2015) Policy & Campaigns Article, 'Women, peace and security: Women's experiences in war and peace'.

<sup>13</sup> ILO (2015) 'Guideline advancing gender equality the cooperative way : gender survey', International Labour Office, Enterprises Department, Geneva.

<sup>14</sup> Coop Africa (2012) 'Empower rural women -end poverty and hunger: the potential of African cooperatives', ILO Leaflet.



## 1.1 The role of women in peace processes

### RWANDA

#### Background to the conflict in Rwanda

In 1994, within only three months (April-July) Rwanda experienced one of the most brutal genocides in recent history. It is estimated that approximately one million people were killed during this time, killed by friends, neighbours and even family. The conflict created a deep division between genocide survivors and genocide perpetrators, as well as their respective family members. In response to this the Rwandan Government created the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), traditional courts of justice (Gacaca), solidarity camps (Ingando) and community mediators (Abunzi) in order to reinforce unity and aid reconciliation.<sup>15</sup>

#### Gacaca (courts of justice)

A Gacaca tribunal is based on the traditional practice of community conflict resolution which involves the participation of the entire community. Traditionally people used to sit together on the grass (agacaca) to resolve their disputes. The Gacaca jurisdiction (court or tribunal) was adopted by the Rwandan government in order to establish the truth and 'eliminate the culture of impunity'. The system, which covered crimes of genocide and other crimes against humanity, covered the period between the 1st October 1990 and 31st December 1994, to reflect the period covering the start of the civil war.

The main objectives of the system were:

- (a) the reconstruction of what happened during the genocide
- (b) the speeding up of the legal proceedings by using as many courts as possible
- (c) the reconciliation of all Rwandans, and building their unity

The Gacaca system invites the participation of ordinary people assisted by lawyers, but remains a permanent court that follows the rules set out in law, which deals with the crimes of genocide. The court hears the cases of those accused of the lower (second and third) categories of genocide; i.e. not those of the planners and ringleaders.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (2016) 'Unity and Reconciliation Process in Rwanda' Republic of Rwanda, UNDP, December 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Bloomfield, David, Teresa Barnes and Luc Huyse (eds.) (2003) Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A Handbook. Stockholm, IDEA.

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## Ingando (solidarity camps)

Ingando is derived from the Rwandan verb Kugandika, which refers to halting normal activities in order to reflect on challenges and find solutions to them. Ingando are traditional approaches developed by the NURC as a tool to build coexistence within communities. Their aim is to support Rwandans to come to terms with the past by revisiting history, developing a common vision for a united future and creating a forum to build trust.

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## Abunzi (mediators/ conciliators)

Abunzi is a word stemming from the Kinyarwanda word Kwunga 'to reconcile or to restore'. These are elected officials at local level who manage minor social conflicts, and reconcile people, thereby reducing tensions and acting as community reconcilers, elected by the population on the basis of their integrity.

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## Background to the cooperative movement in Rwanda

There was no national policy on cooperatives before or for many years after the genocide. It was not until 2006 that a national policy was developed for the promotion of cooperatives. After the 1994 genocide the government, at the local level, was not aware of the existence of the majority of the cooperatives in the country.<sup>17</sup>

Today, the cooperative movement in Rwanda is promoted, supervised and regulated by the Cooperative Task Force that sits under the MINICOM (Ministry of Commerce). The government, through the MINICOM, implemented a policy of organising women to generate their own income, reflecting the fact that many women were widows after the genocide, and needed to provide a living for their families. There was a particular emphasis on craft activities such as weaving, knitting, tailoring, and embroidery, as a means of poverty alleviation. They were able to access support, training and finance, which would have been difficult for them to secure as individuals making such products.

In 1949, the Belgian government had released a decree allowing cooperatives to be legally registered as economic entities in Rwanda, resulting in many organisations operating as cooperatives afterwards, however not all had licenses or were formally registered as there was no serious enforcement of the operating criteria.

At the time of independence (1962), Rwanda had only 8 registered cooperatives (Somuki, Georwanda, Impala, Nkora, Abahizi, Trafipro, the Ntendezi and Codar), however this number greatly increased with over 22 475 registered members benefitting from cooperatives,

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<sup>17</sup> Republic of Rwanda (2006) Policy Document 'National Policy on Promotion of Cooperatives'.

until the 1994 genocide destroyed the movement, through the destruction of property, trust between people as well as social and human capital.<sup>18</sup>

Despite this significant destruction, the cooperative sector steadily developed following the genocide. In 2005, the government took a decision to consider cooperatives as a strong poverty eradication tool.<sup>19</sup> At this time, measures were put in place to allow only the development of strong and viable cooperatives able to improve the social welfare of the population. The MINICOM set up the Cooperative Task Force which was instituted to promote cooperative formation. A policy was also drafted to regulate the development and institutional framework of the cooperative movement. Today, cooperatives are leading the employment creation and poverty reduction strategy that Rwanda has embarked on.<sup>20</sup>

Coffee cooperatives such as IAKB, AKG, ABAKUNDAKAWA and COOPAC, were formed with the view of locating a direct market for their members' coffee. A CoopAfrica report on Rwanda from February 2007 also stressed that coffee has always been a top priority for reconstructing post-genocide Rwanda; as the agriculture sector contributes 41 % of the country's GDP, thus constituting 90 % of the populations' employment. There are cooperatives in every sector of Rwanda's economy.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Calvo, S. and Morales Pachón, A. (2017) *Social and Solidarity Economy: The World's Economy with a Social Face*. Routledge, New York.

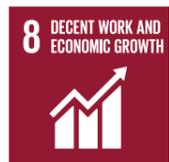
<sup>19</sup> ILO (2010a) 'The hope for rural transformation : a rejuvenating cooperatives movement in Rwanda' Espérance Mukarugwiza, International Labour Office, ILO Country Office for the United Republic of Tanzania ,Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda. - Dar es Salaam: ILO, 20101 v. (Working paper; No.12).

<sup>20</sup> Republic of Rwanda (1999) Minecofin, National Consultative Process Document, 'Rwanda Vision 2020'

<sup>21</sup> ILO (2010a), p. 7.

## Project

### Main SDGs covered:



## Programme description

## Buranga Cooperative

**CEDP member involved:** UK Co-operative College  
**Project partner:** Buranga Cooperative  
**Country:** Rwanda  
**Sector:** Craft  
**Key themes:** Inequalities, Health and wellbeing  
**Category:** Post-conflict  
**Objectives:** Income generation and support cooperative for former prostitutes and women who were raped during the genocide, many of whom have HIV/AIDS

Buranga Cooperative has 16 members, all women, all of whom joined the cooperative to participate in income-generating activities to alleviate extreme poverty. The women lost the majority, if not all, of their belongings during the genocide and several were raped, resulting in HIV infection. Many turned to prostitution as a way to survive or illegally sold their crafts at the roadsides. Some of these women were taken to prison as a result and had to leave their children with no one to look after them.

The women in the cooperative, who often had no other family members left, had children to look after, either their own or those of family members who were murdered. The pressure of this responsibility to provide food and shelter for others encouraged them to get together and start making small crafts to sell.

Buranga Cooperative is a member of Rwandan Federation for Alternative Trade (RWFAT) and is registered with Ministry of Commerce (MINICOM). They have received some training from the government in terms of solidarity, peace and reconciliation.<sup>22</sup> They implement this training in their cooperative, by having strict rules and regulations enforcing a zero-tolerance policy for anyone who tries to nurture ethnic divides or tensions. Some of the members also stated that they go back to their communities and train others in the importance of peace and reconciliation, together with the district level government.

*“I worked in my home community, where we supported them to buy some land, on the land the two groups (perpetrators and survivors) work together to cultivate it. Working towards a common goal of increasing their food security. It is for their mutual benefit.” Buranga Cooperative member*

<sup>22</sup> National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (2016).

## Cooperative contribution to peace

The members stated that they did not join the cooperative to explicitly restore peace, and that it was not their intention. They joined to make a living in order to be able to buy food and find shelter, and to alleviate the sadness and loneliness they felt. However, as with all cooperatives in the country, in line with post-genocide national legislation, there could be no criteria for joining in terms of ethnicity. The cooperative was, and still is, open to all women, regardless of their ethnicity, and whether they or their families are survivors or perpetrators during the genocide. As such, both perpetrators and survivors were brought together each working day to focus on how they could alleviate their own poverty collectively.

*“We are all mixed up, those who sinned and have been forgiven and those survivors. We have a common focus, a goal; this helps us unite.” Buranga Cooperative member*

Some women in the cooperative have had children as a result of rape during the genocide, and stated that they needed a lot of support to deal with this, as they had no one to turn to for help. Now the cooperative is their family.

*“Her husband killed my husband [pointing to another member], he was in prison, but is out now, while me I will never see my husband again. Our daughters have grown up together, they played together. I worked together with the lady, we live together as one. It was not easy to trust again, there was a lot of suspicion, however we attended the Gacaca, we heard the man’s accounts of how he killed my husband, each thing he did to him. He cut him with a machete here [pointing to her arms] and here [pointing to her neck]. He asked for forgiveness from my family. He also beat my mum until she looked like she was dead [this is her in the photo, sitting close to the man], she survived. It is not easy and it does not happen quickly, but we have forgiven. What other choice did we have? Our daughters, you see here in the photo. We do not want them to experience the same things that we have. We have to forgive in order to make sure this does not happen again, that they are not brought up with hate in their hearts. We have to prevent everything that could lead to war.” Buranga Cooperative member*

*“I cannot stand here and say that all anger has gone, when we go through the 100 days of mourning, it sometimes feels in my head like these things happened only yesterday. You feel very sad and angry; tensions can sometimes be high during this time. But you remember what people have done for you in your cooperative, how they have supported you and your family and you try to find peace once again in your heart.” Buranga Cooperative member*

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## Cooperative factor

As a people-centred and democratically driven enterprise, the cooperative model necessitates a stronger level of communication and exchanges between members in order to run the business. Being involved in the cooperative has given members a safe space to gradually overcome the trauma of the genocide and to overcome the fact that they lost so much, not only in terms of family and friends, but also in their home, belongings and an ability to trust. Members also commented that they had joined the cooperative to alleviate loneliness. Many of the women had lost a great number of family members and friends during the genocide, and they felt anger, extreme loneliness and sadness, and had lost hope.

*“Before the genocide everyone in my family was working, I grew up in a good family, then overnight I lost everything, my home, my belongings, my family, even my mind. I couldn’t trust anyone, so I decided not to talk to anyone, ever. During this time, I went through trauma, I felt so alone, unable to connect with anyone or look them in the eye. I was afraid, afraid that I might also be killed. But I was struggling to survive, so I joined the cooperative, but still I did not communicate with people, only about our work, but slowly-slowly we started to talk and I realised that we all shared the same history and the same problems. Now being in the cooperative is like attending counselling – if someone is experiencing hardship and does not have peace in their hearts, we come together and support them, they share their experiences and feel better.” Buranga Cooperative member*

In this way, the cooperative gave them some structure to their days, as well as a purpose and company. At first the members said that they did not talk much to one another as they felt they could not trust anyone. But over time they learnt to open up, and began to help one another with their problems, which enabled them to realise that people cared about them and that they were not alone in the world anymore.

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## Key learning points and challenges

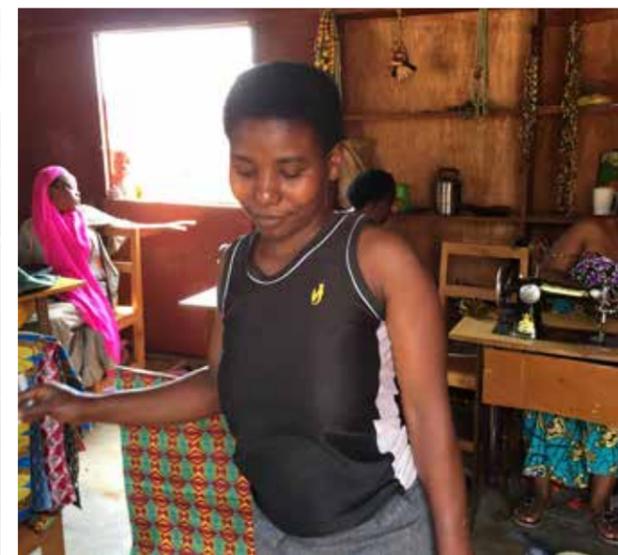
In the members’ own words, not only did they help one another while working within the cooperative, but they also helped one another when they returned to their homes on activities that were not associated with the cooperative. They have supported one another for instance with money to pay for school fees for their children or with preparations for weddings, which they also attended.

*“If a cooperative member is sick, we will visit her and support her. We are a family. The cooperative has helped us unite, no matter whether we are survivor, perpetrators or whether we fled the country and then returned.” Buranga Cooperative member*

There was a lot of discussion around issues of trust and how the cooperative has helped cultivate it.

*“Before, we could not even look at each other, we feared each other, we held suspicion. But here in the cooperative we talk to one another and slowly, slowly we start to open up and trust one another.” Buranga Cooperative member*

In terms of what could have gone better, all conversations came back to the need for training. The cooperative is struggling financially, and needs further support to better access markets, diversifying and making more money for its members. The cooperative members are very much focussed on the future and how their organisation is going to survive and be sustainable.



## Project

## COOPCVK Cooperative

### Main SDGs covered:



**CEDP member involved:** UK Co-operative College  
**Project partner:** COOPCVK Cooperative  
**Country:** Rwanda  
**Sector:** Leather work  
**Key themes:** Inequalities  
**Category:** Post-conflict  
**Objectives:** Income generation and support cooperative for people who were isolated after the genocide and who were living in poverty

## Programme description

COOPCVK Cooperative started with 20 members and now has 60 members, 25 of whom actively participate in the cooperative. The idea for the cooperative originally came out of a recognition that people were isolated after the genocide. The Rwandan Investment and Export Promotion Agency (RIEPA), Rwandan Development Board (RDB) and Rwandan Cooperative Agency (RCA) were all encouraging groups to set up cooperatives, and these national agencies found other people who had been involved in leather making prior to the genocide and brought them together. COOPCVK also works with other cooperatives, sharing lessons and knowledge to support one another. They are also a member of Rwandan Federation for Alternative Trade (RWAFAT) and have received support from the Rwandan Development Board (RDB) in particular through training in store management, financial management and specific training for leather products.

## Cooperative contribution to peace

The aim of the cooperative was to bring both perpetrators and survivors to work together, in line with the government's policy that there should be no difference between the two groups, and the need for people to work together in harmony so as to overcome isolation and benefit from further opportunities. The cooperative has supported peace and reconciliation as people were able to learn new skills, work together with one another, to plan and look to the future, whilst building their financial capacity.

*"Some of the women are widows after the genocide. Eugene [a member] for example has a son who has now finished university – through the work of the cooperative she has come out of isolation and come through the trauma caused by the genocide to do something positive." COOPCVK Cooperative member*

Regarding the cooperative's membership, in line with the government's advice, members were chosen based on their skills or need for support regardless of their background, focussing on the activities of the cooperative and the aim to work together in unison.

The cooperative maintains peace through a committee whose purpose is to resolve conflict and discipline those who are seen to be disturbing the peace within the organisation. The policy of the government was also considered as favourable in supporting cooperatives to preserve the peace among their members. Moreover, the Gacaca justice system helped preserve the peace among the members, as these truth courts dealt with the crimes of the perpetrators, therefore it was not the role of the cooperative to do this.

*"What has helped is that the justice system has ensured that the perpetrators have been punished. The efforts of the government were to unite people so we supported this."  
COOPCVK Cooperative member*

## Cooperative factor

After the genocide, few people were making leather products, so the group saw it as an opportunity. Being part of a cooperative has helped members, some of whom started mending shoes and are now able to make new ones. One of the main benefits of being a cooperative has been accessing a variety of training opportunities. As part of this training, the original members became aware of a lack of gender diversity in their cooperative, so they invited 7 women to join, teaching them new skills and increasing the diversity of members. Cooperative members support one another through their challenges related to grief, anger and finding peace. For instance, during the annual 100 days of remembrance, some of the members whose



family members' remains have been found get the opportunity to give them a respectful burial, with other members present to assist the person concerned. Another example provided was that of a member whose husband was in prison as a perpetrator, then died of sickness after being released. Afterwards, the members of the cooperative supported the widow, regardless of background.

*“Preventing conflict is easy if you are in a cooperative, because we work together for the same aim. We are too busy with the business of the cooperative to nurture bad thoughts and disturb the peace.” COOPCVK Cooperative manager*

## Key learning points and challenges

The members stated that collective work brought many unexpected benefits. They came together to alleviate poverty and work with others to relieve their isolation, and not explicitly for the purposes of peace. The two groups (perpetrators and survivors) were at first suspicious of one another and found it difficult to mix socially as they were too fearful. However, over time they have had to work together on activities within the cooperative, and this has built up trust to the extent that they can now rely on each other, which resulted in breaking down the barriers between them. Cooperative members commented that they currently work together in peace and harmony, not looking backwards at their past, but looking forward towards their futures.

## Project

### Main SDGs covered:



## Programme description

## Ineza Cooperative

**CEDP member involved:** UK Co-operative College  
**Project partners:** Ineza Cooperative; WE-ACTx  
**Country:** Rwanda  
**Sector:** Craft  
**Key themes:** Inequalities, Health and wellbeing  
**Category:** Post-conflict  
**Objectives:** Income generation and support cooperative for former prostitutes and women who were raped during the genocide, many of whom have HIV/AIDS

The Ineza Cooperative, which currently has 26 members, of which 24 are women and 2 men, was created in 2005 and registered as a cooperative in 2010. The members met in 2004, when they were working with a US NGO, WE-ACTx<sup>23</sup>, which was giving financial assistance to HIV positive women, many of whom had suffered rape in the genocide.

WE-ACTx helped the women to form their cooperative, set up in order to:

1. Test for HIV/AIDS and provide a health service
2. Bring together people with a common problem
3. Support them to get out of poverty through income generating activities
4. Help each other to create hope – hope for the future and for a better life.

In the beginning WE-ACTx paid members for their work and helped members with all of their needs, despite the fact they were not operating at a profit. But now the cooperative is transitioning to become self-reliant and is able to produce its own income, although members stated that they need help in accessing markets, as well as product development, pricing and costing, in order to be able to cover all their costs.

*“We didn’t want to just receive help, we wanted to do something to help ourselves, so a goal was to survive without receiving aid, WE-ACTx used to pay us, even if we did not make or sell anything, now we make our own money, the only thing they continue to help us with is the rent on this building and also with the transport fees for us to get to and from our workplace.”  
 Ineza Cooperative member*

<sup>23</sup> WE-ACTx is an international community-based HIV/AIDS initiative, more information is available at <http://www.we-actx.org/>

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## Cooperative contribution to peace

Ineza is also a member of RWFAT (The Rwandan Federation of Alternative Trade) and MINICOM (Ministry of Commerce). Their vision for their cooperative is to have members who are happy, show kindness to one another and give each other hope – people who do not threaten the peace of others, but will do everything they can to assist you.

The cooperative prides itself on preserving peace. Occasional tourists who come and visit after going to the local genocide memorial site tend to be genuinely surprised by the work the cooperative is doing as a group.

*“Sometimes they visit the cooperative. They see the mood of the members and they are surprised, we have come together to overcome our problems, that is a sign that we are showing peace and reconciliation – this is what peace looks like. We continue to stress that being a cooperative is different. We feel like one person, we are united, we are working with people who understand.” Ineza Cooperative manager*

All of the cooperative members are HIV positive, many are widows, and the group is mixed between perpetrators or family members of perpetrator, and survivors and their families. This is a result of the government policy to have no division within cooperatives.

*“We have learnt a lot of things from the government, we have to live in peace with everyone.” Ineza Cooperative member*

With regards to how this works in practice and how they resolve conflicts within their cooperative, the members stated that this has improved over time, but that it is a difficult process requiring strict enforcement in order to ensure that peace prevails.

*“Of course, we had a period where there was conflict between members, perpetrators and victims of what happened during the genocide, there was a lot of anger, resentment, that your family is still alive, but mine are no longer here, often because of the acts that someone in the cooperative or their family members have done, it was difficult, we cannot tolerate this conflict from either side, so they either forgive or they have to leave the cooperative.” Ineza Cooperative member*

The women also shared their understanding of peace and how their inner peace contributes to the peace of the country as a whole, highlighting as well that if they are at peace, then so is their cooperative. They also attested to taking it with them when going home from the cooperative, bringing their children up in homes that have peace and harmony. This has a continuous effect, as when the children go to schools, they will pass this on like a chain reaction. Members therefore stated that what they do on a cooperative level is very important for the peace and stability of the country as a whole.

*“We must help one another find peace in our hearts, to share our problems and unite. If someone comes into work and we can see pain and sadness in their faces and hearts, we don’t work, we help make their hearts happy and peaceful first. We sing, talk, pray and dance. This brings the mood of the members up. Sometimes the goal of our cooperative is not to make money, but to look after our members, first we must feel good.” Ineza Cooperative member*

The members mentioned receiving counselling support after the genocide, prior to joining Ineza, but that they now no longer need it as members of the cooperative, since they are able to work through their problems together. This change has not occurred overnight and has not always been an easy process. All members echoed that they found it difficult to believe that the genocide was over, and still lived in fear that they would be targeted next, or that the survivors would kill them in retaliation for what they as perpetrators had done to their family.

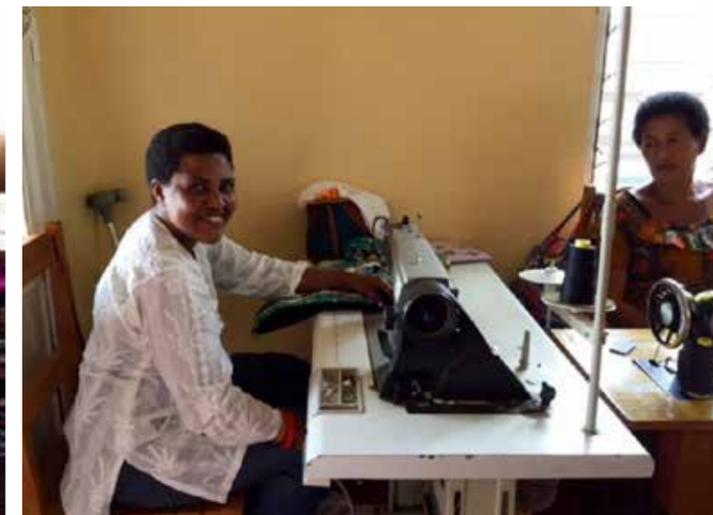
*“At the beginning I was traumatised, I lost all 5 of my children, it was difficult to deal with. They were brutally killed with machetes by neighbours and friends that I trusted. In the early days I was physically here, but my mind could not comprehend what had happened, it was like I was killed with them. I was not a nice person. But over time I learnt to open up and share. The cooperative contributed to reconstruct my personality, now I feel good. I haven’t forgotten everything that happened to me and my family during the genocide, but slowly I am learning to live again.” Francine, Ineza Cooperative member*

Before the cooperative started, many members were alone, becoming orphans following the genocide, often taking care of other children whilst being either widows or not out of childhood themselves, and finding themselves in a female-headed household, responsible for looking after those who survived.

*“Being in a cooperative is a way to focus on other things rather than looking back on the conflict.” Josephine, Ineza Cooperative member*

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## Cooperative factor



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## Key learning points and challenges

Many of the women in the cooperative referred to it as a family, as well as a security net and support system. During the genocide and the period after it, they lost this sense of belonging, the notion that anyone else cared about them, or worse felt that others were out to get them. The cooperative has provided them with a safe space, a sanctuary where they can talk freely, share their problems, and know that someone will listen and understand, especially as others are often going through similar problems themselves, reinforced by the certainty that they will come together to support one another, no matter what their background as perpetrators or survivors.

*“It was difficult in the beginning, we didn’t want to share our problems, but we realised that it is important to be open, to share, to feel as a family [referring to the cooperative], preserving peace among us. It is important to gain peace on an individual level [referring to peace in their hearts, they talked about forgiveness, trust and solidarity]. Having peace on an individual level contributes to the peace of the other members of the cooperative.” Teres, Ineza Cooperative member*

The cooperative members shared examples of how they regularly look after each other’s children and support each other in paying school fees when parents cannot afford it. They also support each other in paying rent or for special events such as weddings, both financially and regarding the arrangements, giving the support that would normally have been provided by that member’s family.

Another key reason stated as a benefit to being in a cooperative was the ability to access training and funding which would not have been available to them as individuals. As a result of training, they have learned how to run their cooperative more successfully in terms of administration, governance and finance, which in turn has helped them to prevent conflict.

*“After the training we learnt to do book keeping and selling. We do what we can to keep a good cooperative. Every person knows how the cooperative runs now.” Ineza Cooperative member*

The cooperative members stated that they were touched that people from a long distance had helped them and that WE-ACTx had shown them real kindness at a time when they no longer believed in kindness. They therefore named the Cooperative Ineza, which in Kinyarwanda means kindness and hope. The cooperative’s wish is that such acts of kindness could be shared all over the world. Members were surprised about the extent to which their cooperative and the cooperative movement as a whole has contributed to peace and solidarity in Rwanda. This was not the reason they joined the cooperative, as they became members in order to make a living and provide for their families, as well as to relieve extreme loneliness. During this process they have broken down barriers between two groups of people, the

survivors and perpetrators along with their families, barriers so big and strong that they believed they would never be broken. But bit by bit, by having a common goal of alleviating poverty, they have been able to look to the future and work together. Through this, they have become friends and confided in one another.

One of the key challenges still facing the members is that their income is not sufficient to cover the responsibilities incumbent upon them in terms of paying for health care, school fees, food and rent. Many are in female-headed households and as such the only person financially able to look after their families. The members require further support with marketing, value addition and business management to improve their incomes so as to meet their basic needs.

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

### Background to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Following the break-up of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s<sup>24</sup>, Bosnia and Herzegovina descended into a situation of exacerbated tensions among various ethnic groups, resulting in a civil war lasting for more than three years (April 1992 - November 1995). In the wake of the war, society emerged fragmented, with a high number of displaced people, an economy destroyed and a severely damaged infrastructure. One of the most harrowing events of the Bosnian war was the massacre in Srebrenica (July 1995) where more than 8000 Muslim men were killed by Bosnian Serb troops in an act officially recognised in 2007 by the International Court of Justice in The Hague as a crime of genocide under international law, making it the most serious massacre carried out in Europe since the Second World War.

The administrative political structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a parliamentary democracy and the spoken language is Serbo-Croat. The population is approximately 4 million people, made up of 44% Bosnian, 31% Serbian-Bosnian, 17% Croatian-Bosnian, 7% others, roughly divided into 40% Muslims, 31% Orthodox, 15% Catholics, 4% Protestants. Since the end of the conflict, the economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been heavily dependent on loans from international donors rather than national private sector investment or local businesses.<sup>25</sup>

The dependence of Bosnia's rural communities on agriculture for their livelihoods meant that a key focus of the post-conflict period was agricultural sector reform.<sup>26</sup> The state expected farmers to play a role in organising, supporting and strengthening the sector, especially as in the aftermath of the war and the transition to peace, Bosnian society had a total lack of trusting relationships, either in relation to other people or to institutions.<sup>27</sup> However, the Bosnian government appeared to discount the cooperative model as a hangover from a socialist past, although it represented a useful way to organise individual farmers who did not have the capacity to access markets. There is a lack of reliable data on Bosnia's cooperative sector, and changes in the institutional and policy environment have been relatively recent. The General Law on Cooperatives<sup>28</sup> in Bosnia, adopted in 2003, was the first state level law on cooperatives to be enacted in the post-war period.

<sup>24</sup> See for more details, BBC News, Timeline: Break-up of Yugoslavia, 22 May 2006, Accessed 11 January 2019.

<sup>25</sup> International Monetary Fund (2016) News, 'Bosnia and Herzegovina: Turning the Economy Around' September 9, 2016, Accessed 08 February 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Milford Bateman and Sonja Novkovic (eds.) (2014) Review of International Cooperation, International Cooperative Alliance, 2014 Issue.

<sup>27</sup> UNDP (2009) 'The Ties That Bind: Social Capital in Bosnia and Herzegovina', National Human Development Report, UNDP.

<sup>28</sup> Cooperative Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina, General Law on Cooperatives, Sarajevo, February 2002.

### Background to the cooperative movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina

## Project

### Support for the constitution of multi-ethnic cooperatives in the Doboj area

## The Doboj area

The Doboj area is located in the Canton of Zenica-Doboj, on the border line of the "Separation Zone", an area that was heavily affected during the war and has a Bosnian majority. From the 1995 Dayton Agreement, Doboj has been divided into 4 distinct municipalities: Doboj, Doboj South, Doboj East and Usora; Doboj Municipality is part of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia and the others are part of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Each of these areas is heavily dependent on agricultural activity, which remains one of the main sectors of employment and an important source of income for the population. The geographical division, which is also divided between two different state entities (Republic and Federation), reveals a situation that is still strongly fragmented, where economic fragility is a regular part of daily life and the effects of the ethnic divisions from the civil war can still be felt. The local economy of the area is mainly based on family management systems, aimed at self-sufficiency and the local market, which is emblematic of the fact that the country remains poorly connected to global markets that and around half of food consumed is imported.

### Main SDGs covered:



**CEDP member involved:** Legacoop

**Project partners:** GVC – Gruppo di Volontariato Civile; Associations of farmers Trebava Kozuhe – Doboj, Zelena Polja – Doboj Jug, and Agro-Usora – Usora; Institute of Agriculture of Dobo – research and technical assistance institute of Doboj municipality; Boorea Cooperative; Legacoop – Association of cooperatives

**Country:** Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Sector:** Agriculture

**Key themes:** Inter-ethnic dialogue, Economic inclusion

**Category:** Post-conflict

**Objectives:** The project aims to improve the social and economic conditions of Doboj area sustaining agro-food cooperatives.

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## Programme description

The project aims to improve the social and economic conditions of Dobož area. The key partner on the ground for the project is Gruppo di Volontariato Civile (GVC)<sup>29</sup>, an Italian NGO focussing on human rights and sustainable development. Improvement is achieved by supporting multi-ethnic agri-food cooperatives through capacity-building, financial resources for investments and supporting the implementation of new cooperative legislation. The project's approach aims to normalise the post-conflict environment by creating spaces for exchange and cooperation among cooperative members belonging to different ethnic groups.

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## Cooperative contribution to peace

The analysis of the situation in Dobož highlighted that the growth of the cooperative sector in the area was correlated to the improvement of the social and economic conditions of the population. One of the key goals of the project was to set up consortia in order to develop a dialogue and inter-ethnic exchange between groups and individuals, to encourage the process of normalisation that had already begun in the country and overcome the mistrust between people. The introduction of dialogue mechanisms is one clear way that the cooperative sector can contribute.

*“During the war there were many problems, this disrupted the trust among people, it was very challenging to recreate this trust among people living in the same territory.” GVC Headquarters (HQ) worker*

Transforming associations into cooperatives was accompanied by preparatory work and the development of activities that aimed to support people in the Dobož area's agricultural and production activities through a micro-credit system that generates a revolving fund for members. Supported by a market study, the fund has supported 60 families to set up activities in the agricultural or livestock sector. However, creating the right conditions for peaceful coexistence can be a challenge and a long-term commitment.

*“The process is very long. Seven years of activities [...] you definitely cannot say that all problems are solved. Some ethnic groups were at war, it's a huge thing, but they did start to speak to each other, recognize each other, see that they were doing something of interest and not to refuse since the beginning the opportunity for dialogue, exchange and future business together. This was a result in terms of peacebuilding.” GVC HQ worker*

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<sup>29</sup> For more information see GVC (Gruppo di Volontariato Civile) at <http://www.gvc-italia.org/>

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## Cooperative factor

When promoting the establishment of an agricultural consortium comprised of three cooperatives, it was important to create the right conditions for this to happen, whilst simultaneously not forcing integration to happen too quickly. Therefore, the approach was to place the autonomy in the hands of the three cooperatives, according to a timeline that they deemed appropriate. A network of exchanges and knowledge was supported and promoted with the aim of developing possible commercial outlets for products, whilst exchanging with other international cooperatives, especially Italian cooperatives, in particular with the support of the Boorea Cooperative of Reggio Emilia.<sup>30</sup> This approach was also supported through the use of new IT and telematic systems, distance training courses, tutoring, internships, visits to international trade fairs, as well as through specific training conducted by international experts. Thanks to training and study visits, and the support of the microcredit programme, some cooperative farmers were able to introduce innovative changes to their business. Ultimately, the shared goal of running a successful business and meeting member's economic needs by providing them with a sustainable income has the potential to transcend the previous dynamics of division.

*“To overcome division and overcome conflict, all of us want to make good business because we want to escape from poverty, if we are together, we can manage better.” GVC HQ worker*

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## Key learning points and challenges

The process of transforming three associations into cooperatives was very challenging due to a range of factors, such as a lack of proper cooperative legislation, coupled with a cultural resistance to the cooperative model that has its roots in previous abuse of the organisational structure by the prior communist and socialist regimes. In addition, a lack of an entrepreneurial approach in a number of associations meant that the cooperatives had been increasingly managed along political lines rather than as commercial enterprises. Another issue was a lack of cooperation between different associations, which was compounded by a division upon ethnic lines, despite the overarching benefits and business opportunities that could be gained from cross-collaboration. This meant that significant background work was required to build trust between different groups and to encourage people to see that many of the issues they were facing were the same whatever group they belong to.

*“I think a lot of work should be done to build trust – create a cooperative, that we can bring people together, to show they have the common problems and for them to support each other, even if it's not in a formalised way in the beginning.” GVC HQ worker*

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<sup>30</sup> For more information see the Boorea Cooperative's website: <https://www.boorea.it/>

The main success of the project was to create a flexible and progressive process for the formation of cooperatives, so that some farmers who were more business-oriented could join immediately, whilst others could remain members of the associations with the possibility to join the cooperative when they were ready to do so. Two of the three cooperatives were completely operational and sustainable at the end of the project. In addition to the trainings with participants of different nationalities and ethnicities at the beginning of the programme, exchanges among different ethnic groups in the cooperatives increasingly developed, thereby promoting peace building and overcoming discrimination.

*“Even though they were in different coops, some members were exchanging ideas between cooperatives.” GVC HQ worker*

Despite some conflicts between Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian farmers that arose during the project implementation, this provided an opportunity to bring to light any misunderstandings and to find a positive way forwards, leading to enhanced trust and peaceful coexistence.

## Project

### Main SDGs covered:



## Programme description

## Frutti di Pace

**CEDP member involved:** Legacoop

**Project partners:** Coop Alleanza 3.0; Coop Lombardia; Coop Liguria; Nova Coop; Coop Reno; Cooperativa Agricola INSIEME

**Country:** Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Sector:** Agro-processing

**Key themes:** Women’s empowerment, Inter-ethnic dialogue, Economic inclusion

**Category:** Post-conflict

**Objectives:** To rebuild the local agricultural economy, create jobs for returning refugees.

The Cooperativa Agricola Insieme was founded in 2003 in Bratunac (10 kilometres from Srebrenica), on the banks of the Drina river, on the border of Bosnia and Herzegovina with Serbia, by a group of women who understood that job creation was the key to reviving their territory. The cooperative transforms small berry fruits grown by local families into jams and nectars, named Frutti di Pace (Fruits of Peace). Large consumer cooperatives support this work and the wider businesses, selling and promoting their products, which in addition to their nutritional value, can demonstrate the positive value of cooperation. Currently, the cooperative, made up predominantly of women, and some men, gives work to 500 families in the territory, engaged in the production and processing of forest fruits. It has enabled many displaced people to return to the area, making Bratunac the area with the highest return of refugees in Bosnia after the war (roughly 30%). The innovative and entrepreneurial project was mostly conceived and carried out by women, some of whom are also victims of the conflict in a number of ways.

*“Horrors such as ethnic rape make it all the more important that this is a project of almost exclusively female entrepreneurship.”  
Coop Lombardia HQ worker*

In the cooperative, people work together, without distinction of ethnicity or religion, without asking whether the producer or the worker next to them is Muslim, Orthodox, Bosnian, Serb-Bosnian or Croat-Bosnian.

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## Cooperative contribution to peace

The women decided to establish the cooperative in Bratunac, where at the time, almost twenty years after the end of the conflict, the number of returning refugees was very low. The members of the cooperative wanted to call it Zajedno (“Together”, in Bosnian), because that was the purpose: to work together, without ethnic or religious distinctions. However, the LAs did not agree with this name, considering it too difficult to overcome ethnic divides. Therefore, it was decided that the Italian name of the Cooperativa Agricola Insieme would be maintained as an alternative.

*Cooperativa Insieme is a small miracle, and I hope it can be an example of what consumer cooperation can do internationally. Projects [are] born on the territory and supported by international cooperation because they deserve it, and when you see a territory that is alive again, I believe you can be proud of the work you are doing.” Coop Lombardia HQ worker*

At the very beginning, the first activity carried out by the cooperative was to collect and cultivate the typical forest fruits of the area. The berries were then frozen and primarily exported to the European market, especially in Germany and Northern Europe. Given the low margin obtained by this type of processing, the cooperative later decided to focus on the transformation of the natural product, and began to produce jam and fruit nectars. With this, the “Fruits of Peace” were born. In 2013, the products were then sold outside Bosnia and Herzegovina, including by large consumer cooperatives in Italy, and supporting as well as promoting the values, ethics and story behind the products further helped to increase their sales.

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## Cooperative factor

The aim of the Cooperativa Agricola Insieme was to make the first steps towards a lasting path of peace, and the cooperative has made great progress in overcoming the mistrust that was left over from the war. The agricultural and processing work of the cooperative has made it possible for many refugees to return home and begin to overcome many of the issues of the past and to rebuild their communities.

*“The strength is the refusal of any difference: every head a vote, every person who works there is valued. Cooperativa Insieme organises training, not only to employees but also to families who are not directly involved but who produce things for the cooperative. They do not want people to buy the “Fruits of Peace” out of solidarity, but because they are good, they respect all European standards and have excellent organoleptic<sup>31</sup> properties.” Coop Lombardia HQ worker*

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<sup>31</sup> Organoleptic properties are defined as the qualities of food, water or other substances (such as cosmetics/drugs) that can be experienced via the senses, such as taste, sight, smell, and touch.

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## Key learning points and challenges

The technical set-up of the cooperative has been designed to create the maximum number of jobs possible (lids are closed manually, there are people who attach labels) so as to maximise the impact that the cooperative has for local jobs and prosperity.

By disseminating the values of work and cooperation, the cooperative makes it possible to restore a sustainable rural economy as well as achieving reconciliation, to overcome the divisions created by the war through the promotion of the values of peace and working together. One of the main success factors is the fact that the cooperative provides continuous training both to its employees and to the producers, a key cooperative principle. Sustainability is also a crucial feature of the cooperative, both in terms of organic production and in terms of the high quality of the products, derived from traditional Bosnian recipes.



## 1.2 Tackling inequalities between populations

### COLOMBIA

#### Background to the conflict in Colombia

The armed conflict in Colombia began in the 1960s, firstly between the Colombian State and far-left guerrillas (FARC, ELN, EPL) passing through several cycles from the 1970s through right-wing paramilitary groups, drug cartels and criminal gangs. There were a variety of causes for the conflict, such as the weakness of the state, conflict over land ownership, disparity between rich and poor, and political persecution of civilians. This multilateral aspect of the conflictual panorama has been further complicated and aggravated by the imposing development of the narco-traffic. The conflict was characterised by a high degree of atrocity and violence, which in the period between 1958 and 2012 alone resulted in more than 8.5 million victims, of which about 270 000 died, 170 000 disappeared, 11 000 were victims of torture, 38 000 kidnapped, 26 000 victims of sexual violence and more than 7 400 000 displaced persons.<sup>32</sup>

A peace agreement was signed in 2016 between President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón and Timoleón Jiménez, commander of the Central Military Staff of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army (FARC-EP), as a result of many years' negotiation beginning with the Law of Victims and Land Restitution in 2011. The Colombian peace negotiations began in Havana, Cuba in 2012 and have had higher than average women's participation, which resulted in formal recognition of the crucial role that women play in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding. The peace agreement contains a series of measures to promote wellbeing and good living ("bienestar y buen vivir") in communities, including measures to improve health, education, quality of life and agricultural production systems, in particular promoting indigenous production and solidarity economy approaches in line with the SDGs.

<sup>32</sup> Acknowledging discrepancies between different sources available, these figures are taken from the Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas (Unit for Comprehensive Care and Reparation for Victims), Government Agency, Colombia.

#### Background to the cooperative movement in Colombia

According to the data collected by the Confederación de Cooperativas de Colombia (Confecoop), 6.1 million people are associated with cooperatives, equivalent to nearly 13% of the total population, with assets worth \$38.7 billion.<sup>33</sup> The role of cooperatives in the peacebuilding process has both been strongly promoted by the Colombian cooperative movement and recognised in the peace agreement. In 2016, cooperative members gathered at the XV National Cooperative Congress "Cooperatives for Colombia 2016-2020. Our contribution for Peace!" and made a declaration that committed them to work together to promote "socio-economic development, reconciliation and the reconstruction of the social fabric of the country; to continue cultivating a culture of solidarity and cooperation [...] working for the transformation of the country and the consolidation of a peaceful and inclusive society to move towards equity; to continue promoting the construction of trust within the movement".

Moreover, within the final peace agreement<sup>34</sup>, the point "Towards a New Colombian Field: Integral Rural Reform" provides stimuli to the solidarity and cooperative economy with the objective of strengthening the capacity of small producers to access and trade goods and services. The agreement also specifies that the national government of Colombia will create and implement the "national plan for the promotion of the cooperative and social economy".

<sup>33</sup> Confecoop (2017) 'Cooperativas: Empresas para la gestión social y económica, Desempeño de las Cooperativas 2016'.

<sup>34</sup> See 'Acuerdo Final para la Terminación del Conflicto y la Construcción de una Paz Estable y Duradera Duradera' (Final Agreement for the End of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace), 24 November 2016.

## Project

# Promotion of local economic activity to alleviate causes and consequences of internal displacement in Colombia

### Main SDGs covered:



**CEDP member involved:** DGRV  
**Project partners:** DGRV (German Cooperative and Raiffeisen Confederation); Financial Cooperative CFA, Savings and credit cooperatives COOGRANADA y Cofisam; ASOCOPH (Regional Cooperative Association); CONSUMO (Consumer Cooperative); Gentytec (Agricultural technical assistance cooperative)  
**Country:** Colombia  
**Sector:** Finance, Agriculture  
**Key themes:** Migration, Inequalities  
**Category:** Post-conflict  
**Objectives:** The project supports the integration into the labour market of internally displaced persons and those at risk of displacement by vocational guidance and access to financial services.

## Programme description

The aim of the project is to strengthen the cooperative infrastructure in the country and increase local people's access to financial services through cooperatives, by offering guidance and targeted training. To achieve this, DGRV works with existing savings and credit cooperatives and other cooperative institutions that are present even in the most marginalised regions, and are therefore ideally placed to provide their services to internally displaced persons.

DGRV works by establishing a close and complementary collaboration with cooperative partner organisations in the target regions, such as credit cooperatives, cooperative foundations and associations, and is therefore able to implement the planned activities swiftly and effectively. The programme aims to reach both internally displaced persons as well as those at risk from out-migration due to a lack of local economic prospects.

## Cooperative contribution to peace

While the project was not labelled as a peacebuilding one per se, it definitely brought a positive impact in that regard. It has created solidarity between people, helped to re-integrate ex-combatants, and assisted in the reconstruction of villages, enabling people to buy materials and agricultural processing equipment, providing them with education and training, and boosting local infrastructure. As a result, at least 270 families participate permanently in the working groups, and at least 300 persons are acquired as customers of a cooperative and make use of their services to a considerable extent (microcredits, private savings).

Part of the success of the programme resides in choosing the right type of organisational structure for the activity through an assessment of what would work well in specific environments.

*“Cooperatives can be the best solution - it doesn't mean they have to be - in many cases they are” Philipp Schneider, DGRV Project Co-ordinator*

## Cooperative factor

Until today, cooperatives have not played a major role in the Colombian economic system, and particularly not in the financial sector. DGRV benefits from a long-standing network of partners and cooperatives in Colombia, and is keen to emphasise the importance of a functioning financial system and economic development as key factors for peaceful societies and sustainable development. Cooperatives have an inherent interest in participating in programmes that aim to strengthen the local economy, as cooperatives' success is dependent on the success and standing of their members.

The key components of the programme regarding financial capacity building and vocational training play an important role in both preventing displacement and supporting the reintegration of internally displaced persons in the country, thus supporting the social peace in the region. Cooperative networks also have an inherent interest in strengthening and promoting local value chains, as this



is a prerequisite for locally-based savings and credit cooperatives to benefit from economically active new members and reinvest possible profits for a long-term perspective. There is also a strong focus on capitalising on each person's skills and building trust through these networks.

*"We have developed a methodology where we generate and strengthen trust among the members of the networks, which make up the cooperatives and producer organisations. What are we looking for there? To focus on the human side of things. Before doing business or making financial alliances, we seek to strengthen the relationship between these people, and to know what skills they have."* Viviana Rúa Ortega, Project Manager, Fundación CFA

## Key learning points and challenges

Many of the challenges have centred on the presence of armed groups that persist in rural areas, which sometimes affects the ability to run activities. The very isolated locations with poor road infrastructure and lacking market access can struggle with commercialisation of their enterprises' products.

However, DGRV is confident that sustainable local development and reconstruction of the social fabric can be achieved by supporting people at risk of displacement, through consultancy to start up activities, productive lending, and the promotion of specific value chains and access to local markets. In addition, equipping the local savings and credit cooperatives with modern IT instruments and programmes provides them the tools to work well in a competitive environment. Finally, DGRV considers the partnership with local cooperatives as essential to achieve a tangible and sustainable impact with their activities in Colombia.



## Project

## AGRICOOP Colombia

### Main SDGs covered:



**CEDP member involved:** Coopermondo  
**Project partners:** Coopermondo – Confcooperative; Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA); Confcoop Colombia  
**Country:** Colombia  
**Sector:** Agriculture, Aquaculture  
**Key themes:** Sustainable tourism, Gender, Reducing inequalities  
**Category:** Post-conflict  
**Objectives:** AGRICOOP Colombia is a long-term programme that Coopermondo implements in the country in order to contribute to the development of a cooperative and solidarity economy promoting social inclusion and the valorisation of local territories within the framework of the peace agreements.

## Programme description

The project started with a pilot project (2015-2016) "Agricoop Colombia – The Italian Cooperative Model for Social Inclusion", funded by the Italo-Latin American Institute and developed by Coopermondo in partnership with Confcoop Colombia, among others to strengthen the regional offices of Confcoop Cauca and Confcoop Valle. The project aimed to create a trust network among producers engaged in five different sectors (quinoa, coffee, panela<sup>35</sup>, fruits and aquaculture) in the Cauca region. The project brought together 60 small producers, including 36 women, representatives of 34 agricultural organisations in the territory, and indirectly benefited over 6000 people.

## Cooperative contribution to peace

One of the main results besides equipping people with new skills is to have created, through the cooperative model, solid and trusting relationships among people living in one of the most dangerous regions of Colombia, which has been particularly affected by narco-traffic. One participant explained the benefits of cooperative trainings on members' knowledge of the cooperative model.

*"Before the trainings we knew cooperatives only by name. For us, cooperativism was only linked to the issue of taxes. Within the cooperative there are groups of Misak, Nasa, the ancestral people of Ambalo and Quizgó, and therefore conflicts are*

<sup>35</sup> Panela refers to a type of whole cane sugar found in Colombia as well as other parts of Central and South America.

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## Cooperative factor

*common, but there is a constant dialogue: the cooperative form favours unity.” Asenciòn, Cooperative member, AGRICOOP*

In addition to the direct result of job creation for unemployed young people, who would otherwise have been at risk of becoming involved in the conflict, the setting-up of cooperatives has in general increased the standard of living, thus preventing the population involved from becoming victims of the war.

The cooperative model proved a great opportunity for the people to unite their strengths and democratically manage their business, thus building their own organisation and limiting the abuse of power that often occurs in profit-driven companies. It has also given women the opportunity to challenge gender roles and get involved in entrepreneurial activities in their own right.

*“We can’t just stand around waiting for our husbands to support us.” Asenciòn, Cooperative member, AGRICOOP*

In 2017, the project helped to create in the Cauca region a secondary cooperative of indigenous trout producers, based on their own values and principles such as the respect for nature. Aquaculture in the territory has been a key growth activity in the last 10 years, receiving support from the government to encourage an alternative to drug crops. As observed by members, involvement with the cooperative is not only about improving agricultural production but plays a bigger part in other issues – in line for instance with the principle of concern for community.

*“There are women who work with onions and quinoa, others with panela. But the cooperative also deals with other problems, such as the prevention of family violence: even if they are not specialised in psychology, the aim is that the cooperative has an all-round role in helping the community.” Asenciòn, Cooperative member, AGRICOOP*

One of the key learning points has been to connect people and build trust within the groups affected by the war; people who did not know each other despite being neighbours. This has consequently brought people closer together and encouraged business cooperation, including through the use of group activities in meetings to help them realise that the problems they face are often the same, even whilst they may be from different indigenous communities. In this sense, cooperatives have been instrumental in fostering dialogue and unity.

Special attention has also been paid to reinforcing the confidence and self-esteem of members, who have often experienced significant hardships in their lives.

*“Cooperatives maintain our identity, they maintain our culture.” Asenciòn, Cooperative member, AGRICOOP*

Another crucial point to bear in mind is that all groups and individuals will have a different timescale when it comes to starting up their cooperative. Some are ready within a month, while others take a year or more to build the trust within the group before being in a position to commit. Understanding the unique cultural dynamics of each location proves fundamental to successfully work with the people. One challenge faced by this project has been the fact that the notion of “cooperative” has been promoted by the FARC, giving it a political connotation that could prove detrimental for the perception of the public towards the work of the project. Project stakeholders also mentioned the need for further capacity building on leadership, the cooperative principles, communication and marketing, as well as food security.

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## Key learning points and challenges



## IVORY COAST

### Background to the situation in Ivory Coast

Despite relative stability since independence, Ivory Coast has suffered more recently from civil conflicts that were mainly driven by ethnic rivalry, as well as being influenced by political and economic interests. In 1999 Ivory Coast witnessed a coup d'état and later experienced two civil wars, the first between 2002 and 2007 and the second between 2010 and 2011. The civil conflicts caused severe damage and the country was deeply divided. In recent times, the economy has been largely driven by agriculture, for which the exports of coffee and cocoa are the primary crops. The case discussed here focusses on the Ivorian fishing sector and international trade.

The Ivory Coast does not have a very developed fishing industry, and in spite of its strong potential in terms of production, it has never created an important fishing fleet. For this reason, the fishing industry operating in its waters is mainly run by vessels from industrialised countries (such as the EU and China), while the local fishing activities are dominated by thousands of artisanal fishermen from Ghana, who have permanently settled around the main ports of Ivory Coast or migrate there for the fishing season. Despite the dominance of Ghanaian fishermen, the trading of the artisanal production is in the hands of Ivorian traders, either men (so called "boxiers" trading high value fish) or women (called "mareyeuses" trading mainly at local level). These traders (men and women) have a certain level of control over the Ghanaian fishermen as they pre-finance their fishing campaign (fuel, food, etc.), and recoup this investment through the catches.

In order to facilitate the organisation and control of the artisanal fishery, which was mainly based on the informal economy, the government has incentivised the organisation of fishermen into associations that have then been turned into cooperatives, following the approval in 2010 of the Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa (OHADA) Uniform Act on Cooperative enterprises<sup>36</sup>. Being member of a cooperative is compulsory for benefiting from the fuel incentives, and for obtaining fishing licenses. This has resulted in a situation where at least a certain number of key positions in the cooperatives are dominated by Ivorians, largely due to practical reasons such as Ghanaians not speaking the level of French required to understand official documents. Therefore, in the fishing cooperatives of San Pedro, the leaders are Ivorian, and the fishermen almost all from Ghana, with a low level of either awareness on the cooperative functioning or of participation in the decision making processes.

<sup>36</sup> See OHADA 'Uniform Act on Cooperatives', Unofficial Translations, 15 December 2010 in Lomé (Togo), Entry into force: May 15, 2011.

### Background to the cooperative movement in Ivory Coast

The first cooperatives were established in Ivory Coast by the French colonial authorities in the 1930s<sup>37</sup> for developing the export of cash crops such as coffee, cocoa and bananas, and today Ivory Coast remains a significant exporter of cocoa beans. The process of creating and reforming cooperatives in the fishing sector in Ivory Coast was mainly driven by the government following the OHADA Act. The National Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Societies and Actors in Côte d'Ivoire (FENASCOOP-CI) was created in June 2016 by all artisanal fisheries actors in Ivory Coast, composed of two large unions, the Union of Cooperative Societies and Actors from the Artisanal Fisheries Sector in Ivory Coast (USCAPA-CI) and Union of Women Cooperative Societies working in Fisheries in Côte d'Ivoire (USCOFPCI).

<sup>37</sup> Shaffer, J. (1999). Historical Dictionary of the Cooperative Movement. Scarecrow Press, Folkestone.

## Project

# Upgrading SPS standards and value chains to facilitate access to international markets for artisanal fishermen of West Africa

### Main SDGs covered:



**CEDP member involved:** Legacoop  
**Project partners:** UNIDO (leader); Haliéus (NGO for international cooperative development of Legacoop); Government Ministries  
**Countries:** Senegal, Guinea, Mauritania & Ivory Coast  
**Sectors:** Fishery, International trade  
**Key themes:** Socioeconomic inequalities  
**Category:** Conflict prevention  
**Objectives:** To improve the integration of artisanal fishermen into the international value chain.

## Programme description

The project is funded by the Standard Trade Development Facility Programme<sup>38</sup> of the WTO and focusses on facilitating access to international markets (regional or intercontinental) for artisanal fishermen, helping them to benefit from the potential revenues deriving from international trade. To this end, the project supports fishermen to overcome the constraints that they face in this process, such as having the capacity to fulfil international standards in terms of food safety (SPS measures<sup>39</sup>), as well as the capacity to collectively organise production and marketing activities (through cooperative enterprises) to be able to reach the markets. For the pilot action in San Pedro all of the five local cooperatives active in the fishery sector were involved, while at national level the project involved the national association of fishery cooperatives FENASCOOP-CI.

## Cooperative contribution to peace

The balance of economic power between the different actors of the value chain is an element of potential socio-economic conflict between the Ghanaian artisanal fishermen and the Ivoirians, who were able to access better incomes through marketing and distribution. This was in part due to the fact that the Ghanaian fishermen were not able to

<sup>38</sup> See the FAO, OIE, the World Bank, WHO and the WTO 'Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF)' available at:

<https://www.tfafacility.org/standards-and-trade-development-facility-stdf>

<sup>39</sup> See WTO, Sanitary and phytosanitary measures, Trade Topics, Accessed 08 February 2019.

access the Francophone documentation so as to take a significant role in managing the bureaucratic requirements.

*"There was no link with peacebuilding at the beginning, but then we found some situations where there were minor conflicts, this was the framework of how the project came about." Legacoop/Haliéus HQ Worker*

The project supported the cooperative enterprises (aside from the technical fishery aspects) by improving the awareness of the managers and members on cooperative values and principles, and on the OHADA norms and governance procedures. Therefore, the members became aware of their rights and duties, and gained a better awareness of cooperative managers' roles and responsibilities (voting, maximum duration of mandates in governance bodies, open door policy, rebates on the profits, etc.), while cooperative managers became more aware of how to respond to members' needs. This has empowered the Ghanaian fishermen at the social level within the cooperative and in society, reducing the social and power imbalances.

## Cooperative factor

Through better awareness of how cooperative enterprises have the potential to improve planning collective business strategies, members were also able to increase their bargaining power and define entrepreneurial activities that reduced their dependence on other actors. This has further contributed to reducing the economic imbalances within the cooperatives. The cooperative model also brought to the fore their potential to offer ongoing training and development to members, and cooperatives were used as a tool to work towards fully integrating the Ghanaians into the local community through acquiring better knowledge of French and a better understanding of local trading processes and practices. Also, by bringing members from the individual cooperatives together to access training, this helped these cooperatives to understand how they could complement each other's activities or form partnerships to benefit from working together.

*"Since this was all done together, it was clear for many of them that for their investment proposals they needed to collaborate, as they were active in different steps of the value chain." Legacoop/Haliéus HQ Worker*

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## Key learning points and challenges

There was a need to create more awareness around what a cooperative is, how it operates and the members' role in the governance, as well as how it could benefit people, as this understanding was previously lacking. This helped members understand their potential role within it in terms of increasing agency.

*"Once they understand the potential of the cooperative and once they know and are more aware about the cooperative, being able to know how it actually works, because they learnt what the bodies and the rules are." Legacoop/Haliéus HQ Worker*

The conflict of economic interests between the different actors clearly represents a main risk to be faced in these types of actions. For this reason, it is critical to have a wider vision over the balance of power all along the value chain of the sector. Nevertheless, the definition of common strategies that could be of benefit in the long term to the whole sector, can contribute to ensuring the positive attitude of all actors.

*"Specifically referring to economic contrasts, cooperatives can help to not only solve some economic contrasts, but make it clear, and make people aware of their potential and conditions. Not only in solving [their economic conditions] but just to give people a clear idea of it." Legacoop/Haliéus HQ Worker*

As a result of the project, 4 out of the 5 local cooperatives actually reviewed their statutes, internal regulations and practical procedures, in order to be in line with the OHADA norms. They also developed business plans for the cooperatives, which were shared within the membership and followed by internal discussions. In addition, due to the fact that the Ghanaian members are now more active in the life of the cooperatives, this has created a more open dialogue with the LAs (mainly the port authority) for solving their issues, improving the coordination of natural resource management, as well as increasing the trust and understanding of the rules and how they are applied.

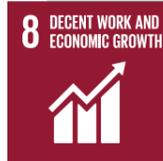
## 2. CONTRIBUTING TO PEACE BY FOSTERING DECENT WORK AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

This section demonstrates that providing decent work and opportunities for communities to take an active role in managing local resources can help to alleviate ongoing conflict, as well as create opportunities to strengthen communities in a post-conflict setting.

Our case studies show that, as well as improving livelihood options through collective production, processing, marketing and finance, cooperatives not only provide improved working conditions, but they also increase the capacity of families to better educate their children and rebuild their community.

In addition, by providing opportunities for people to come together to deal with conflicts over natural resources, particularly where they have little strength or voice as individuals, cooperatives increase the chance of communities to access resources more sustainably and to campaign to influence policy to protect their rights.





## 2.1 Providing decent work and inclusion opportunities

### LEBANON

#### Background to the situation in Lebanon

Lebanon has been the subject of ongoing conflict for a number of decades<sup>40</sup>, both within the country and also as a result of conflict in neighbouring states. When examining the civil society in Lebanon, it can be characterised as under-representative of certain social groups as well as having high levels of corruption and weak dialogue amongst inter-faith groups. This is perceived as preventing the development of an active, inclusive and empowered society with healthy levels of civic engagement, which consequently negatively impacts on essential service delivery. There is widespread discrimination against women, as the legal framework mirrors a patriarchal, sectarian socio-political order discouraging women's participation and engagement in a constructive and collaborative citizenry. Lebanon currently hosts a huge number of both Palestinian and Syrian refugees in its territory, which further contributes to a decline in internal stability and security. There is evidence of growing prejudice and discrimination against Syrians<sup>41</sup>, and therefore many CSOs in Lebanon are working towards promoting a peaceful coexistence and conflict management techniques.

#### Background to the cooperative movement in Lebanon

The Abadih Farmer cooperative was the first cooperative to be established in Lebanon in 1937, and as of 1971, there were 45 registered cooperatives in the country. By 2017, this number has grown to 1238, with fairly even distribution across the country, but with a higher concentration in the South and fewer in other regions where intensive agricultural production on medium and large agricultural estates is practiced. 50% of cooperatives are active in the agricultural sector, and legally, no more than one cooperative with the same purpose can be established in the same village. There are estimates that only one third of registered cooperatives are active, and

<sup>40</sup> See for more details, BBC News, Lebanon profile - Timeline, 25 April 2018, Accessed 08 February 2019.

<sup>41</sup> Maha Yahya, Jean Kassir, Khalil el-Hariri (2016) Carnegie Middle East Centre 'Unheard Voices: What Syrian Refugees Need to Return Home', Section Two: Policy Framework for Refugees in Lebanon and Jordan.

that many cooperatives were formed as vehicles for receiving funds and equipment from the Ministry of Agriculture and international donors. The Lebanese agricultural sector faces many challenges, and the weakness of Lebanese cooperatives has been often mentioned as one of the factors hampering growth and development of the agricultural and agro food sectors.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> ILO (2018) 'The Cooperative Sector in Lebanon: What Role? What Future?', International Labour Organization, Regional Office for Arab States, Beirut.

## Project

### Main SDGs covered:



## Aamal

**CEDP member involved:** Legacoop  
**Project partners:** AVSI; Oxfam Italia; LAMA  
**Countries:** Lebanon and Jordan  
**Sector:** Employment  
**Key themes:** Gender, Refugees, Reducing inequalities  
**Category:** Conflict prevention and mitigation  
**Objectives:** The project aims to contribute to improving living conditions for the most vulnerable refugees, in particular Syrian refugees, as well as the local population in Lebanon and Jordan through strengthening work and employment skills.

## Programme description

The project is managed by cooperative organisation LAMA at the regional level, in Lebanon and Jordan. Good knowledge of the wider geographical context assures that the project is able to ensure that the needs of the Syrian, Palestinian and host community's living conditions are met from the perspective of moving "from vulnerability to resilience". The project aims to improve the capacity of the most vulnerable groups, such as women and young people, to access work in Lebanon and Jordan, and improve the social inclusion of Syrian and Palestinian refugees. It also aims to improve teachers' capacity to train and increase their mentorship skills, as well as enhance the capacity of the public and private sector to absorb the additional workforce.

## Cooperative contribution to peace

By providing cooperative responses, including employment opportunities and skills training for refugee communities, as well as increasing the availability of jobs, the project helps to alleviate potential conflict that may arise between refugees and host communities.

*"When you have to share the same place...and when you maybe feel that others take a job that could have been yours... it's very important to suspend prejudices and start to listen to each other, and build opportunities to cooperate, to collaborate, and find new ways of answering to problems that were there before." LAMA HQ worker*

One of the other key factors in preventing conflict is ensuring there are opportunities for all different communities to get involved, including both the host and refugee communities, so that one community is

not considered to be benefiting over another or given preferential treatment.

*"I think that the key is that the process should not just touch one of the actors, but rather we have to be in this adventure together. If it's just one way, trust is not something that can flourish in this situation." LAMA HQ worker*

## Cooperative factor

By providing a joint approach to solving shared problems, cooperatives have the potential to encourage people to work collectively to come up with solutions to their everyday need for employment and income.

*"We empower people to have entrepreneurial 'dreams' but together. Starting from the opportunities of common problems. How can we come together to start something that can bring us money, jobs etc. Even if it was not the focus of the project itself." LAMA HQ worker*

The very action of spending time together as a group and sharing experiences means that it strengthens the opportunity to create cooperative businesses, whilst building confidence that probably would not occur to the same degree if these activities were pursued individually.

*"It was powerful to see how the women go out from the house to go to the trainings, to start to talk to each other, to share recipes to cook, they realised they were like sisters. These examples are the ones that make us say that the project has had an impact also on their approach and they started to feel like they could cooperate." LAMA HQ worker*



## Key learning points and challenges

By delivering an integrated programme for the training of mentors, LAMA has used a mentorship approach to support the growth and development of soft skills, which has given mentors the ability to guide less experienced people during their work experience by building trust and modelling positive behaviours. This means that people have the opportunity to be supported by people they can relate to, and that they are able to advance at their own pace, using their own judgement and developing their own abilities.

*“It’s important when working with vulnerable groups to recognise their needs and work closely with them, without giving too many instructions, but to create the space for their potential to emerge.” LAMA HQ worker*

One of the most important learning points was to highlight the relevance of listening skills for all stakeholders involved, to ensure that people are able to fully appreciate the needs of others and take these into consideration to work together effectively.

*“I would say listening skills are the base of all good relationships between groups and between states. If we don’t teach children in school how to listen to each other, it is very difficult to teach adults, we have to make a bigger job of it.” LAMA HQ worker*



## Project

## YallayaShabHUB

Main SDGs covered:



**CEDP member involved:** Legacoop  
**Project Partners:** LAMA Development and Cooperation Agency; Oxfam Italia; DPNA (Lebanese CSO); Union des Municipalités de Jezzine (Local Authority)  
**Country:** Lebanon  
**Sector:** Employment  
**Key themes:** Inequalities, Youth inclusion, Political participation  
**Category:** Post-conflict  
**Objectives:** To reinforce civil society capacity to engage in multi-stakeholder partnerships with LAs and the private sector. To promote social innovation and job creation initiatives to create socio-economic opportunities and empowerment of vulnerable groups. To create a more inclusive community development through enabling a supportive environment for state-citizen-CSO engagement.

## Programme description

The project, conducted by cooperative organisation LAMA in partnership with NGO Oxfam Italy, aimed to reinforce the capacity of civil society members to become active and engaged citizens in their communities, through creating a space for dialogue with the Union des Municipalités de Jezzine (Union of Jezzine’s Municipalities) to increase local collaboration and stimulate socio-economic development. A participatory, bottom-up, and community-based approach was used to organise capacity building processes, in order to empower and support civil society stakeholders, as well as formal and informal groups, to engage in the design and implementation of community development initiatives. During the project, a multi-stakeholder community resource centre (the Jezzine Hub) was formed and became a focal point for the community. This created networks and partnerships amongst CSOs, LAs and citizens of the Jezzine region, which supported the implementation of events, initiatives and training opportunities, while providing services and promoting social innovation as well as entrepreneurial initiatives so as to prevent socio-economic marginalisation of vulnerable groups. Key themes of the project cover active citizenship, youth participation in politics, youth and peace culture, participation and negotiation, youth and human rights, advocacy and campaigning, entrance to enterprise, and dealing with conflicts.

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## Cooperative contribution to peace

By creating a cooperative co-working space aimed at the promotion of social innovation practices and the development of social enterprise, based on the model and methodologies of the first Impact Hub which opened in London in 2005, the YallayaShabHUB is part of a network of 100 Hubs worldwide.<sup>43</sup> By adapting the community building methodologies and the organisational model of the Hub to the local context of Jezzine, as well as of facilitating the networking of the local initiative with other Hubs in Italy and the Middle East, it has helped to strengthen the culture of peace by fostering dialogue and offering employment and economic opportunities to vulnerable groups, which has a 'stabilising' effect on the local situation.

*"We have a space in the community, which is available for the community to use. Now it exists and the community is using it, actually in an active way, suggesting and organising events by themselves." Oxfam Italy Field worker*

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## Cooperative factor

Whilst the project did not directly engage with cooperatives in Lebanon, the movement's values and principles were reflected in the work led by Italian cooperative LAMA, and it did provide a good illustration of how cooperatives can work well with other CSO actors, such as NGOs, as well as demonstrate that a range of different types of enterprises are available opportunities.

*"In this sense, we set an example as a coop, talking about business models as a good example for the young people." LAMA HQ worker*

Another key success of the initiative was in developing the capacity of the young people to take control of their own project and to play an active role in decision-making, which is also consistent with the member-driven approach of cooperatives.

*"We decided to let the young people decide and have autonomy over decisions [...] they grew a lot, their mindset completely changed in terms of desire to be active in the community, and also their skills really improved." Oxfam Italy Field worker*

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## Key learning points and challenges

Among other obstacles, project workers pointed out how difficult it was to engage with local cooperatives on the ground, despite how relevant their potential contribution would have been, as they would have diverging priorities and not be prepared to fully participate in driving or leading the process. It was also difficult to build up the credibility and legitimacy of cooperatives due to historical mistrust of the sector, which had not been alleviated by past attempts from the

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<sup>43</sup> For more information, see: <http://www.impacthub.net/>

government to promote the cooperative model.

Tailoring the Impact Hub model to a town in a rural area was also a learning process for LAMA and its partners, which required more time than initially planned in the proposal. One challenge was that the community members were not familiar with concepts such as social innovation and entrepreneurship. In addition, the main partners had to test the design at the start, to realise that its implementation necessitated a greater deal of flexibility, and tweaking the activities, as well as time to increase local buy-in.

Relations with key stakeholders and partners have improved all along the three years of the project, with the building of good linkages and the possibility of future collaborations, but this took serious long-term commitment to make sure people knew about the organisation and its work.

*"The problem was we started from scratch, the biggest problem was to position ourselves and getting us known with the beneficiaries. Mostly that people would know about and turn up at the events. Getting active participation was really difficult." Oxfam Italy Field worker*

# UGANDA

## Background to the conflict in Uganda

The insurgency in Northern Uganda which began in the late 1980s has been one of the longest running conflicts in Africa, and as a result, the region is lagging behind in development, leaving families displaced and sheltered in camps. The insurgency of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), led by Joseph Kony, against the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government of Uganda, has led to an estimated 1.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), leading the UN to describe the situation as among the worst humanitarian disasters in the world.<sup>44</sup> Community schools are a phenomenon of communities that have returned to their traditional home lands from internally displaced camps (IDC) and where services like education have not yet been restored.

## Background to the cooperative movement in Uganda

Cooperatives in Uganda can be traced back to 1913<sup>45</sup> where farmers organised themselves to prevent exploitation by middlemen. From the 1920s onwards cooperatives grew at a steady pace, and by the middle of the twentieth century cooperative membership had multiplied, particularly in cash crops such as coffee, tobacco, tea and cotton. A cooperative college was started in 1963 and a cooperative bank in 1964, with a main objective of delivering quality services to the cooperative movement that had become an engine of economic growth. By 1965, the cooperative sector was a dominant player in the Ugandan economy.

Upon independence, the government introduced the 1963 Cooperative Societies Act, which relaxed the regulatory framework for cooperatives, but also shifted the power into the hands of cooperative administrators rather than cooperators themselves, leaving the door open for corruption.<sup>46</sup> Despite this, the cooperative movement expanded in virtually every economic sector, and by the end of the 1960s into the 1970s, the cooperative sector was a vital source of taxes and foreign exchange, and was the largest employer in Uganda. In the 1970s and 1980s Uganda's cooperative sector was badly affected by civil wars, losing assets, stock, as well as many of their members. Following on from the wars and political turmoil of the previous two decades, liberalisation of the economy in the 1990s was another huge challenge for the cooperative movement, which saw the closure of the Ministry of Cooperatives, the break-up of

<sup>44</sup> International Crisis Group (2004) Northern Uganda: Understanding and Solving the Conflict, Report No. 77, Africa, 14 April 2004.

<sup>45</sup> See Semuwemba (2010) Development of the Cooperative Movement in Uganda, History of Cooperatives in Uganda, and Republic of Uganda, (2011). Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives, National Cooperative policy (2011), [www.mtic.go.ug](http://www.mtic.go.ug).

<sup>46</sup> The Uhuru Institute, Centre for Basic Research, ActionAid (2013) The Cooperative Movement and the Challenge of Development: a search for alternative wealth creation and citizen vitality approaches in Uganda. December 2013.

the Cooperative Bank and privatisation of the agricultural marketing sector. However, whilst many primary agricultural cooperatives suffered in this period, the SACCO (Savings and Credit Cooperative) movement flourished<sup>47</sup> and continues to represent the strongest sector within the movement.

Uganda Cooperative Alliance (UCA)<sup>48</sup> Ltd is the apex organisation for cooperatives in Uganda, established in 1961, and represents the Ugandan cooperative movement both nationally and internationally. It also acts as a key cooperative policy advisor for the government, carries out various cooperative development projects, and has a mandate to arbitrate conflicts within the Ugandan cooperative movement.

<sup>47</sup> ILO (2010b) 'Cooperatives: the sleeping economic and social giants in Uganda' Lawrence M. Kyazze; International Labour Office, Dar es Salaam (CoopAFRICA working paper; No.15).

<sup>48</sup> For more information see the Ugandan Cooperative Alliance at <http://uca.co.ug/>

## Project

# Rural Community Economic Empowerment Project (RCEEP)

### Main SDGs covered:



**CEDP member involved:** We Effect  
**Project partners:** Vi Agroforestry; Uganda Cooperative Alliance (UCA) Ltd; Geneva Global  
**Country:** Uganda  
**Sector:** Agriculture  
**Key themes:** Economic opportunities, Access to education, Internal displacement  
**Category:** Post-conflict  
**Objectives:** To contribute to improving household incomes in war-affected communities, also locally referred to “community school communities” through the establishment of income-generating projects at household level.

## Programme description

The RCEEP project provides a sustainable holistic package of community controlled production and marketing and financial service cooperatives that improve household incomes of community members. This creates livelihood options and improves the capacity of families to meet their obligations towards the education of their children in the community schools and elsewhere. An analysis was conducted in July 2016 where 75 groups were identified and 68 farmer groups with a total membership of 1740 were short listed. The groups elected 30 community-based facilitators amongst themselves who underwent training in community mobilisation and sensitisation. With the assistance of these community-based facilitators, UCA has mobilised five farmer groups which have acquired legal status by registering as agricultural cooperative societies (Rural Producer Organisations) with the Registrar of Cooperative societies.

## Cooperative contribution to peace

UCA provides support for people who have been displaced by the long-term civil conflict and insurgency in Northern Uganda. The RCEEP project targets community school communities in the districts of Gulu, Amuru and Nwoya and parents and guardians of children attending community primary schools. Most of the parents in the community have children between 9-15 years of age, who have had little or no opportunities to get formal primary education. This is due to a number of factors such as previous civil wars and displacement, as well as parents being too poor and having no reliable source of income to pay school fees or meet basic home needs. In addition,

many children lost their parents in the conflict or as a result of HIV/AIDS and are in the care of guardians, who struggle to meet their basic needs as well as pay school fees due to the numbers of dependents they care for. This project supports these people to meet their basic needs and mitigate against the effects of previous conflict and resulting displacement, giving people access to more sustainable sources of income which led to school enrolment increasing by 50% from 2016 to 2017.

## Cooperative factor

UCA offers training and guidance to communities around community schools to create primary cooperative societies (also known as Rural Producer Organizations – RPOs) and secondary cooperatives (also known as Area Cooperative Enterprises – ACEs). UCA supports cooperatives and their members through a range of services including finance, organised production and produce bulking, collective processing and marketing. UCA looks at innovative ways of cooperative organisation, such as ushering in an enabling environment and the collective use of resources, including land. In agriculture, block farming is encouraged as it reduces the challenges facing small scale farming and also lends itself to commercialisation. Community farms are guided to transform into larger scale farms. In line with the cooperative principles of open membership and inclusive and equal member participation, women and young people are targeted to ensure their full participation and membership in cooperatives, both in the agricultural and the SACCO sector.

## Key learning points and challenges

It is important to focus on the quality of membership in terms of ownership, patronage, level of benefit and control, as well as improving the technical competence and level of commitment of leaders and management staff. By supporting farmers (including a large percentage of women and young people) to establish nurseries in high-value horticultural crops, this has not only increased food production, food security and given a boost to household incomes, but also given people access better extension services and training to significantly increase their crop yields. Cooperative approaches have been a key factor in improving the stability and economic empowerment of communities whose existence was disrupted by the conflict, including by supporting access to education for vulnerable children affected by the legacy of the conflict.

# TANZANIA

## Background to the situation in Tanzania

Access to land and natural resources, for water, grazing land and mining, has accelerated conflicts between farmers and pastoralists, small mining communities and large mining companies in Tanzania. Farmer and pastoralist conflict has been an ongoing issue for several decades, resulting in killings as well as the destruction of property and livestock. Some consider this to be further exacerbated by the effects of climate change and reduction in available resources through drought. There have been attempts by government and CSOs to tackle the conflict through various means, such as changes to policy, training, participatory land-use planning and strengthening community organisations.<sup>49</sup> In the case of the tensions between small/artisanal-scale miners and large miner operators, small scale miners complain of being unable to access licences in favour of the larger mine operators. This has resulted in marginalisation of small/artisanal-scale miners and increased risk of violence<sup>50</sup>. Many of those impacted suggest that the voice of minority communities has not been heard by policy makers, resulting in conflict over local resources between larger interests and small-scale producers.

## Background to the cooperative movement in Tanzania

Whilst informal peasant cooperatives can be traced back to the 1920s, the first recognised cooperative in Tanzania dates back to the early 1930s<sup>51</sup> with the Kilimanjaro Native Cooperative Union (KNCU) in Tanganyika (now Tanzania) established in 1933 with over 3000 coffee growers. In the decades prior to independence, some cooperatives became seats of action in the struggle for liberation and demands for independence. After independence in 1961, cooperatives flourished and the sector boasted a healthy infrastructure of primary cooperatives, secondary cooperatives and a national cooperative bank. Towards the late 1960s Tanzania had the largest cooperative movement in Africa and the third largest cooperative in the world in terms of percentage of the market share of agricultural exports. In 1976 the cooperative societies and unions were abolished by the government and continued to suffer many setbacks in the post-abolition period, where they were used as state structures by the government. The poor performance of cooperatives in the 1980s and 1990s limited the role of cooperatives in poverty reduction and national development and were further weakened by corruption and embezzlement of resources, resulting in loss of trust in the movement. In the 2000s, the Tanzanian government

<sup>49</sup> Massay, G. E. (2017) In search of the solution to farmer–pastoralist conflicts in Tanzania. Occasional Paper 257, South African Institute of International Affairs.

<sup>50</sup> Carstens, J. & Hilson, G. (2009) Mining, grievance and conflict in rural Tanzania. *International Development Planning Review*, 31(3), pp. 301-326.

<sup>51</sup> ILO (2010c) 'Cooperatives in Tanzania mainland: revival and growth', Sam Maghimbi; International Labour Office, Dar es Salaam, (CoopAfrica working paper; no.14).

established a special commission to rejuvenate the sector, creating new legislation designed to strengthen member participation and democracy, as well as the Cooperative Reform and Modernization Programme (CRMP) which aims to empower members and increase commercialisation of the sector. There is a fully-fledged university — the Moshi Cooperative University (MoCU)<sup>52</sup> — dedicated to building leadership skills for the sector. The current laws aim at making the movement economically efficient and structurally flexible, and put emphasis on proper financial responsibility and auditing of cooperatives.

<sup>52</sup> For more information see MoCU's website: <https://www.mocu.ac.tz/>

## Project

# ANSAF - Support SMEs and Cooperatives

### Main SDGs covered:



**CEDP member involved:** We Effect  
**Project partners:** Vi Agroforestry; Agricultural Non-State Actors Forum (ANSAF); Tanzania Federation of Cooperatives; Farmer organisations  
**Country:** Tanzania  
**Sector:** Agriculture  
**Key themes:** Social, economic and political inclusion, Sustainable use of land  
**Category:** Conflict prevention and mitigation  
**Objectives:** Improved coordination of service providers, smallholder producers and micro and medium small enterprises (MSMEs).

## Programme description

The work of ANSAF aims to promote inclusive equitable distribution of resources, power and risks among key players in the sector. The various programmes aim to provide a better opportunity for rural producers to actively engage in policy dialogue and decision making for a secure livelihood. This has resulted in pro-smallholder producers' policies being put into practice by the government and private sector in Tanzania.

## Cooperative contribution to peace

ANSAF's work with cooperatives has been able to help deal with conflict over land and natural resources such as water, grazing/farming land, as well as access to minerals for mining and giving access to irrigation schemes to women and young people, who would normally struggle to access this type of technology. This has also been boosted by better planning around land use and promoting climate-smart agricultural methods that require lower levels of inputs and therefore cut down on potential conflict over resources. This has helped to create harmony among communities, as there is a much better system of resource management and allocation, and also a space to jointly plan.

According to ANSAF, the project is helping to overcome conflicts by strengthening the governance systems in cooperatives, by providing more accountability and transparency on the cooperatives' business. In addition, they state that the fact that cooperatives depend on a democratically elected leadership, adhere to the rule of law according to their constitution and abide by regular, planned elections, helps people to build trust.

## Cooperative factor

*"This is work in progress. We are monitoring the outcomes as we strengthen members' understanding on how to control conflicts in the overall management of cooperatives, capacity to supervise executives, the governance system (board, executives)." ANSAF's executive staff at field level*

ANSAF staff indicated that the cooperative model is chosen in this case as cooperatives have the potential to include everyone equally, thereby supporting the empowerment of their members and ensuring they have a voice in the decision-making process. In addition, agricultural buyers demand quality assurance and the ability to buy in bulk, so rather than sourcing from individual producers, they prefer working with cooperatives that are able to provide this. Similarly, banks and other financial institutions demand organised groups such as cooperatives, as this is much less risky and administratively burdensome than financing multiple individual producers.

*"Most of decision-making platforms don't necessarily involve minorities [small-scale miners and smallholder farmers], and in some cases their ideas are easily ignored. Unless there are mechanisms to listen to them and provide a consolidated front, their voices are not heard." ANSAF's executive staff at field level*

ANSAF, in partnership with the Tanzania Federation of Cooperatives Ltd, has agreed to identify cooperative unions that can be used as models to promote the movement in Tanzania. This is being coordinated by cooperative unions in the operation of a Warehouse Receipt System (WRS),<sup>53</sup> for buying and marketing crops. This has shown success in some regions where there are economically viable commodity value chains, such as in southern regions of Tanzania (Mtwara, Lindi), where it is used as a tool for marketing cashew nut. The use of systems such as this enables farmers to better plan, gain access to financing and manage the risk of their activities, thereby increasing sustainability.

## Key learning points and challenges

The use of the WRS has improved the marketing of crops in a transparent way as well as access to finance through the involvement of financial institutions. This has also led to the volumes of transactions increasing, meaning that government revenue collection has improved, in turn leading to better support for the cooperative sector. However, ANSAF state there has been a challenge to change the old way of working in cooperatives, in both attitude and practice, but the sector is now receiving more widespread support.

<sup>53</sup> See Farmaf, Farm Risk Management for Africa: <http://www.farmaf.org/en/about-farmaf/risk-management-systems/warehouse-receipt-system-wrs-and-commodity-marketing>

One of the key learning points has been in promoting increased interactions and transparency between different actors in the agricultural sector to facilitate better solutions to overcome land-related conflicts. ANSAF has developed and strengthened the partnership with the Tanzania Federation of Cooperatives Ltd, the Ministry of Agriculture, regional Chambers of Commerce, the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, Commodity Boards (coffee, cotton, cashew nut,) local and international organisations, financial institutions such as banks, and the Office of the Prime Minister. Improving these relationships and creating spaces for people to come together helps to contribute to conflict prevention, which ANSAF underlines as an important ongoing role of cooperatives.

*“[Conflict] prevention is the most important aspect because it provides information related to short, medium and long-term plans, promotes ownership and transparency.” ANSAF’s executive staff at field level*



## 2.2 Common ownership of natural resources as a path to post-conflict reconstruction

### GUATEMALA

#### Background to the conflict in Guatemala

The civil war in Guatemala ran from 1960 to 1996, with the Guatemalan army fighting various leftist guerrilla groups in indigenous areas, which led to many human rights violations against the Guatemalan civilian population and left a range of devastating social consequences after the war. The most affected populations were the ethnic Maya indigenous people and Ladino peasants, who together make up the rural poor, which has led to the government forces of Guatemala being condemned for committing genocide against these groups and widespread human rights abuses against civilians. It is estimated that 200 000<sup>54</sup> people were either killed or “disappeared” during the conflict, which left a legacy characterised as a ‘society of fear’. Many killings and disappearances were never documented.<sup>55</sup> Since a UN peace accord, the country has experienced economic growth, though it continues to exhibit high levels of instability, crime and high rates of poverty.

#### Background to the cooperative movement in Guatemala

The cooperative movement of Guatemala was formed in the early twentieth century but was not entirely legalised. Following the collapse of the Ubico dictatorship, the 1945 Constitution adapted the legislative framework and the government decided to establish a Cooperative Development Department in order to promote cooperatives with the Ministry of Labour and Economy<sup>56</sup>. New

<sup>54</sup> Oglesby, E. (2004) ‘Historical Memory and the Limits of Peace Education: Examining Guatemala’s ‘Memory of Silence’ and the Politics of Curriculum’ Working Paper, Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs Fellows Program, History and the Politics of Reconciliation Design.

<sup>55</sup> Koonings, K & Kruijff, D (1999) Societies of Fear: The Legacy of Civil War, Violence and Terror in Latin America. Zed Books, London.

<sup>56</sup> Various Authors cited in Capra International Inc. (2013) Thematic Evaluation on the Cooperative Model, presented to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), July 19 2013, p. 52.

agricultural cooperatives were formed in the early 1970s as a result of agrarian reform, which provided land to smallholder farmers organised in cooperatives, although the peasantry mostly remained landless. In attempting to reform such land rights, many agricultural cooperatives and peasant organisations were established, alongside trade unions and labour organisations in a wider social movement.

Although the military dictatorship and USAID had supported the formation of cooperatives to encourage agricultural production, during the mid-1970s cooperative leaders were considered to be part of the guerrilla insurgency, and during the civil war, cooperative membership constituted a grave risk. The leaders of farmers' organisations (organizaciones campesinas) and cooperatives were persecuted, and the social fabric decimated. A widespread fear had been instilled in community organisations, who ceased to work on securing rural development opportunities. By 1989, around 5% of the economically active population were registered as cooperative members.<sup>57</sup> Since the Peace Accords in 1996, there has been greater freedom of organisation and a gradual strengthening of community organisations that had previously been a target for killings and disappearances during the military counterinsurgency. With time, the political climate has slowly become more hospitable to the cooperative movement.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p.52

## Project

# FECCEG, Federacion Comercializadora de Café Especial de Guatemala

### Main SDGs covered:



**CEDP member involved as contact:** We Effect

**Partner:** FECCEG

**Country:** Guatemala

**Sector:** Agriculture

**Key themes:** Gender, Sustainability

**Category:** Post-conflict

**Objectives:** To promote and support the sustainability of small-scale producers by providing training in the production of organic coffee, honey, and sugar cane, as well as post-crop production and marketing projects.

## Programme description

*La Federación Comercializadora de Café Especial de Guatemala* (FECCEG, i.e. the Guatemalan Specialty Coffee Trading Federation)<sup>58</sup> was established in 2006 and is a second-level cooperative of small producer cooperatives in the Western Highlands of Guatemala, including Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango, Quiché, Sololá, San Marcos and Quetzaltenango. FECCEG represents around 2000 small farmers, approximately one quarter of which are women, and 70% of members depend on agricultural production for their livelihoods. FECCEG focusses on strengthening producers' networks, to increase its members' bargaining power in the global market and to achieve fair prices for their agricultural products. They also focus on organic, value-added agriculture and projects that promote gender equality and food security. Sorting, pulping and drying the coffee berries and processing them for export is started by the farmers, then they are transferred to the central FECCEG warehouse to be dry milled and stored, before being exported by FECCEG's export company, *Exportadora de Café Especial de Guatemala*. As well as these export activities, FECCEG has created a range of value-added products such as Kishé Coffee and Tea, which are sold in its shop in Quetzaltenango alongside a range of products such as coffee, honey and chocolates produced by FECCEG farmers.

<sup>58</sup> See Federación Comercializadora de Café Especial de Guatemala (FECCEG) at <http://fecceg.com/>

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## Cooperative contribution to peace

By promoting community organisations, the cooperative has brought people together to create sustainable livelihoods in areas that were particularly affected by Guatemala's civil war, through an approach that values equality and respect between Guatemala's vast numbers of different cultures and ethnicities. This has enabled people to strengthen community links and access training, technical assistance, value-addition to products and access to export markets that were previously out of reach for individual producers. This has been supported by providing access to finance to support organic production of crops such as coffee, honey and panela (a type of unrefined sugar). With a strong focus on gender equality, FECCEG aims to increase women's visibility, leadership and voice in its member cooperatives.

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## Cooperative factor

The cooperative has been successful in mitigating the effects of volatile coffee markets for small-scale producers by bringing producers together to access a range of training and services to strengthen their production activities. This has been a precursor for economic stability for its members, as it was originally set up by the region's small producers as a result of the 2001-2002 crisis in the coffee industry, where coffee prices drastically plummeted to a point at which farmers could not cover production costs, causing many producers to stop coffee production altogether. FECCEG aimed to bring producers together to achieve a much higher volume of production that was independently processed and avoided middlemen, as well as achieving the quality certification needed to access higher earnings from specialist markets. This has created a greater sense of stability in these communities and provided sustainable production opportunities for many of the civilian populations affected by the civil war.

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## Key learning points and challenges

In the cultivation of coffee in Guatemala, small associated producers number around 125 000, of which 3 cooperatives with infrastructure for the coffee export process are active. Therefore, with a low economic output, the growth of the cooperative coffee sector would be considered desirable. In addition, the most important outcomes to come out of the activities of FECCEG was to gain both national and international recognition for their products, as well as community recognition. The cooperative is keen to stress its approach of integration and teamwork to jointly overcome any issues they face. The cooperative promotes environmentally responsible practices, such as organic production and sustainable use of natural resources, which adds value to the products, increases social responsibility, and enables the cooperative to offer a high quality and healthy product to consumers.

## EL SALVADOR

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### Background to the conflict in El Salvador

The armed conflict in El Salvador resulted from violence between the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) military government and the left-wing movement in the late 1970s and 1980s, triggering a civil war. The left organised itself into the Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation (FMLN), whose leaders had the support of the farming sectors (sectores campesinos) organised in rural areas, and of the urban workers sector. The brutal and deliberate targeting of civilians by the Salvadoran government, funded and supported by the United States, resulted in widespread human rights violations. In 1990, the two parties accepted that the UN should mediate the conflict and talks were initiated in order to find a solution to the war. The Peace Accords were signed in Chapultepec, Mexico, on January 16, 1992, between the Government of El Salvador and the FMLN, ending twelve years of civil war in the country. Politically, the country has become a democracy and all elections in El Salvador have been supervised by the UN and other national and international bodies. However, the war was estimated to have killed 75 000 people and has left a great polarisation in society, with gangs presenting an ever-increasing threat in the present day.<sup>59</sup>

One of the departments most impacted by the war was Morazán, where the San Carlos Dos cooperative (i.e. the case described below) is located. During the conflict, Morazán suffered the El Mozote massacre<sup>60</sup>, where a battalion specialised in guerrilla combat committed one of the largest massacres of the conflict, killing more than 1000 people; mainly children, the elderly and women. Another important factor was the creation of new settlements for people who returned to the department in the post-conflict period, which generated disputes of land tenure between the people who had been displaced and those who had remained within the territory.

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### Background to the cooperative movement in El Salvador

In El Salvador, cooperation was first institutionalised in 1904 by the Code of Commerce, followed in 1917 by the Sociedad de Obreros de El Salvador (Workers' Society of El Salvador) leading to the creation of more cooperatives. In the 1940s, the State prioritised credit unions, and in the same decade they organised the Federation of Savings and Credit Cooperatives of El Salvador (FEDECACES)<sup>61</sup>, which grew alongside other cooperatives throughout this period. The first

<sup>59</sup> Héctor Dada Hirezi (2016) First Take: Twenty-Four Years Later: The 1992 Peace Accords and El Salvador's Reality Today, *ReVista*, Harvard Review of Latin America.

<sup>60</sup> Binford, L. (1996) The El Mozote massacre: Anthropology and human rights. University of Arizona Press, Tucson.

<sup>61</sup> Federación de Asociaciones Cooperativas de Ahorro y Crédito de El Salvador de Responsabilidad Limitada, FEDECACES de R.L. <http://www.fedecaces.com/site/>

cooperative apex organisation, FUNPROCOOP<sup>62</sup>, whose objective is the construction of a new political, democratic, ethical and human culture in farmers' and popular organisations in general, through the implementation of popular education processes, was created in 1967.

Agricultural cooperativism in El Salvador is a movement that expanded with the Agrarian Reform initiated in 1980<sup>63</sup>. The cooperative movement, parts of which was perceived to be part of the insurgency against the government, was strongly repressed by the military during the armed conflict of the following decade. Later, with the Peace Accords in 1992, another group of cooperatives was formed, made up of former FMLN and Armed Forces combatants, who benefited from the Land Transfer Program. As a result, the Salvadoran agricultural cooperative movement is made up of four main types of cooperatives with different characteristics due to their form of access to land and the modalities of exploitation. The four classifications are: i) cooperatives created by the Basic Agrarian Reform Law (Decreets 153 and 154, of March 6, 1980), which were constituted with extensive areas of collective property; ii) cooperatives formed as a result of Decree 207 of April 28, 1980, whereby land was allocated individually to its direct cultivators and promoted by the same beneficiaries or federations; iii) cooperatives formed by ex-combatants and civilian population settled in the conflict zones of the war, who had land allocated to them after the war; iv) traditional cooperatives created by small landowners, through purchase of land in instalments and allocation of land owned by the State. As such, the cooperative movement in El Salvador has diversified routes when examining the different formations of cooperatives.

In regard to the numbers of cooperatives, according to the Department of Agricultural Associations (DAA) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG), 1520 agricultural cooperatives were registered in 2012, with a membership of 67 730 members (15 964 women – 51 766 men). Of these, 380 from the reformed sector; 1003 from the unreformed sector; 137 from the fishing sector. Access to land is one of the main motivations for people to join cooperatives, and access to resources for production or the benefits of collective market access are additional factors that can encourage cooperative membership.

62 For more information, see Fundación Promotora de Cooperativas.

63 Richard A. Haggarty, ed. (1988) El Salvador: A Country Study. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress.

## Project

## San Carlos Dos Cooperative – ADEL Morazán

### Main SDGs covered:



## Programme description

**CEDP member involved:** Cera-BRS  
**Project partners:** Asociación Cooperativa de Producción Agropecuaria San Carlos Dos de R.L. (Cooperative Association of Agricultural production San Carlos of R.L); Morazán Local Economic Development Association (ADEL Morazán)  
**Country:** El Salvador  
**Sectors:** Coffee, tourism, vegetables, honey and handicrafts  
**Key themes:** Employment, Education, Access to water services, Health and Housing  
**Category:** Post-conflict  
**Objectives:** Strengthen the competitiveness of coffee cooperatives, allowing them to increase their productivity, management capacity and access new markets.

The San Carlos Dos cooperative came about as a product of the Agrarian Reform process, where the farmers were given the land of the landowners where they worked, redistributed on condition that they organised into cooperatives. San Carlos Dos was created in June 1980, and began with 300 members and with a territorial extension of 992 *manzanas* (plots), of which 834 are used for the cultivation of coffee. The production model is collective and associative where all owner-members share investment risks and surpluses. The cooperative was badly affected by the conflict, suffering losses of assets, and more recently has been badly affected by coffee leaf rust, which heavily decreases yields and has had devastating effects across South America. Currently, the Cooperative has 950 *manzanas*, 122 active members, and 17 who are retired. Through the cooperative, they have been able to access housing, drinking water services, electricity and basic education. The San Carlos Dos Cooperative is a founding member of ADEL Morazán (Agencia de Desarrollo Económico Local de Morazán), which groups together 9 organisations including NGOs and cooperatives.

Created in 1993, immediately after the signing of the peace accords, ADEL Morazán is a private, non-profit, apolitical and participatory organisation. Since its creation it has formulated, managed and executed projects in the areas of local development, credit, agro-industrial diversification, disaster prevention and risk mitigation, food security, protection of natural resources, environment, business development and geographic information systems. ADEL Morazán aims to create sustainable and inclusive economic development

processes for local people to improve incomes and the quality of life of families. The department of Morazán is characterised by the development of agricultural, commercial and service activities. ADEL Morazán has identified 5 areas of growth potential: coffee, tourism, vegetables, honey and handicrafts, and 6 years ago set up 5 *mesas* (translated as boards or organisational structures) in order to facilitate the work with these sub-sectors.

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## Cooperative contribution to peace

As previously mentioned, the San Carlos Dos cooperative was born during the conflict, and subsisted despite suffering significant damage in that period. During the first years, it managed to produce up to 16 000 quintals<sup>64</sup> of coffee (café oro, which can mean either “raw” or “green” coffee), however, this production was diminished after the damages caused by the bombardments that the army carried out. In August 1985, the army set fire to the entire infrastructure, water pipes, warehouses, truck scales, as well as the farm and the homes of the associates, cutting off the electricity. At that time the cooperative generated 300 permanent jobs and up to 1600 jobs during the harvest season.

Having been revived in the post-conflict reconstruction, the cooperative has been instrumental in the efforts to rebuild peace in the area, by generating jobs, improving infrastructure and equipment, and opening up to a greater number of young people and women following the peace agreements.

*“Time spent within the organisation and age are important criteria, but recently these criteria have become more flexible, now there are women who do activities that were previously done by men, elderly and disabled people who participate as they can, carrying out lighter activities.” Field coordinator, ADEL Morazán*

Through the model implemented by the cooperative, the members have achieved employment, education, access to water services, health and housing, as well as improvements in the internal road infrastructure.

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## Cooperative factor

The strength of San Carlos Dos cooperative to remain operational despite many years of conflict is what the organisation considers to be one of the central strengths of the cooperative factor; the nature of the cooperative organisational structure enabled it to survive where others would have failed.

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<sup>64</sup> A quintal corresponds to a 100kg unit.

*“Despite the difficulties, the cooperative kept going, we managed to make it through.” Field coordinator, ADEL Morazán*

Moreover, cooperatives have been a way to ensure a fairer distribution of land to those deprived of access, whilst collective association via cooperatives has given individuals a share of pooled resources and more bargaining power when bringing their products, in this case coffee, to market. The cultivation of coffee requires an improvement in the quality of the production and development of the commercialisation processes, such as marketing. The San Carlos Dos Cooperative has recently managed to export for two consecutive years (2017 and 2018) and has international buyers who are demanding a greater amount of coffee for the year ahead. To improve linkages in the coffee value chain, the cooperative is working in coordination with other public and private institutions, in the renewal and increase of sowing, improvement in quality and management of the harvest process, processing and marketing at the national and international level. In order to achieve this, the cooperative is being converted into a pioneering company that can buy coffee from the cooperatives of the coffee board (mesa de café).

In addition, when the cooperative makes a profit, it is distributed to members in accordance with the principles and the law of cooperative, as well as being integrated as a contribution to the development of community activities. Its production model is cooperative in nature by being collective and associative, where all members are owners of the property, and are therefore also owners of its surplus or losses. The cooperative is also developing a range of sustainability measures, such as Rainforest Alliance certification, water harvesting activities, reforestation, maintenance and protection of an area of 25 hectares of protected forest as well as improved wastewater management.

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## Key learning points and challenges

The key learning points have been notably the technical and managerial achievements regarding coffee production. The development of entrepreneurial capacities, improvement of infrastructure for processing the coffee, increasing export capacity as well as development of good environmental sustainability measures. In regard to coffee production, the quality has improved greatly across the value chain, and farmers have continued with the process of renewing their plantations affected by coffee leaf rust. Currently, farmers aim to increase the production and export of their coffee, and become leaders in the processes of production, processing and marketing of coffee in the territory.

Furthermore, the cooperative has created both permanent and temporary jobs, innovative processes to improve the quality of the coffee, and has enhanced the inclusion of women and young people within their membership.

The San Carlos Dos Cooperative has also made a note of strong collaborations with other partners in addition to ADEL Morazán. These include different local and international organisations and the local municipality. There are strong relationships with other public and private organisations, including the Consejo Salvadoreño del Café (Salvadorian Coffee Council), MAC – Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of the Environment, the NGO CRS (Catholic Relief Service), ADEL Morazán, Center for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises, and the FIAES fund (Fondo de Inversión Ambiental de El Salvador). In addition, thanks to the Forum for Economic and Productive Development, there is a coordination of the five thematic areas dedicated to the different sectors.

Among the main challenges was how to complete the renovation of the coffee plantation, increase production, and make processing and commercialisation more efficient. It was also necessary to improve the cooperative’s administrative, accounting and managerial controls, improve the functioning of the different structures of the functional and operative organisation of the cooperative, and finally, learn how to meet the new demands of international buyers.

## Project

## CONFRAS

### Main SDGs covered:



**CEDP member involved:** We Effect

**Project partners:** Confederación de Federaciones de la Reforma Agraria Salvadoreña – CONFRAS de R.L.; Federaciones de Cooperativas de la Reforma Agraria: FECORACEN, FECORAO, FECORAPCEN, FESORASAL, FENACOA; Asociación Salvadoreña de Integración al Desarrollo (ASID); Central Campesina Salvadoreña (CCS); Federación de Cooperativas Agropecuarias del Norte de Morazán (FECANM); Asociación de Mujeres Salvadoreñas Trabajando en la Tierra (AMSATI); Asociación de Productores Agropecuarios Amanenciando en el Campo de La Libertad (ADPAL)

**Country:** El Salvador

**Sector:** Agriculture

**Key themes:** Cooperative governance, Education and training, Agricultural technical assistance, Environmental conservation

**Category:** Mitigation and Post-conflict

**Objectives:** Protection of the agricultural cooperative movement and land reform.

## Programme description

CONFRAS is a third-tier cooperative that emerged during the armed conflict in the country in 1988. Its mission has been to protect the cooperative agricultural movement, preserving the land inherited by the agrarian reform, through the advocacy of laws related to ownership, possession and use of the land.

CONFRAS is made up of seven federations and two associations, covering 11 of the country’s 14 departments, with a total of 7334 members, approximately 43% of whom are women. Initially, CONFRAS had the financial support of external cooperation agencies, which enabled it to carry out projects as well as sustainable agricultural development and farmer to farmer programmes. At present, CONFRAS continues to provide services and training for its members, as well as forming national and international strategic alliances and engaging in political advocacy for the movement.

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## Cooperative contribution to peace

As previously stated, the activities of the cooperative began during the conflict period, and continued during the post-conflict reconstruction. The last governments developed policies aimed at improving the living conditions of the rural and peasant (campesina) population, and sought to revive cooperatives as a way to promote food sovereignty and agroecology. In that context, CONFRAS has established strategic relationships with government agencies, in order to promote laws, policies and strategies to support these initiatives and to consolidate the peace process that began in 1992.

Once the Peace Accords were achieved, CONFRAS has taken the lead in pursuing joint organisational initiatives such as the Economic and Social Forum and the Advocacy Committee for Agricultural Development (CIDAR). CONFRAS plays a key role in CIDAR's operation and strategy to ensure that peace is maintained in terms of potential conflicts over land and resource use, and remains an active partner alongside other government bodies and CSOs.

CONFRAS considered that the most effective way to ensure that peace was sustained in the post-conflict phase in El Salvador was to ensure that its cooperative members were given the means to develop their agricultural practices to ensure food sovereignty, agroecology and conservation of the environment, in line with government initiatives. Keeping its members concerns close has been an important strategy to sustain peace.

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## Cooperative factor

Access to land is one of the main motivations for joining cooperatives in El Salvador, and access to resources for production and to the market collectively is another factor that makes them attractive. The institutional vision of CONFRAS is to be a recognised, integrated and strong organisation that is able to represent its members as a key actor in rural development, thereby improving quality of life for its members through better organisation, production, commercialisation and representation at policy level.

In line with the peace accords, CONFRAS also focusses on cooperative governance, education and training, agricultural technical assistance, environmental conservation through agro-ecological production techniques, and promoting food sovereignty. The inclusion of women and young people is also promoted, as well as increasing organisational capacity and training within the cooperative movement.

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## Key learning points and challenges

CONFRAS believes that one of the primary factors in maintaining peace is overcoming the problem of land tenure, which is still a potential source of conflict. It also considers that to sustain peace it is important to keep working with the different actors of civil society.

The existence of successful agrarian reform cooperatives to date is a clear demonstration that the Confederation's institutional vision of becoming a key actor for rural development, with broad participation in the public activities of the sector, remains valid. To support its activities, CONFRAS was also able to rely on multiple partnerships and alliances with unions and NGOs, both at the national and regional level.

The main challenge is the consolidation of the ongoing agrarian reform process and ensuring that young people are coming forward to make generational change happen in the cooperative movement. This requires strong organisation, internal cohesion, productive technology, improved product processing and marketing.

CONFRAS states that a mark of the success of the cooperative movement is that despite the state policy to repackage and distribute the collective property of cooperatives, this did not result in the agrarian reform process being derailed, nor did it result in cooperative leaders exploiting the process for personal gain.



# BRAZIL

## Background to the situation in Brazil

The conflict in Brazil centres on the precarious and volatile lives for people living in the favelas. The origins and growth of the favelas are the result of a wide range of factors over many decades, such as displaced populations after historical conflict, former slaves establishing settlements and mass migration from rural to urban areas. The lack of infrastructure in the favelas means that they are often cut off from the rest of the city, with precarious access to mains water and waste disposal as well as improvised plumbing and electricity. This isolation is added to by the high levels of crime associated with the favelas due to organised crime and drug trafficking, which often means residents are caught in the crossfire between the police and the armed gangs<sup>65</sup>. According to the 2010 census<sup>66</sup> 6% of the Brazilian population lives in favelas that are often overcrowded, with poor living conditions and high pollution rates. In the City of Rio de Janeiro, almost one third of the population lives in approximately 1000 favelas, spread all over the city. Favelas are not found on the city maps, which highlights the invisible status of its inhabitants, mostly Afro-Brazilians.

## Background to the cooperative movement in Brazil

Common ownership in Brazil is not an unknown concept as it was customary practice in the indigenous populations, yet the cooperative movement in Brazil can be traced as far back as the late 1800s<sup>67</sup>. The growth of the sector was largely influenced by the huge influx of European immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but also by government policies to promote cooperatives as a means to alleviate economic crises at various points throughout the twentieth century, notably the 1930s and 1980s. However, state interference in cooperatives has been as much of a hindrance as a help in terms of restrictive legislation on profits. Whilst the cooperative movement in Brazil has been subject to fluctuation, it has experienced a resurgence since a dip in the 1960s, particularly with worker takeovers of industries that became bankrupt in the crisis of 1981-83<sup>68</sup>.

65 Zaluar, A. (2011) Turf War in Rio de Janeiro: Youth, Drug Traffic, Guns and Hyper-masculinity. In: Ceccato, V. (ed.) *The Urban Fabric of Crime and Fear* (pp.217-237). Springer, New York.

66 Statistics available at IBGE, Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2010 Census, available at <https://ww2.ibge.gov.br/english/estatistica/populacao/censo2010/>

67 Ros, A. J. (2001) *Profits for All? The Cost and Benefits of Employee Ownership*. Nova Science Publishers, New York.

68 Singer, P. (2006). The recent rebirth of the solidary economy in Brazil. In B. de Sousa Santos (Ed.), *Another production is possible: Beyond the capitalist canon* (pp. 3-42). London, England: Verso.

## Project

### Main SDGs covered:



## Programme description

## RevoluSolar

**CEDP member involved:** REScoop  
**Project partner:** RevoluSolar  
**Country:** Brazil  
**Sector:** Renewable energy  
**Key themes:** Climate action, Community development  
**Category:** Conflict mitigation  
**Objectives:** To create a solar cooperative - "The energy is ours" and promote renewable and decentralised energy production models to improve the sustainability of the energy matrix in Brazil.

RevoluSolar is a non-profit organisation of production, research and management of renewable energies in the community of Morro do Leme, in the south zone of Rio de Janeiro. The aim is to democratise production and access to energy, reducing monthly costs of electric energy, with the view to promoting local socioeconomic development, preserving the environment and developing self-sustainability. RevoluSolar's vision is to be recognised as a pioneer cooperative in the production of sustainable energy, based on a pilot project that was developed in Babilônia, within the community of Morro do Leme. It also aims to create independent, resilient communities, looking for positive socioeconomic results and hoping to expand the model to other parts of Brazil and across South America, through a network of partner entities, with a focus on quality and fair price.

RevoluSolar follows some key cooperative values through which they aim to achieve their vision of community energy, such as valuing democratic participation, solidarity and cooperation in the community in which they operate, aiming at joint rather than individual prosperity. Whilst not yet officially a cooperative, and with intentions to formalise their cooperative status within the Brazilian legal framework, their actions are guided by ethics, honesty and total transparency to both members and society, with the aim to strengthen environmental and sustainable practices in the community. They encourage respect and coexistence among all, without distinction of colour, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, disability, social class, nationality, or any other form of discrimination.

In line with cooperatives' *raison d'être*, people came together to meet a clear and pressing need within a community. In this way, RevoluSolar is an innovative community response to the wider structural problems within the Brazilian energy market. Brazil's energy production, which is heavily dependent on hydro-electricity, continues

to have wide ranging social and environmental impacts, and the cost of electricity is high. Privatisation and the commodification of energy have impacted the people living in the favelas, who following the initial introduction of charges for electricity where previously there had been none, were hit with heavy bills that many found difficult to pay. Illegal connections had been a very common issue, and many people living in the neighbourhood had difficulties in handling the rapid changes in the energy supply chain. RevoluSolar provided an alternative to a monopolised energy market in the favelas.

*“The coop could be a non-violent resistance to this – where people feel they don’t need the energy companies anymore, they produce their own energy, re-empowerment” Pol Dhuyvetter, a RevoluSolar Founder*

The situation demonstrated that many people did not have the means to pay for electricity supply. However, community energy such as that provided by RevoluSolar can help to introduce a feeling of social inclusion. A founder of RevoluSolar explained how greater social inclusion can contribute to cutting down on the numbers of people who make illegal electricity connections.

*“Now a lot of people however don’t want that [illegal connections], by paying electricity and receiving a bill they feel less excluded by the society.” Pol Dhuyvetter, a RevoluSolar Founder*

Within this wider context, both regarding inequalities in energy access and the volatile environment described earlier, RevoluSolar started on August 2014, originally emerging from informal conversations between project leaders and some local residents of Babilônia. It was then formally and legally set up at the end of 2015, going on to run two pilot projects in two local community hostels. Through cooperation between cooperatives, in 2016, an important seminar was held in a partnership with the Organisation of Brazilian Cooperatives (OCB - the national cooperative apex) and a range of local organisations. The seminar included as a participant the organisation REScoop, a CEDP member uniting European renewable energy cooperatives such as Ecopower, one of Belgium’s largest and most successful examples in the sector, which also provided one of RevoluSolar’s Belgian founders, Pol Dhuyvetter, with a source of inspiration for the project.

In order to progress beyond the pilot phase, in 2017 research was carried out in 100 homes in Babilônia to evaluate their access to electricity, their knowledge and interest in creating an alternative model for energy consumption and production, as well as some technical issues.<sup>69</sup> In 2018 over 10 Babilônia residents participated in

<sup>69</sup> Based on the data collected about energy consumption charged by the local electricity company, estimations show that the whole favela of Babilônia pays BRL 1 345 150 annually (USD 358 707). This money represents the equivalent of 67 solar installations, which could provide high quality solar photovoltaic energy for the favela.

## Cooperative contribution to peace

some internal courses on electricity and solar energy, some of whom went on to get technical qualifications. Following this, residents of the favela had the opportunity to learn to conduct photovoltaic solar panel installations, providing them with new skills and offering a potential source of employment for the future, as solar panel installers. For those in the favela with little previous technical education, this had a positive and empowering impact.

The RevoluSolar project has emerged in a context of both structural and sporadic armed violence, resulting in high risks to the local population and visitors. Residents have described an ongoing armed conflict between corrupt military police, rival armed drug gangs and how the military have repeatedly occupied the neighbourhood, in a show of force designed to reclaim territory from armed groups. Known as the Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora (UPP) approach, or Police Pacification Unit, such militarised interventions have had a deep impact. Only in 2018, at least 15 people were killed out of a total population of an estimated 6000. The combined everyday threats to security have taken a heavy toll, not only in economic terms, but also for the physical and mental health of individuals, who suffer from psychological problems including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), insomnia, nightmares, or anxiety, and drug or alcohol abuse. This had led many people to leave their neighbourhoods in response to disruptive violence, and makes others from outside the favela, including volunteers of the RevoluSolar project, reluctant to visit.

Within this context, the third pilot project is currently underway and is the first project to take place in a public space in the favela. This activity comes as a result of the evaluation that was made during 2016 in the REScoop 20-20-20 report, which showed that the



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## Cooperative factor

majority of the successful projects in Europe had a common factor; a pilot project in a public space that was designed in order to gain people's trust, to let them get together and learn that solar energy is a possibility available for everyone, not just as a business or for people who are better off. The project has also been working throughout 2018 with local school children to get involved with the project and help it to grow, leading to the installation of solar panels in the local community school in December 2018. At every stage during the project, the people behind RevoluSolar have sought to include the community's views in the process, a factor which they state has been crucial to their success.

*"It's really important to give the inhabitants of the favela the lead of the project. They need to be involved in the key decisions – because if not – there is no project." Juan Cuervo, RevoluSolar's Executive Secretary*

These types of activities are trying to break down barriers of distrust between people that are the inevitable result of years of living in a precarious and uncertain environment and also of being set apart from 'mainstream' society. Part of this has been to 'reclaim' public spaces and facilitate activities in communal areas. An example of this can be seen through the expansion of the group and in encouraging a variety of different interest groups to come together. As the project has grown and many volunteers began to join the team, meetings began to take place at the Association of Babylonian Residents. Since September 2017, RevoluSolar has centralised its activities in the "Jardim Babilônia" co-working space, where work has been shared with other sustainable social community projects that work in Morro do Leme. This place hosts meetings of volunteers, meetings with partner institutions, the daily work of the RevoluSolar, as well as providing a community space for local residents. Through these activities, residents have come together to work on meeting their common needs despite a difficult and conflict-ridden context.

Unfortunately, there is a lot of mistrust around the state and any organisations that are perceived to be related to state bodies, and this has a knock-on effect on cooperatives in Brazil. However, RevoluSolar sees the potential of cooperatives and the social economy, and for building up the cooperative infrastructure to overcome this problem.

*"You could do a lot more in the favela with coops, with the little money they get, they go to the supermarket. You could set up a supermarket coop for the local people for food so the money stays in the favela, there's so many more things you could do [...] There's a reforestation coop in Babilonia that was set up in the 90s, so it's not completely a new idea, there's some very favourable things for a project like RevoluSolar." Pol Dhuyvetter, a RevoluSolar Founder*

The cooperative factor is embedded in the project's aims of increasing the culture of sustainability, group activities and social links within the community. By improving energy independence and reducing the energy footprint of residents, it democratises access to electricity and also positions the favela as an educational space for generation and dissemination of knowledge, facilitating access between academic research and the people's daily problems. It also reinforces people's status as 'knowledge holders' by training local people to carry out projects and installation and maintenance of renewable energy systems, to bring autonomy to the communities, whilst at the same time transmitting a message of inclusion from favela to the city, including how cooperatives can be part of the discussion and implementation of public policies of the city and the State.

*"We want to influence public policy – so that favelas will be incorporated in the city. I hear people say, the favela is also the city...I dream that in the future this will no longer be a discussion, because the favela is a part of the city and it must be included in public policy. Anything that is taking part in the city, the favela must also be involved in." Juan Cuervo, RevoluSolar's Executive Secretary*

RevoluSolar also aims to promote renewable and decentralised energy production models to improve the sustainability of the energy matrix in Brazil, by pioneering a model of sustainable energy cooperative that can be replicated elsewhere in Brazil. This also means further community benefits such as local employment, not just as solar technicians, but creating more infrastructure and telling people about all the opportunities that are available in the favela. By encouraging economic activity within areas affected by social exclusion, RevoluSolar's Executive Secretary explains how the cooperative model for community energy can return the benefits to the communities in which they reside.

*"We are trying to get them jobs, to prepare curriculum vitae, with accountants, for them to be in the formal economy, and to do as well as anyone, to work in or outside the favela, to break a bit the current model that all the money is produced and spent outside [...] We want to develop more here, more activities here, more technical professionals here, to be more self-confident and to work on fronts just as, or more, urgent than the energy issue." Juan Cuervo, RevoluSolar's Executive Secretary*

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## Key learning points and challenges

The project is taking place in a challenging environment, and one of the key learning points has been the tenacity of the project workers and their determination in the face of adversity, even when the project has faced an uphill struggle and serious risks. This means that they are different from other previous projects or visitors to the favela, who are often viewed with distrust as they come to the favela, study it, map the situation, but then do not attempt to change or improve it.

*“People come saying they will do projects, make interviews with the people, they do their projects, they write their thesis, get a nice job in the World Bank or something, they document it but they don’t change anything – the favela carries on as normal with the same big problems.” Juan Cuervo, RevoluSolar’s Executive Secretary*

One of the key success factors has been in giving local residents transferable skills and the confidence to be able to use them more widely, which is especially important in light of the fact that people’s confidence has been eroded by years of living under precarity and being disenfranchised. One way they have done this is to learn from their activities as they go along. For example, some courses failed as people were not ready for it, so the project carried out consultation to find out what was needed and wanted, as one of their observations was that they needed to do this to overcome distrust.

*“[It is] really important to give the opportunity, to give the space to people in the Favela, to help them feel more confident, to learn how to take these skills to any other front.” Juan Cuervo, RevoluSolar’s Executive Secretary*

RevoluSolar is aiming to develop further in the future, once the insecurity experienced in the favelas has improved. With the right support and the right structures, RevoluSolar proposes to promote the model of community energy further across Brazil and South America. A key part of this work has been in educating people on the model, raising awareness of the benefits and methods for community energy generation and opening up partnerships with learning institutions, universities and other cooperatives that work on social and circular economy. Having pioneered the model in Rio de Janeiro, RevoluSolar hopes to be a part of a wider renewable energy transition.

*“Here in the favela, the dynamic is always changing – I can tell you how it is today, I can’t tell you how it will be tomorrow, next month, next year, it’s always changing...I would love to go to top of the favela in 5 years, in 10 years, and see solar panels all around the favela, to see solar panels on every house.” Juan Cuervo, RevoluSolar’s Executive Secretary*



## 3. STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS AND HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT

This section underlines the role of cooperatives in fostering an environment of trust and strong relationships, making them an important actor in creating the right conditions for partnership-building and ensuring human rights are respected. Our case studies demonstrate that through their collective voice and actions, cooperative members can play an important role in influencing political processes, in raising awareness of peacebuilding campaigns and mobilising communities. As a result of their people-centred nature and their relationship to civil society, in addition to their contribution to collective economic development, cooperatives provide an opportunity to re-engage people with civil action and dialogue between different groups.

In terms of responding to more urgent humanitarian needs, our case studies have shown how values and principles such as ‘concern for community’ work in action, providing support to families to mitigate against some of the worst effects of conflict. In addition, from humanitarian support for immediate needs, to ongoing support for emotional and psychological difficulties associated with conflict, as well as longer term training and livelihood support, the overarching cooperative approach underlines a commitment to solidarity and cooperation between cooperatives.



### 3.1 Building trust and peaceful relations through partnerships

#### IRAN

#### Background to the recent conflict in Iran

In Iran, conflict has centred upon economic and social difficulties that fuel a growing discontent with the quality of life. From one dimension, this results from the decades of punitive economic sanctions placed on the Iranian economy, arguably bringing the country to the edge of fiscal collapse before the 2016 suspension of the sanctions brought minor economic relief.<sup>70</sup> Some analysts consider that the decision by US President Trump to reintroduce the economic sanctions is to reignite this sense of discontent among the population, as a catalyst towards ‘regime change’<sup>71</sup>. In addition, an eventual crisis of the current regime could open the way for the claims of the minorities (most notably Azeris and Kurds).<sup>72</sup>

Many analysts place this social malaise within a wider wave of disaffection that began in 2009 with the “Green Movement,” which protested against the presidential election results and the status quo with mass demonstrations and civil disobedience. Further, in December 2017 civil protests began in the city of Mashhad against price rises and corruption, but gradually became some of the largest political protests in Iran in recent memory.

This places Iran at high risk from internal conflict due to socio-economic and political reasons, with concerns over the protection of civil liberties and gender equity. In a country where law enforcement is considered to be highly reactive to protest, the underlying conflict can remain latent for years but then manifest suddenly and violently.

<sup>70</sup> Iana Dreyer José Luengo-Cabrera (Eds.) (2015) ‘On Target? EU Sanctions as Security Policy Tools’, Report No. 25, September 2015, EU Institute for Security Studies.

<sup>71</sup> Sengupta, K. ‘Trump’s sanctions on Iran might well achieve regime change – but not to the kind of regime the US would like’ The Independent, News, 5 November 2018, Accessed 08 February 2019.

<sup>72</sup> Rohrs-Weist, P. ‘Under the Radar: Minorities pose threat to Iranian stability’, Global Risk Insights, June 18, 2018.

In this context, it is clear that rebuilding socio-economic structures such as cooperatives may be a necessary element to improve the participation of people in decision-making processes, and also to empower intermediary organisations. The direct control that the government can or has previously exerted over intermediary organisations has created mistrust of institutions, which could further impact their agency to be effective civil society actors.

## Background to the cooperative movement in Iran

In Iran, the development of the formal cooperative movement dates back to the inclusion of some articles in the Trade Law of 1924<sup>73</sup>. After the Islamic Revolution (1979) the government pushed on the agricultural cooperatives as structures for organising the farmers and being able to reach rural areas with its policies. This meant that they ended up being semi-public structures that are not member led and not market oriented. Until the moment when the government invested in the agricultural cooperatives by distributing seeds and other inputs, the general attitude of the farmers remained positive toward them, even if they were not acting as cooperatives in the full spirit of ICA values and principles. More recently, new legislation appears to be more market-oriented, opening the way for different types of cooperatives but it is still heavily tied to the public sector. Despite this, cooperatives are viewed as potentially strong actors in rebuilding the social-economic texture of the country and improving “social capital”<sup>74</sup>.

<sup>73</sup> See ‘Iranian Cooperative History’ Ministry of Cooperatives Labour and Social Welfare, Islamic Republic of Iran, at <https://www.mcls.gov.ir/en/about/history> Accessed 08 February 2019.

<sup>74</sup> Social Capital intended as: “the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively.”

## Project

### S.P.R.IN.G. - Strengthening CSO’s Participation for a Responsible and Inclusive agriculture Growth through development of rural cooperatives

#### Main SDGs covered:



**CEDP member involved:** Legacoop

**Project partners:** SPASDI - The Society for the Protection and Assistance of the Socially Disadvantaged Individual; Haliéus (NGO for international cooperative development of Legacoop); Legacoop; CORC - Central Organization of Rural Cooperatives; CURACI - Central Union of Rural Agricultural Cooperatives of Iran

**Country:** Iran

**Sectors:** Agriculture, territorial development

**Key themes:** Strengthening of the cooperative model, Multi-stakeholder dialogue

**Category:** Conflict prevention

**Objectives:** Strengthen the capacity of cooperatives and cooperative associations to promote inclusive and sustainable growth, by supporting the rural producers in the County of Bam.

## Programme description

The project focusses on enhancing CSOs’ contribution to inclusive and sustainable growth, in particular by reinforcing in priority their service provision for agricultural activities and access to agricultural resources. The project aims to strengthen the capacity of CSOs, in particular rural cooperatives and cooperative associations, to lead local economic development by providing services that support their members’ activities, and at the same time facilitating the development of new shared strategies in coordination with the LAs. In terms of expected results, the CSOs’ (rural cooperatives) capacity, professionalism, competences will be improved, to foster economic empowerment through their service provision, particularly for disadvantaged groups, including women. At the same time, the capacity of the CSOs to participate in and contribute to policy dialogue and accountability processes at local and national level will be improved, through the new mechanisms for consultation, coordination and cooperation foreseen in the rural development strategy of the County. The dialogue will allow to develop, test and implement a strategic and innovative development plan for the identified territory through a multi-actor partnership.

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## Cooperative contribution to peace

The project is still in its first phase, so most activities are currently being carried out. Nevertheless, the main action concerns rebuilding trust between the agricultural cooperatives and their members.

*“At the kick-off meeting we had the coop directly ask us, ‘Please how do you do trust building in Italy?’ We said it was day-to-day work” Legacoop/Haliéus HQ worker*

This is achieved by making the cooperatives more responsive to the business needs of the members, and directly opening the way for business opportunities (exports) that could in turn motivate the members to overcome their mistrust and rebuild their relationships with the cooperative. This is also supported by improving the internal management of the cooperatives and the full participation of members in the decision-making system, as well as using a mechanism for continuous dialogue.

*“For really building peace, you must build in the field and have day-by-day relations with actors and the different stakeholders. You cannot just plan, even if well-structured with many different meetings, it’s not enough, you really need to be out in the field to assist the cooperative in the role, so that they can be a player in the peacebuilding process.” Legacoop/Haliéus HQ worker*

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## Cooperative factor

Aside from the internal perspective of the cooperatives, the project also foresaw the creation of a local consultation mechanism with LAs to develop inclusive rural development plans, in order to boost the participation of people in the decision-making system, directly or through their representative organisations (starting with cooperatives). It emerged that local and central authorities tend to be very interested in actions that create business opportunities and improve the local economy, because they perceive it as creating consensus, while they could be sceptical of actions merely addressing social participation.

*“When we say smallholder farmer – it’s clear that the issue is the production, they would like to improve the production, they don’t have any bargaining power. The dealers at the end of the season, they arrive, at really the lowest price they buy the dates from the farmers [...] If it they [the farmers] are organised in the cooperative form, they will have more negotiation power when selling their products.” S.P.R.I.N.G field project manager*

Working on cooperative enterprises (and inclusive business models adopting the cooperative principles) can therefore provide a platform to increase community participation whilst also developing the people’s socio-economic conditions. This provides a means to tackle the risk of conflicts even without directly addressing them. Providing opportunities for networking between cooperatives at both the national and local levels, including between different sectors such as agriculture and tourism, will further strengthen member participation as these relationships become more fruitful.

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## Key learning points and challenges

The project is still in its preliminary phase, but the level of mistrust between farmers and cooperatives (considered as government branches) was even higher than expected, and also more far-reaching. The key to overcoming this deeply embedded issue is through direct interpersonal, open and continuous relationships, such as reinforcing the planned regional round tables through enhanced coordination at the field level.

*“This is one way to smooth the potential conflicts of interest between the different actors. Our partner also thought it was critical to have a more continuous facilitation work at the local level. Instead of just having round tables, they are doing day-to-day facilitation, consulting every day the different farmers. This is added to the project as an additional feature. At the round table, everyone is much more aware [...] This is a continuous dialogue mechanism, not just a few events.” Legacoop/Haliéus HQ worker*

In this context, working with cooperatives often requires even more time than implementing the action directly with single producers. In addition, in order to rebuild the cooperatives and provide opportunities for development, it was necessary to involve other organisations that were not necessarily cooperatives themselves, although they may operate according to many of the same principles, for example the National Association of Date Producers. In such a situation, it is important to keep the cooperative apex organisations as central players, supporting them to gradually rebuild trust with the cooperative members. It must be emphasised that the only effective way to restore this trust is to respond to the needs and aspirations of the members, and to ensure their participation in decision-making processes.

*“They really need to feel that the coop is in their hands, which up till now, in many cases it wasn’t working. [...] the transactions of the members is not so clear for them. It was about inputs, so some see the coop as just a place to ‘get’ aid, rather than participatory.” Legacoop/Haliéus HQ worker*



## THE MIDDLE EAST

### Background to the Arab Peace Initiative (API)

The API<sup>75</sup> was ratified at the summit of Arab leaders in Beirut in March 2002, presenting principles for an agreement in ending the Israeli-Arab conflict, aiming to normalise relations between the Arab region and Israel. API was re-endorsed at the 2007 Arab League summit and again at the 2017 Arab League summit. In exchange for a full withdrawal by Israel from the Palestinian occupied territories (including East Jerusalem) and a fair settlement of the Palestinian refugee crisis, Arab nations would consider the Arab-Israeli conflict to be over, and would sign a peace agreement with Israel, thereby achieving peace in the region. The API follows on from other significant attempts to negotiate a workable peace deal for the region.<sup>76</sup>

The Israeli and Palestinian communities are perceived to be jaded, indifferent and reluctant to engage in initiatives related to resolving the conflict/the peace process due to growing apathy and intensified existential fears. The Arab Spring and the development of social revolution movements in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, and Yemen, coupled with growing militarism in Iran and the war in Syria have all contributed to the atmosphere of instability and uncertainty in the region, arousing fears and anxieties and reducing Israelis' belief in and readiness for engaging in peace promoting activities. Recent research and surveys identified that there is low awareness of the existence of the API in Israel<sup>77</sup>, coupled with a lack of interest and indifference towards resolving the conflict, as well as apathy and even denial of the graveness of the situation.

### Background to the cooperative movement in Israel

The Israeli cooperative movement has been of major importance for the genesis and development of Israel. The roots of the movement date back to the 19th century<sup>78</sup> with the establishment of cooperative settlements, the beginnings of the kibbutz movement and also producer cooperatives, which steadily developed to include a cooperative wholesale society and consumer cooperatives. Due to a lack of legislation, these associations were not formally registered as cooperatives, but behaved as cooperatives in nature. The Palestinian Cooperative Ordinance was created in 1920 and the movement steadily grew, developing a cooperative bank and leading to the creation of collective farms and cooperative settlements. At the end

of the Second World War, cooperatives played an important role in integrating the increasing numbers of European immigrants. The Israeli cooperative movement further developed throughout the 1960s, also sharing its success through initiatives that promoted cooperatives' potential role in international development, such as the International Research Centre on Rural Cooperative Communities (CIRCOM). Whilst the cooperative movement continued to grow, it was not without its challenges, but it still remains a strong force in Israel today.

<sup>75</sup> For further information see the Arab Peace Initiative at <http://www.centerpeace.org/explore/arab-peace-initiative/>

<sup>76</sup> See for more details, BBC News, History of Mid-East peace talks, 29 July 2013, Accessed 08 February 2019.

<sup>77</sup> See Goldberg, E. (2013) 'American Jewish Leadership & the API' Molad, The Center for the Renewal of Israeli Democracy, 24 June 2013.

<sup>78</sup> Shaffer, J. (1999). Historical Dictionary of the Cooperative Movement. Scarecrow Press, Folkestone, p.110.

## Project

### Main SDGs covered:



## Regional Network arising from the 'Promoting the Arab Peace Initiative Project'

**CEDP member involved:** AJEEC-NISPED

**Project partners:** CDCD - Center For Democracy And Community Development (Palestine); AJEEC NISPED (Israel); IKV Pax Christi (Netherlands); Jordan Institute for Middle Eastern Studies; URI United Religious initiative (Jordan); Middle East Citizens Assembly - MECA (Morocco); Israel-Syria Peace Society (Israel); Maaber Webzine and Printing House (Syria); Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs; The Israel cooperative movement; IPI - Israel Peace Initiative; One voice Israel

**Sector:** Policy

**Region:** The Middle East

**Key themes:** Conflict resolution, Networking

**Category:** Conflict mitigation

**Objectives:** To formalise a Middle East regional civil society network that works within and between the different neighbouring countries to promote the API (Arab Peace Initiative).

## Programme description

A key component of the project was to create and formalise a regional network operating as a forum of civil society activists and organisations from the Middle East, working together to promote a regional peace initiative based on the API and the learning from previous negotiations between the parties. The Israeli and Palestinian communities were among the main target groups, as well as young people from all around the region acting as young ambassadors. The project also aimed to develop public awareness and lobby towards decision-makers to promote the API, build political support for the initiative and propose policies and programmes to advance it.

## Cooperative contribution to peace

The basic assumption of the project was that the civil society and cooperative members can play an important role in influencing political processes, therefore efforts need to be invested in raising awareness and mobilising various groups to voice their support of the peace process and pressure politicians to promote it. This assumption is anchored in the literature of conflict resolution and peace building, whereby the top-down approach to peace considers that the accomplishments at the highest level will translate to, and

move down through, the rest of the population. If the representative leaders of the parties to the conflict agree, that sets the stage and the environment for bringing in the rest of society in the implementation of the agreement that will end the conflict. By engaging with people who are in leadership positions, such as people in education and academia, the cooperative sector, business, or the health sector, but not necessarily connected to the formal government structures, this allows them to have significant connections to top-level leaders as well as grassroots populations. The project sought to develop this through a cross-border approach, to bridge existing gaps.

*"We saw that people in CSOs were in touch with Europeans in western countries, but not among themselves very much, as far as you can speak of CSOs in the Middle East – cross border CSOs were not there, e.g. from Palestine, Saudi Arabia, or Jordan and Egypt." Jannie, PAX*

In this context, the Israeli cooperative movement leaders and members were significant participants in all the activities during the project. The Arab Jewish Center for Equality Empowerment and Cooperation – Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Development (AJEEC-NISPED), which represents the international cooperative sustainable development and training centre for the Israeli cooperative movement, decided to lead the project in cooperation with the Center for Democracy and Community Development (CDCD)<sup>79</sup> in Palestine and Dutch NGO PAX<sup>80</sup> (at the time called IKV Pax Christi), with the help of the EU. They participated actively in all of the public conferences both in Israel and internationally, and contributed to the regional network of CSOs, writing policy papers, articles and signing letters to endorse the API, as well as lobbying members of parliament and establishing a coalition of Israeli peace NGOs that support the API. The project on the Israeli side aimed indeed at addressing all three levels of peacebuilding, from the political level through CSOs as well as grassroots level. The regional network succeeded in influencing politicians to act through activities such as bringing six prominent Palestinians to meet with Israeli politicians and participate in the second event of the newly formed lobby in the Knesset.

*"This notion of cooperation and partnership and trying to partner around a joint goal, is something that is very prevalent here." Anat Langer-Gal, Peace NGO Forum Activist*

<sup>79</sup> See the Center for Democracy and Community Development at <https://www.peaceinsight.org/conflicts/israel-palestine/peacebuilding-organisations/cdcd/>  
<sup>80</sup> For further information see <https://www.paxforpeace.nl/>

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## Cooperative factor

The Israeli cooperative movement believes that cooperatives play an important role within civil society and social transformation, covering a large tranche of the population as well as a wide geographic and socio-economic scope. This includes shifts from conflict to conflict resolution, from dictatorship and centralised economies to democracy and the free market, from poverty and dependence to sustainable human development. This belief is underscored by cooperatives' people-centred nature and their relationship to civil society, economic development and the people-to-people peace process.

Whilst the work of the regional network has had demonstrable benefits in terms of creating a space for joint work and strengthening the relationships between the cooperative movement and CSOs, there is still some way to go to promote cooperatives as organisations that contribute to promoting peace.

*"I don't think the average Israeli would make a connection between cooperatives and peacebuilding. I don't think that would strike them as something that would make sense." Anat Langer-Gal, Peace NGO Forum Activist*

However, that is not to say that the underlying values of cooperatives do not play a role as some would consider that cooperative members tend to be more predisposed to having a commitment to peacebuilding activities.

*"Many of the people that were involved in the API [project] either are part of a cooperative or have the personal standpoint of socialist thinking. I think there's a lot of relation between these lines of thought [...] I personally think there is a lot of relation between the notion of mutual responsibility, a core part of what you do when you work in or act in a cooperative, and between this kind of work. It's more philosophical, but there's something about humanity that links this together." Anat Langer-Gal, Peace NGO Forum Activist*

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## Key learning points and challenges

Project partners stated that in order to be effective in exerting pressures on decision makers there needs to be a strong partnership backing the peace process, and so it was important to build a coalition of cooperatives, peace NGOs, businesses, academics and CSOs. It is a noteworthy achievement that a regional network of 50 CSOs with more than 1000 civil society activists has been established and maintained throughout these unstable, volatile times in the region. Such a network of active core groups in each of the Arab states may enable keeping the API as a viable topic of discussion and communication, despite difficulties to ensure that high-level policy activities would trickle down to the grassroots level. The mere presence of many groups of people in the Middle East who

are thinking about a possible solution to the conflict and maintain persisting strong relationships is of special value, and should be promoted and applauded.

*"In terms of the partnership, I can generally say it was a very good partnership with a lot of mutual respect, and deep understanding of the restrictions and capacities of each side." Anat Langer-Gal, Peace NGO Forum Activist*

As well as organising joint events, conferences, and other activities such as a short film competition to promote peace<sup>81</sup>, project workers indicated that it is important to allow space for people to interact, to build relationships between different groups in informal spaces that allow people to understand the reasons behind people's beliefs and standpoints. This aspect was further reinforced by the fact that partners' representatives considered particularly good at conflict-solving took it upon themselves to play an informal mediation role in some meeting discussions, to ensure balanced exchanges.

*"There should be time and opportunities to bring people together, for example when you eat, it should be mixed. It's also important to have time, it's not something you can really organise, you can organise it up to a certain level, but it should spontaneously develop." Jannie, PAX*

All the while, the political environment and its volatility proved a constant challenge for the project, resulting in missed opportunities such as the idea to involve refugees in the API discussions, which came to a halt around the issue of the right to return for Palestinian refugees. At the same time, the political dimension of the activities also brought interesting and fruitful connections, for instance support from some local EU delegations to bring stakeholders together – either by facilitating the coming of foreign participants or by providing a meeting room.

As the API Regional Network of activities showed, the beneficiary and project partners carried out over 140 meetings, including conferences in Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Cyprus, Jerusalem, Prague and Brussels. It should be noted that the project has assisted in making the API a core discussion among the Israeli and regional political spheres as the regional framework has gained more momentum. The following activities, whether local, regional, or international were all geared towards in the intention of the project's concept: transforming the conflict by creating a multitrack international-Arab-Israeli communication process which includes parliamentarians and politicians led by civil society.

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<sup>81</sup> The competition was entitled 'Minute for Peace', and an example of the short movie produced within that framework can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25pbxMob-DA>

The API Regional Network expanded into a large group of civil society actors, cooperative members, business individuals, universities' students and lecturers, peace activists, former or serving politicians, all dedicated to bringing about regional peace based on the regional framework of the API. Besides the great increase in numbers, the API Regional Network also expanded in the digital sphere, gathering great public support not only locally, but also globally. The mere fact of bringing regional parliamentarians together, despite the instability and decades-long hostilities, is result previously unseen.



## 3.2 Humanitarian-development linkages

### SYRIA

#### Background to the conflict in Syria

The beginning of the crisis in 2011, the escalation of violence in the ensuing conflict, the gradual destruction of infrastructures and services, the prolonged protraction of a situation of insecurity and restrictions, have had a devastating impact on the Syrian population, in particular on those communities that were already characterised by high levels of social and economic vulnerability.

The massive presence of internal refugees – families forced to leave their homes and move to other regions of the country – has seriously aggravated the already precarious living conditions of the population, due to the situation of dire straits and discomfort in which they found themselves living. Over two million children and adolescents are now outside the school system and many more every day are forced to leave school to support their family financially. The conditions of insecurity have created a serious threat of exploitation and violence, especially for women and girls. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees continue to live in a state of extreme vulnerability and are even more exposed to the ongoing conflict.

According to the data contained in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2017<sup>82</sup> there are an estimated 13.5 million people, including 6 million children, who require emergency humanitarian aid, of these 8.7 million people are in conditions of extreme vulnerability and need food, medical, psychological and other daily support (blankets, hygiene, etc.). In addition, one in three people in Syria cannot meet their food needs, 86 000 newborns and children (6-59 months) are estimated to suffer from acute malnutrition with an additional 3.6 million children as well as pregnant and lactating women considered to be at high risk of malnutrition. Since the beginning of the crisis, life expectancy has decreased by 20 years and one in three families in Syria has contracted high debts due to the increase in food

<sup>82</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (2017) Humanitarian Response: Syrian Arab Republic: 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan (January - December 2017).



## Background to the cooperative movement in Syria

prices. According to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA),<sup>83</sup> more than half a million Palestinians are in camps in Syria, 95% of whom need continuous humanitarian support.

In Syria, cooperatives were used as a way to promote socialism and socialist relations. The first cooperative law was issued in 1950 (number 65f), but the total number of cooperatives remained limited.<sup>84</sup> When land reform was introduced in Syria, those receiving expropriated or government land were required to join farm cooperatives.<sup>85</sup> The cooperative movement developed slowly until the early 1970s, but later on grew significantly to approximately half a million members in the late 1980s.

Today, the cooperative sector in Syria is led by three cooperative unions: The Housing Cooperative Federation, the Farmers' Cooperative Federation and the Handicrafts and Production Cooperative Federation. Over 550 000 are members of housing cooperatives (figures from 2004), approximately 10 759 of handicraft cooperative societies (2005 figures), and 3236 of production cooperatives (2005 figures).

More recently there has been an upsurge of cooperative activity in Northern Syria, where new unions of cooperatives have been established in all the cantons and regions of Rojava as reported by the Solidarity Economy Association: "Cooperatives [have] become successively a strong element of the economy in Northern Syria, which is developing as a communal and democratic economy according to our political concept of Democratic Confederalism."<sup>86</sup>

<sup>83</sup> See the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) <https://www.unrwa.org/>

<sup>84</sup> ILO (2010d) 'Cooperatives in the Arab World: Reaffirming their validity for local and regional development', Background paper for the Sub-Regional Knowledge Sharing Workshop on Cooperatives in the Arab States Beirut, 23-26 November 2010.

<sup>85</sup> Collelo, T. (ed.) (1987) The Economy: 'Agriculture' in Syria: A Country Study. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress.

<sup>86</sup> Social Solidarity Economy Association, Solidarity Statement from the UK Cooperative Movement to the First Conference of Cooperatives in North Syria, 21-22 October, 2017, Accessed 08 February 2019.

## Project

### Relief and protection initiative in favour of vulnerable families of Damascus suburban and rural areas afflicted by the protracted conflict.

#### Main SDGs covered:



**CEDP member involved:** Coopermondo  
**Project partners:** Armadilla social cooperative; Zaharet Al Mada'en - Association of women  
**Country:** Syria  
**Sector:** Food Security & Agriculture, Health, Protection  
**Key themes:** Humanitarian aid, Psychological support, Empowerment of women  
**Category:** Conflict mitigation  
**Objectives:** The project aims to support vulnerable people in suburban and rural areas of Damascus, in particular women and people with disabilities.

## Programme description

The project works in the Damascus suburban area and aims to support vulnerable people who are particularly affected by the protracted conflict, managing a social centre with Zahret Al Madan (ZAM). These communities already suffered from poverty and lack of access to basic social services. Their conditions have considerably deteriorated due to the consequences of the conflict. In this context, women represent a particularly vulnerable category, since they find themselves in a condition of double inequality. They are discriminated against in public life due to social and cultural constraints and institutionalised gender bias. This results in their participation in socio-economic activities being hindered and their potential contribution to local development considerably limited. On the other hand, they are heavily burdened with family responsibilities, including caring for children and family members with disabilities or chronic diseases. In a general context of scarce public services and social stigmatisation of disability, it considerably hinders women's economic empowerment. Under the current critical circumstances, they may develop further stress and depression, as they are unable to face the additional needs emerging inside the family – due to displacement, deterioration of economic status, and difficult access to basic services.

The intervention is integrated with the strategies developed by the international community, to respond to the serious humanitarian

emergency caused by the conflict. The aim is to adequately meet the nutritional needs of the population affected by the effects of the crisis until the population itself is able to provide it autonomously. Among the most vulnerable categories in the context of the crisis are children (millions of whom are affected by the crisis, as previously highlighted) and women, who see a more limited access to basic social and health services. This has particularly dramatic effects for the population that was already living in poverty. Concern for survival, focussing on access to food and seeking accommodation, forces families to overlook other important needs including health. This has particularly negative effects on children with disabilities, whose interruption of rehabilitation programs causes regression of their conditions.

In 2013, Armadilla social cooperative started a humanitarian programme in the Damascus Southern Suburbs to promptly respond to the most urgent needs of vulnerable families who were dramatically impacted by the negative effects of the crisis. The reduced access to basic services and family income coupled with the soaring prices of basic goods resulted in a serious deterioration of their living conditions. When in November 2012 the armed conflict reached the South of Damascus, most families from the areas of Hajar Al Aswad, Yarmouk camp, Sbeneh, Set Zeinab, Babila, and Yalda, were forced to flee in search of a safer place to stay, leaving behind their few possessions and further exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities.

Through the Waldesian Church, the Italian Cooperation funds and Italian private foundations, Armadilla social cooperative has been able to give relief assistance and protection to around 1300 families so far. As the crisis has protracted and further intensified, the humanitarian needs of vulnerable people are increasing, making it necessary to continue to prioritise life-saving humanitarian assistance while paying particular attention to the special needs of vulnerable people. By providing a rapid response to continuing and new needs, Armadilla social cooperative has been able to mitigate against some of the worst effects of the ongoing conflict, by demonstrating the seventh cooperative principle, concern for community.

By using collective action and working with local partners on the ground, the project is better able to assess the needs of the families it works with, such as enabling people to access adequate nutrition and improvements to basic personal and household hygiene, due to living situations in shelters or crowded conditions with insufficient access to WASH facilities. It was also possible to target women with psycho-social support, to relieve the burden of care generated by the ongoing crisis and to improve well-being. The ZAM Centre also offers education and training for women as an income support initiative.

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## Key learning points and challenges

Currently, given the serious humanitarian crisis resulting from the continuation of the conflict, while continuing to support the activities described above, Armadilla is mainly involved in frontline emergency activities, such as the distribution of food and other basic necessities (hygiene kits, clothes and equipment suitable for the winter season, etc.) and the implementation of protective and psychological support for the most vulnerable (women and children).

Through the implementation of projects co-financed by the European Union and private foundations, Armadilla has favoured the strengthening of the local partner's intervention skills, making the ZAM Centre an important territorial reference in the field of physical and cognitive rehabilitation of children with disabilities, and in the field of vocational training for women, aimed at promoting income support activities, and psychosocial interventions designed to increase the emotional well-being of women.

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## Cooperative contribution to peace

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## Cooperative factor



## PALESTINE

### Background to the conflict in Palestine

Tubas Governorate is located in the north eastern part of the West Bank bordering Jenin Governorate and the Armistice Line (1948 borders) to the north, Nablus and Jericho Governorates to the west and south, and Jordan Valley to the east. The 19 communities targeted through this project are mostly small herding communities located in Area C in the North Jordan Valley.<sup>87</sup> Following the 1995 Oslo II Accords, Area C is an Israeli administered division created after the West Bank's separation into three areas (A, B and C), with C making up over 60% of West Bank territory. Israel has full civil and military control of Area C, home to roughly 300 000 Palestinians and 400 000 Israeli settlers.<sup>88</sup> Within Tubas Governorate, there are eleven military bases, nine settlements occupied by 1845 settlers, scattered over approximately 162km<sup>2</sup> classified as military training zone and the buffer zone (closed military zone) of the River Jordan. The communities involved in this project are constantly subjected to numerous rights violations and demolitions and evacuations are carried out regularly. One example of this is the community of Khirbet Yarza, which in the period 2010-2014, received 60 stop-work and demolition orders for shelters, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities and livestock structures. The community also received evacuation orders due to military training activities throughout 2010 to 2015 which forced residents to leave their houses and move to other areas. Local residents face daily movement restrictions, from road blockades to checkpoints, hindering access to services and markets. The effects of the harsh conditions on the ground have led to a decrease in the size of the population.

### Background to the cooperative movement in Palestine

The origins of the cooperative movement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) pre-dates the Israeli occupation, and has a long history, with the first cooperative being established nearly a century ago in 1924.<sup>89</sup> Cooperatives spread throughout the territory after the first cooperative law was passed in the 1930s, predominantly in the agricultural, transport and consumer sectors, but over time expanding in to a greater range of sectors, encouraged by government incentives and access to financing. By 2016, the number of registered cooperatives had reached nearly 1000, but the development and expansion of the cooperative sector is constantly under threat from the volatile climate in the OPT.

<sup>87</sup> Institute for Palestine Studies, The Situation and Future of Area C and the Jordan Valley, IPS Annual Conference, 2-4 November 2018.

<sup>88</sup> See OCHA, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Humanitarian Facts and Figures, 21 December 2017.

<sup>89</sup> ILO (2017) 'Palestinian Prime Minister launches Cooperative Sector Strategy' ILO Press Release, 15 February 2017.

Under occupation, due to the progressive marginalisation of communities and violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the role of cooperatives became even more important in the West Bank as the local population has to develop self-reliance and community-based coping mechanisms. The isolation of communities and restrictions on movement, commerce and rights highlighted the need for coordinated initiatives where people could be brought together by common goals. A number of cooperatives have therefore flourished especially in Area C communities where they have rapidly become the most common organisation type for herding and agricultural communities.

## Project

# TURBO - Tubas Rural Business Opportunities and Social Innovation

### Main SDGs covered:



**CEDP member involved:** Legacoop  
**Project partners:** GVC- Gruppo di Volontariato Civile; Legacoop Emilia-Romagna; Cooperativa di comunità Melpignano; Cooperativa LattEmilia; Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano  
**Sector:** Agriculture  
**Country:** Palestine  
**Key themes:** Gender equality, Environmental sustainability, Human rights  
**Category:** Conflict mitigation  
**Objectives:** The general objective is to strengthen the resilience of rural communities in the Jordan Valley in the West Bank through linking relief work, rehabilitation and development. The aim is to connect the chronic need for humanitarian aid with sustainable development projects that improve living conditions in 19 communities in OPT.

## Programme description

The lead partner active on the ground is Gruppo di Volontariato Civile (GVC)<sup>90</sup>, an Italian NGO focussing on human-centered and sustainable development. The Palestinian economy's growth rate has declined sharply in recent years as a result of the severe restrictions imposed by Israel and the stalemate in the peace process. This situation has hindered the creation of employment, especially for women and young people. In addition, the 19 beneficiary communities in Tubas Province have restricted access to water services, sanitation, energy, opportunities for agricultural production, and are affected by human rights violations such as settler violence, home demolitions and forcible transfer.<sup>91</sup> In this protracted crisis, creating conditions for the social and economic development of the most vulnerable communities is fundamental. The project achieves this objective through a set of activities to tackle multiple humanitarian needs, protection risks and development issues, to stress the importance of a holistic approach to people's vulnerabilities. Economic development is therefore fostered

<sup>90</sup> For more information see GVC (Gruppo di Volontariato Civile) at <http://www.gvc-italia.org/>

<sup>91</sup> Makarim Wibisono, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, OHCHR 'Alarming accounts of human rights violations of Palestinians living under occupation – UN expert' Geneva, 19 June 2015.

in a framework of inclusive and participatory strategies as well as gender equality, increasing women's opportunities to start a business and be part of decision-making processes.

The initiative is based on the idea that, in order to consistently and comprehensively tackle the needs of people in the Palestinian context, characterised by an extended conflict, it is important to adopt an approach of linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD), with complementary and simultaneous integrated initiatives.<sup>92</sup>

## Cooperative contribution to peace

As well as capacity building support for cooperatives in terms of start-ups, improvement of production, business management, marketing and value-addition, the project has supported networking and best practice exchanges with Italian cooperatives. The project has helped develop early warning mechanisms in the communities, to report violations of human rights as well as providing training for the Tubas Governorate staff to monitor and respond to human rights violations, creating a department to draft and update Protection Response

<sup>92</sup> European Parliament (2012) Policy Briefing 'Linking relief, rehabilitation and development: Towards more effective aid' Policy Department, Directorate-General for External Policies, 03 July 2012.



Plans (PRP) for each community. There has also been training for civil officials on “Community Protection Approach” (CPA), good governance, and mapping of needs to build specific social protection mechanisms for Area C. Despite previous mistrust of cooperatives associated with past corruption, the project has responded to a clear need to provide a way for people to come together to manage their products and resources. Over 6700 beneficiaries have been reached with these activities, making a real difference to those in Area C.

*“They make a concrete ground level contribution to peacebuilding, it’s micro level, but it can impact the macro level. Once people are talking - things can improve.” GVC fieldworker, Palestine*

The fieldworker staff observe that when there are economic activities that connect both Israeli and Palestinian populations, such as buying and selling products and agricultural inputs, other linkages are created as a result. This also helps in terms of lessening financial vulnerability of communities and increasing security.

*“Once people are comfortable economically, on two levels, it will have them more educated. Poverty is the mobiliser for violence, and violence of course, should be avoided in our context. In order to build peace, we need dialogues, and we need bridges.” GVC fieldworker, Palestine*

In addition to the economic security generated through cooperative activities, the project had an additional focus on the empowerment and economic inclusion of women, primarily by supporting women’s start-up enterprises and partnering with a Palestinian NGO business women forum (BWF). Support includes technical support to future entrepreneurs and the organisation of meetings and calls within the communities, to identify female entrepreneurs who were already active in different projects or women who had innovative business ideas but may not have the capacity or the funds to carry them out. In addition, a number of women’s cooperatives are active in Area C in the field of agricultural production, receiving support from GVC on cooperative management and governance.

*“We worked with them on mobilisation, gaining new members, managerial capacity, product level work, rehabilitation of lands, plantation opportunities – for such products to be owned, processed and marketed by the members.” GVC fieldworker, Palestine*

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## Cooperative factor

*“Cooperation is a start as a social dynamic toward economic building, as trust and bridge building.” GVC fieldworker, Palestine*

One of the most important opportunities was the best practice exchange visit to cooperatives in Italy that had a real impact on communities back in Palestine as it gave people a different perspective on what was possible. In addition, the visit created more certainty in people’s production activities and the resulting enterprises and exchanges, reinforcing participants’ economic security and strengthening relationships between cooperative partners. In Italy, Palestinian counterparts visited a solar panel cooperative, an idea which they brought to the West Bank, adapting the model to suit their needs. With support of the governorate, the solar panel cooperative in Area C operated between several communities. Members who have solar panels can pay a small monthly fee to generate and support a fund that will maintain and repair the panels in case of a demolition order, but also to buy new panels for the less fortunate. This is the same model adapted to the needs of the West Bank, and represents a good example of the LRRD approach, overcoming the division between humanitarian aid and development and providing a transferable and scalable example for other governorates.

*“We were looking to create income and reinvest it for the wealth of the community itself, and to strengthen social cohesion among people.” GVC HQ worker, Palestine*

The approach taken was very much around encouraging cooperatives to take the lead as civil society actors who can provide multi-purpose goals of economic elevation and development, as well as being connected to a global movement able to support and strengthen cooperatives in terms of development, providing resources and promoting the voice of marginalised communities.

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## Key learning points and challenges

A key challenge for the cooperatives was the access to markets, which is hampered by restrictions on free movement, however fieldworker staff acknowledge that there are many lessons and success stories from individuals working together that have resulted in new organisations coming together to provide services for the community. Vulnerable communities in Area C are now benefitting from higher levels of protection from mechanisms put in place, such as the early warning system and monitoring of IHL violations, that enable them to build and manage their production activities and strengthen socio-economic development. This is leading to better linkages and more transparency between the local government and CSOs.

*“Engagement with local authorities as partners was a very good idea as it opened doors and it strengthened their capacities to know their communities.” GVC HQ worker, Palestine*

The cooperative network, and use of social media for mobilisation, is particularly important for the approach promoted by the project, as it allows the use of established formal and informal networks and community-based mechanisms to support community-led analysis of vulnerabilities and threats, and the identification of community-based response plans. This mechanism represents the foundation of the LRRD approach championed by the project, whereby vulnerable groups are supported and protection of individuals is mainstreamed in all community initiatives.

In terms of promoting gender equality, it was also a challenge to work with the business women's forum in a highly patriarchal society, as finding women who wanted to take economic leadership was very difficult. The approach of piloting specific projects is going to be reviewed and a new strategy developed so as to better reach the women who are less confident but may be the people who would benefit most from these activities.

The partners on this project emphasise that cooperatives could be playing an even more prominent role in supporting communities in the OPT as from a bottom-up perspective they have observed that this is having a positive impact.

*"I strongly believe that the cooperative movement in Palestine should have a greater role in making a difference. Now, at the moment, there is a difference being made. Looking at life expectancy in the areas we are working, they are making some differences, economically, and socially speaking. Definitely they are making a difference in their local areas, involving more people and farmers in their dynamics, meaning that they are creating more opportunities, employment rate is high, more job opportunities, more land being cultivated, more resources utilised, more protections of the natural environment, this is a difference." GVC fieldworker, Palestine*



## 03. Conclusions and Recommendations

# 1. CONCLUSIONS

This report has demonstrated that cooperatives play important part in a multi-stakeholder approach to social, economic and political stabilisation in conflict and post-conflict settings. As people-centred businesses, cooperatives improve the jobs and livelihoods of community members and help people overcome social barriers that otherwise would be insurmountable.

The cooperative engagement in peacebuilding stems from a powerful tradition of strengthening community building and using people-centred approaches that empower and facilitate local people's direct involvement in decision-making. Due to a bottom-up strategy allowing space for members to develop skills, which can advance social inclusion, cooperatives have shown that they are better at nurturing relationships between divided people and overcome barriers through meaningful collaboration, thereby promoting democracy and consolidating peace. An example shown in this report is the case of the Buranga Cooperative in Rwanda, which gave women from different ethnic backgrounds an opportunity to come together for a common economic goal, through which a strong implicit outcome was an emerging environment of reconciliation between two divided ethnic groups.

The cooperative movement grew out of times of crisis. As a response to the needs of vulnerable people living in difficult conditions, cooperatives have an inherent capacity to mobilise people, provide and distribute services to local communities, foster dialogue between different ethnic groups and integrate both victims and former perpetrators. In light of the cooperative values and principles such as autonomy and independence, as well as self-help, equity and solidarity, cooperatives are skilled at restoring stability, building democratic leadership and maintaining trust among citizens from diverse social groups. For instance, the Ugandan multi-stakeholder cooperative project set to improve the stability of communities by giving children access to basic education.

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## Democracy, participation and autonomy

The participatory and democratic nature of cooperatives gives members of traumatised communities valuable knowledge and powerful tools that are helpful in the process of reconciliation. Cooperatives are effective at building trust due to their inclusive approach to peacebuilding modelled by the dialogue between citizens, grassroots communities and CSOs. A valuable example of this can be found in the S.P.R.I.N.G. programme in Iran, which had a strong impact on rebuilding trust between members and the cooperatives in order to strengthen their socio-economic conditions.

Due to their resilient structure and organisation, cooperatives are skilled at creating new opportunities for peaceful coexistence between people in conflict areas, for instance in places affected by inter-ethnic tensions. By ensuring common goals and shared decision-making, cooperatives guide their members toward joint purposes, mutual understanding and acceptance of differences, as they recognise the values and contributions of all members regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, or any other social or personal characteristics.

Cooperatives can also be a means to democratise the rights of underprivileged groups or societies and improve local, regional and national autonomy. Inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue plays a significant role in the development of infrastructures with the common goal of extending access to services to all communities. In many disadvantaged areas, cooperatives establish and protect access to affordable utilities, resources and housing, provided they benefit from supportive legal frameworks enabling them to do so. When favourable public policies are in place, cooperatives are able to play a vital role in economic and social development by improving access to essential services and common goods for the community, whilst generating local employment. An example is the work of ANSAF in Tanzania that had an impact on the conflict over land and natural resources by improving financial support for cooperatives.

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## Humanitarian assistance

Cooperatives strive to (re)establish relationships between local communities and international representatives. By focussing on building resilience at community and higher political levels, cooperatives assist in developing capacities such as conflict mitigation and reconciliation. They can also improve the dissemination of information on peace and tolerance, confidence building and community leadership programmes. We can single out the contribution of cooperatives in addressing humanitarian needs during open conflicts, and the way they are able to link humanitarian and development issues, acting as grassroots level stakeholders fully embedded in their local communities. Good examples from the research included a project from Syria supporting vulnerable people, in particular women and people with disabilities, as well as a multi-stakeholder cooperative project in Palestine set to strengthen the

resilience of rural communities in the West Bank through linking actions on relief, rehabilitation and development.

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## The value of education and training

Cooperatives have the ability to rebuild and educate communities affected by conflict. By training communities in the importance of preserving peace and fostering reconciliation, cooperatives actively engage in creating an environment that prevents intolerance of different beliefs and of differences between members. Furthermore, cooperatives can be significant spaces for mediation and compromise between people that have experienced threats and trauma, because member and community participation can help to better process inner fears, anguish and distress either individually or collectively. This was illustrated in particular through case studies from Rwanda, where the values of peace diffused by the cooperatives were complementary to the institutional justice process carried out in the Gacaca; or in the case from Ivory Coast, where education on the cooperative model empowered fishermen from a disenfranchised minority to better know and advance their rights.

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## Decent work and self-sufficiency

Successful cooperative businesses are a way to avoid and prevent poverty, and to transcend conflict. Furthermore, through access to decent work, cooperatives become safe spaces of inclusion and offer livelihood opportunities regardless of age, gender or ethnic group. As potential healing spaces cooperatives can restore the lives of their members and re-create a sense of purpose, fostering self-sufficiency and providing new working opportunities among the members of different communities. Members of cooperatives also tend to have better access to training, higher job security, a safer work environment and, as a result, the possibility of fairer labour rights. An example of the value of self-sufficiency was Insieme cooperative in Bratunac, Bosnia and Herzegovina; by providing continuous training to its employees and to the producers, as well as a better access to markets for their products, the cooperative has managed to both maintain and create new jobs and prosperity for the local community. As 'schools for democracy', employing the concept of equal voting rights (one member, one vote), cooperatives are constructively tackling inequalities when they arise, through inclusion regardless of social group, whilst giving opportunities to vulnerable individuals to access and manage common resources as an equal cooperative member. Through the democratic management of resources, related tensions may be reduced, as was illustrated in a case from El Salvador, where cooperatives played an instrumental role in land management under the country's land reform programme. Another example is the Aamal project in Lebanon and Jordan whose principal objective was to encourage local people to cooperate with refugee groups from Syria and Palestine.

Cooperatives can stabilise a community and mitigate the impact of war and conflict, which often damages economic activities. Through the provision of decent work and economic opportunities that are often not available to individuals, a cooperative may help to re-establish these economic relations in a precarious environment. The re-emergence of commerce can give people renewed opportunities to rebuild their lives after a conflict. Many cases reflected this aspect, such as cooperative examples from Guatemala and Colombia.

Cooperatives are also a source of innovation, as in many cases the services set up by cooperatives were not previously being provided elsewhere, e.g. the case of a renewable energy cooperative in a favela in Brazil. This also links to reducing economic inequality where cooperatives represent an alternative to the provision of services in monopoly markets.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, a series of recommendations concerning the role of cooperatives as key actors in a multi-stakeholder approach to peacebuilding has been developed. Our recommendations are directed to EU institutions, cooperative leaders and potential external partners, including other CSOs such as NGOs, but also LAs and other general stakeholders, and they are most effectively implemented when all partners can take them into account. In addition, when one or several of these categories may be more particularly well placed to facilitate actions related to peacebuilding processes, we also suggest this within our recommendations.

### 1. Promote local ownership

With 3 million cooperatives worldwide and more than 1 billion members, cooperatives are valuable global networks of social and economic power, based on democratic practices and concern for social justice. Cooperatives are organised on a universal set of binding values and principles, and their members have a common understanding and vision rooted in democracy and cooperation. This makes cooperative members natural supporters of their community's political freedom, freedom of expression and the opportunity to voice its own beliefs and priorities. Cooperatives are defined by democratic practices and good governance which improves trust and collaborative relationships between its members. As a result, members of cooperatives have an innate ability to build equitable, inclusive political settlements and restore good governance. EU institutions,

CSOs, NGOs, LAs and other stakeholders can therefore work alongside cooperatives to promote formal mechanisms for local ownership and participation in peace processes, and more inclusive participation in the political system such as the empowerment of women, elders and young people. Moreover, international partners, communities and donors can support institutional transformations more effectively, grounded on an understanding that there may be multiple paths toward successful peacebuilding. Further, political stakeholders and other external actors may take advantage of the benefits of greater ownership, and work more closely with cooperatives on locally owned peacebuilding processes. This can for instance be achieved through further institutional capacity building and technical assistance, especially through trainings that benefit the wider community, joint initiatives to assess and map existing problems, or enhanced sharing of information on democratic governance. There is a need for committed leadership and guidance that benefits all stakeholders involved. One way of achieving this could be through setting up democracy fellowships and internships in post-conflict communities, and to ensure that democratic pedagogy and civic education are promoted in schools.

### 2. Foster greater inclusivity in peacebuilding processes

While focussing on members' needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members. Building on this, it is crucial to give local communities and cooperatives a voice by strengthening their political participation in governance and increasing their influence in key debates. As grassroots level stakeholders, members of cooperatives that have endured the struggles of conflict often have an in-depth understanding of its causes and can therefore better articulate the most appropriate and effective solutions for their context by implementing local perspectives. By endeavouring to involve all the members of their local community, including women, young people and elders, cooperatives are essential architects of peacebuilding and social and political reconciliation. This can be better capitalised on by ensuring that cooperatives are involved in policy dialogue, through consultations, debates and networks, to carry the voice of their diverse

membership and foster participatory and inclusive processes. To reach this goal, there should be open, transparent and participative cooperation between local actors and international partners, as well as clear communication on development and peace processes at the community level. Greater inclusivity in peacebuilding is of particular relevance for the EU institutions, as well as national governments.

### **3. Emphasise the resilience of cooperatives to encourage investment**

Cooperatives may be the first or only remaining local support structures that people are able to access. Furthermore, cooperatives can help to rebuild local societal structures and provide jobs where there is no other effective infrastructure, enabling people to share risks and pool resources. They may also be most effective when used in immediate post-conflict spaces when attention shifts from immediate needs to a more long-term strategy. The cooperative model has proven resilient to disruptive change, such as armed conflicts or economic crisis. For such benefits to be reaped, cooperative leaders and members should focus on strengthening cooperative governance, which may be considered a key source of cooperatives' resilience. It should also be emphasised that cooperatives must play an important role in shaping the economic recovery of fragile and conflict-affected countries by integrating peacebuilding goals and strategies into their economic plans and by meeting the needs and increasing the economic participation of the most vulnerable groups. Furthermore, we recommend that EU actors and international partners consider the resilient nature of the cooperative model when engaged in the design and implementation of peacebuilding activities.

### **4. Ensure autonomy and independence**

It is important to bear in mind that within a given community, not all people may want, or be able to be members of the cooperative. In the case of land inequalities, cooperatives may exacerbate the potential for conflict between member and non-member constituents as non-members perceive that members are unfairly able to accumulate assets that they cannot access, thereby negatively impacting social relations. For cooperatives to be most effective, the cooperative movement needs to be truly independent from government and fully exercise its participatory democratic powers to rebuild relationships between individuals and institutions, particularly as cooperatives may have been misused by governing organisations in conflict situations, and therefore may not be trusted as a potential enterprise opportunity. Therefore, prioritising cooperatives' autonomy can be recognised as a strong step toward peace. This is particularly relevant for supranational institutions, national governments, public authorities and cooperative leaders, who should consider the benefits of an enabling environment that preserves the autonomy and independence of cooperatives as genuine member-owned and controlled organisations, in accordance with the fourth cooperative principle.

### **5. Support education and training to foster peacebuilding**

Civic education and training should be made available to all community members so that they better understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Cooperatives are exemplary at providing education and training for their members, so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. Furthermore, cooperatives inform the general public – particularly young people and opinion leaders – about the nature and benefits of cooperation in peacebuilding. This can be further reinforced if the cooperative

movement keeps the building capacity of its member organisations to develop trainings that can fuel peacebuilding efforts. We urge external partners and donors, such as the EU, to support cooperative education and training, as well as the greater involvement of cooperatives in awareness-raising initiatives.

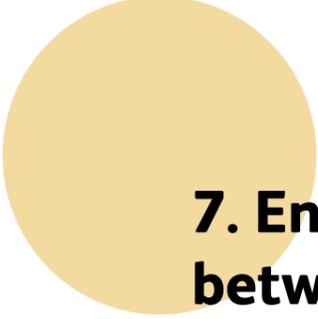
Local communities, local actors, cooperative leaders, political stakeholders and service providers all have something to gain from knowledge sharing. However, differences in their interests and backgrounds often result in separate challenges and approaches. It is therefore imperative to focus on making information and knowledge available in meaningful ways between in-country and external partners. This can be achieved by creating an open trusting environment, engaging in transparent and participatory decision-making, recognising local approaches and developing work protocols to make time and resources available. Most importantly, all partners should endeavour to promote a bottom-up approach in knowledge sharing processes, for which needs assessments with local community members can be a useful tool. Furthermore, EU actors, policy makers and civil society should endeavour to promote and support knowledge sharing activities, alongside local communities, cooperatives and their members.



## **6. Acknowledge existing community dynamics and power structures**

There should never be an automatic assumption that cooperatives, by their very nature, will inevitably create the right conditions for peaceful coexistence. Social and solidarity organisation like cooperatives can only have an impact on peaceful coexistence as long as the community and the political setting permit it. Whilst cooperatives can be a vehicle for overcoming conflict, they can also face many challenges such as elite-capture, member control by dominant groups, inequality, social polarisation and even corruption. It is therefore essential to recognise the divergent needs at grassroots level when creating cooperatives in a post-conflict space, with the aim of protecting local communities from a continuing conflict resulting from needs of different groups not being met. In order to overcome such challenges and to get the community to work

jointly in their mutual best interest, cooperative leaders should seek to promote measures such as sustainable and participatory business practices, drawing further attention to cooperatives' socio-economic impact and especially to what makes cooperatives unique. It is important to acknowledge the multiple interpretations of peace, conflict resolution, justice and reconciliation. Consequently, policy makers and international partners should consider local community dynamics and power structures when implementing peacebuilding activities, while cooperative leaders should focus on upholding cooperative values and principles, including democratic participation, inclusion and the capacity to empower their members and wider society.



## **7. Ensure cooperation between cooperatives and other partners**

The relevance of strengthening partnerships, both between cooperatives and with non-cooperative actors such as other CSOs, NGOs and LAs, was a recurrent feature in the cases, and frequently emphasised as a strong asset. Many cases highlighted this, particularly regarding partnerships with municipalities, such as a cooperative-led project in Lebanon supporting the establishment of a local hub for young people. In addition, cooperatives are able to act as a bridge between humanitarian and development approaches in conflict resolution (as particularly illustrated by cases from Palestine and Syria), and thus they can be a key partner in peacebuilding transitions. Therefore, it appears crucial that peacebuilding and democratisation efforts benefit from the strengths of each local partner. In this context, it would be important for CSOs and LAs to keep engaging further with cooperatives, so that all stakeholders are able to use synergies between their projects and activities, in order to overcome obstacles and help tackle power inequalities by creating a political space for collaborative action. Cooperatives must encourage mediation and dialogue processes and implement local mechanisms to broaden community participation and to help transform relationships between local communities and international actors on the ground throughout the different phases of the peace process. International partnerships can encourage peacebuilding reform processes such as education in conflict management, democratic

participation and electoral processes, as well as promote mission design and implementation that builds on local capacity and input.

These conclusions and recommendations are intended as a useful summary for interested stakeholders and aim to get to the heart of how the cooperative difference can have a greater impact in peacebuilding processes and activities. Keeping inclusivity, cooperation and ownership central to programmes of this nature, combined with the strength of education and the sharing of knowledge between partners, are key elements that will help to build upon the cooperative advantage in the field of peace. Of course, more questions could be addressed through further research, for instance on exploring the most efficient tools for peacebuilding and trust building supported by the cooperative model in terms of governance, member participation, and training. Acknowledging that much remains to be done for peaceful and inclusive societies, this research and future work in this field strive to inspire peacebuilding actors to further take cooperative values and principles into account, and to find inspiration from the practices of cooperation advanced by the movement.

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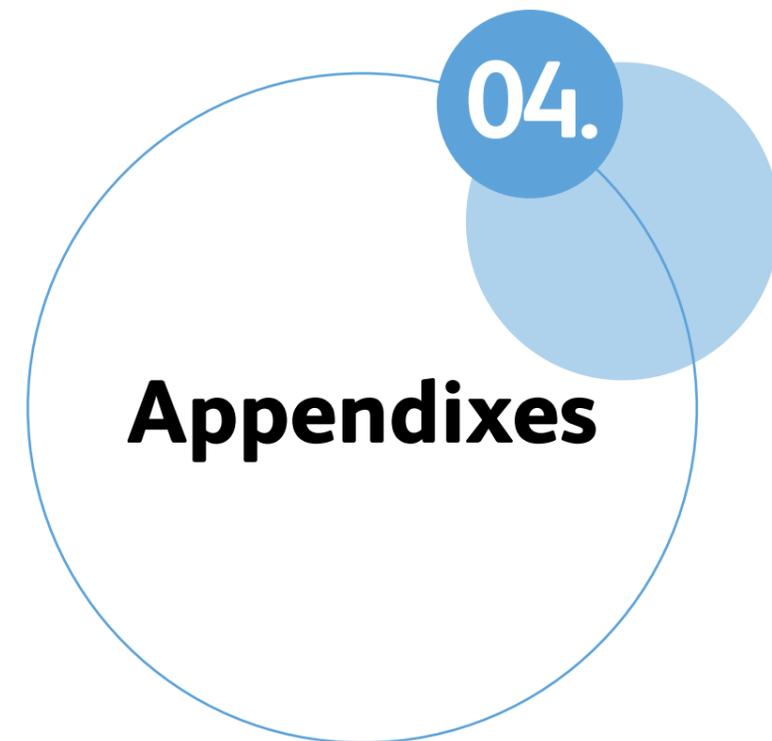
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# APPENDIX 1 – DESCRIPTION OF CEDP MEMBERS

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## AJEEC-NISPED

**AJEEC-NISPED** (the Arab-Jewish Center for Equality, Empowerment and Cooperation – Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Development) is an Arab-Jewish non-profit organisation based in Israel’s Negev, dedicated to strengthening active citizenship through education and economic empowerment. AJEEC-NISPED works towards creating equal, inclusive and flourishing societies. Their programming includes an array of strategies including economic development through formation of cooperatives and social enterprises, volunteerism, quality early childhood education, health promotion, and Jewish-Arab partnership. In Israel they focus primarily on the most marginalised populations, particularly the Negev Arab Bedouin. In the Middle East they promote a comprehensive peace through people-to-people cross border projects. Internationally they work to advance sustainable human development in societies in transition by education and training projects.

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## BRS

**BRS**, the Belgian Raiffeisen Foundation, was founded in 1992 by CERA Bank, a fully-fledged cooperative bank set up a century ago by Belgian farmers following Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen’s cooperative principles, one of the fathers of savings and credit cooperatives. Since its inception, the ambition of BRS has been to share CERA’s experience in cooperative banking with microfinance institutions (MFIs) located in the South by supporting local savings and credit cooperatives. After the merger between the CERA Bank, Kredietbank and ABB Insurances in 1998, a new financial group emerged: KBC Bank & Insurance. Accordingly, CERA Bank has turned into Cera, the main shareholder of KBC Group, and BRS’s capacity has been enriched with insurance expertise. Nowadays, BRS – the joint venture of KBC Group and the cooperative Cera – is benefitting from the financial and technical support of Cera and KBC Bank & Insurance and its mission is expressed as follows: “BRS supports microfinance and micro-insurance projects in the South to help sustainably improve the quality of life of the poorer population in the South. Not merely with cash, but more specifically with advice and in a dialogue with the stakeholders.”

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## Cera

**Cera** is a cooperative of around 400 000 members. By joining forces with its members and its partners, Cera creates economic and social added value in 3 areas:

- As a principal shareholder, Cera ensures the solid foundations of the KBC Group.
- The members of Cera qualify for unique benefits.
- Cera generates a positive impact in our community through support to projects and services on cooperative entrepreneurship in Belgium and in the South. In the global South, Cera focusses on governance of rural cooperatives, including – but not limited to – microfinance and microinsurance institutions (in collaboration with BRS). Raiffeisen’s cooperative values of ‘cooperation’, ‘solidarity’ and ‘respect for all’ have already underpinned the entrepreneurship of Cera for 125 years.

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## Co-operative College

The UK **Co-operative College** is an educational charity that educates, trains and capacity builds the cooperative movement nationally and internationally. Through its dedicated team, the College focusses its expertise on cooperative education and development, cooperative research, international cooperative development, cooperative history and heritage and cooperative schools.

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## Coopermondo

**Coopermondo** is the Association for International Development Cooperation supported by Confcooperative, the Confederation of the Italian Cooperatives. Founded on 13th March 2007, Coopermondo aims to enhance the social and mutual character of the Italian Cooperatives at the international level, by promoting a sustainable economic and social development based on the centrality of the human being.

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## DGRV

**DGRV** (German Cooperative and Raiffeisen Confederation) is the national apex organisation and top-level auditing confederation of the cooperative groups in Germany. It represents more than 5500 cooperative enterprises with over 800 000 employees and almost 20 million members. Since more than 30 years DGRV, as a specialist organisation, has incorporated the expertise of the cooperative system into Germany’s international development cooperation. The organisation is currently working in more than 20 countries to provide consultancy services and to develop and strengthen cooperative systems and structures. DGRV is primarily commissioned by the German government and its international projects are mainly funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL).

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## Euro Coop

**Euro Coop** is the European apex organisation for consumer cooperatives. Founded in 1957, Euro Coop was one of the first Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) to be recognised by the European Commission. It has made its expertise available to all European Union Institutions for the promotion of the interests of consumer cooperatives and their consumer-members. Euro Coop is the voice of the cooperative retailers in Europe. Our organisation brings together the national associations of consumer cooperatives in 19 European countries. Together, Euro Coop members are Europe's strongest retail force – accounting for € 79 billion in annual turnover. Today, Euro Coop represents and upholds the structure and ethics of consumer cooperative enterprises at European level.

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## Kooperationen

**Kooperationen** is the Danish cooperative employers' organisation with a network of 106 member companies and more than 14000 employees. As the apex organisation for Danish cooperatives, they promote the cooperative alternative across many sectors of the economy. Established in 1922, Kooperationen provides professional legal advice and counselling within areas such as employment law, company law and construction law. Their members represent a wide range of business fields such as the banking and insurance sector to craftsman and construction businesses, conference centres and museums. Furthermore, they offer high quality professional legal and governance advice and guidance to new cooperative start-ups as well as to established cooperatives. As a cooperative employers' organisation, they play an active role in the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and in Cooperatives Europe.

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## Legacoop

Founded in 1886, **Legacoop**, Lega Nazionale delle Cooperative e Mutue (National League of Cooperatives and Mutuals) is the oldest Italian cooperative organisation. Legacoop promotes the development of cooperation and mutuality, the economic and solidarity relations of its member cooperatives and encourages the spread of cooperative principles and values. More than 15 000 cooperatives belonging to Legacoop are present in all regions and productive sectors. They can be found in leading positions in sectors such as retailing, construction, agro-food, services and manufacturing. Member cooperatives have also created important companies in the insurance, finance and credit sectors.

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## REScoop

**REScoop** is short for renewable energy cooperative, and refers to a business model where citizens jointly own and participate in renewable energy or energy efficiency projects. REScoops are also referred to as community power or community energy initiatives. REScoop.eu empowers citizens and cooperatives in their fight for

energy democracy. This is achieved by representing the voice of citizens and renewable energy cooperatives to European policy makers, supporting the start-up of new REScoops, providing services to the European REScoops and promoting the REScoop business model throughout Europe and beyond.

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## We Effect

**We Effect** (formerly the Swedish Cooperative Centre) works since 1958 with partner organisations in more than 20 countries, towards the vision of a sustainable and just world free from poverty. Their mission: to strengthen the capacity of member-based, democratic organisations to enable women and men in poverty to improve their living conditions, defend their rights, and contribute to a just society.

# APPENDIX 2 - DATA COLLECTION TEMPLATE

TEMPLATE USED TO COLLECT CASE STUDIES OF COOPERATIVES AND PEACEBUILDING PROMOTED OR MANAGED BY THE CEDP AND THEIR MEMBERS.

## 1. Primary Details of the Case Study Project:

Please fill in and duplicate the following form for each ongoing or completed project you wish to include.

<b>Name of the project</b>	
<b>CEDP Member involved</b>	
<b>Organisation in charge of the project</b> (if different from above)	
<b>Start and end date</b>	
<b>Location of the project</b> (country/state/area)	
<b>Projects Objective(s)</b> (150 characters maximum)	
<b>Sector of intervention</b>	
<b>Project partners</b> (i.e. name and type of organisation e.g. coop, CSO, other)	
<b>Please provide a very brief and general description (1000 characters maximum) of the project.</b> Please highlight the link to peacebuilding where possible.	

## 2. Qualitative and Contextual Details of the Case Study:

This section is intended to collect relatively brief written input on the case, which will be expanded upon during the next phase of the research, in particular through follow-up interviews.

<b>Please fill in which category best describes the cooperative project and its relation to peace</b> Provide additional details if desired.		
<b>Prevention</b> (preventing conflict from occurring)	<b>Mitigation</b> (mitigating an ongoing conflict)	<b>Post-Conflict</b> (post-conflict reconstruction)
<b>Background to the Conflict:</b> Please briefly outline the historical background to the conflict and relevant key sub-themes (e.g. Gender, Environment, Armed conflict etc.). Other useful elements to include would be the key events, main actors, turning points, and outcomes. Additional sources of information (further links, resources, webpages) can be provided here and are also welcomed.		
<b>The Cooperative Context:</b> Please briefly outline the historical background of the cooperative movement in the context and location stated above. Please also describe the motivations for the involvement of the cooperative i.e. how did the cooperative become active in this framework?		
<b>Cooperative Contribution and the Cooperative Factor:</b> Please provide details of the main cooperative actions during the project (i.e. What actions did the cooperative carry out in relation to peace, and what was the added value brought by the cooperative model?)		
<b>Learning Outcomes:</b> Please provide a description of the key outcomes and takeaways from the project. What was successful? What could have been improved? What challenges were faced? What was learnt?		
<b>Partnerships &amp; Stakeholders:</b> Please describe the key relationships and partnerships in the project (i.e. target audience, beneficiaries, relations with the wider community, relations with key stakeholders and partners both inside and outside the coop movement e.g. relations with cooperatives apexes, CSOs, LAs, other linkages.)		
<b>Please provide any additional information you wish to provide in the box below:</b>		

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### 3. Contact information

<b>Name of the person who has filled in this form:</b>
<b>Position within the organisation:</b>
<b>Contact details (email address/work phone):</b>

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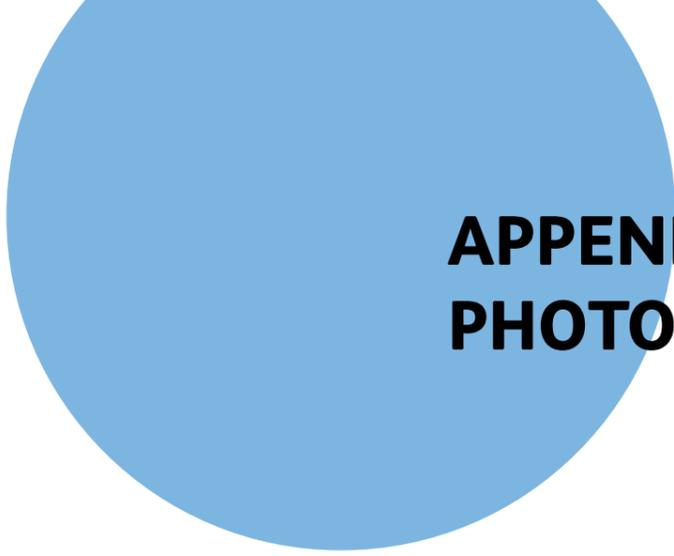
### 4. Acceptance and Disclaimer notice

Thank you for taking the time to complete this document. Please be assured that the individual contact information requested in section 3 is held as strictly private and confidential data, in line with data protection legislation. Therefore, it will not be published, sold, or shared with anyone outside Cooperatives Europe's structures and partners, and will be kept for internal purposes only, such as contacting you for further clarification and follow-up on the data provided. All other information provided on the project details will contribute to the production of Cooperatives Europe's publication, to highlight and demonstrate cooperatives' contribution to peacebuilding worldwide.

If you would like to receive further updates about the outcomes of the study, please check the box below:

Yes, I want to be informed

By submitting this form, you understand and accept the data protection policy of Cooperatives Europe and consent to your information being used as per the policy. For more information on how the data submitted may be used, please check Cooperatives Europe's website.



## APPENDIX 3 - PHOTOS CREDITS

I. Pictures on pages 32, 33, 35, and 39 courtesy of Andrea Wilkinson of The Co-operative College

II. Pictures on pages 53 and 54 courtesy of Fundación CFA

III. Pictures on page 57 Courtesy of Coopermondo

VI. Picture on page 62 courtesy of Legacoop

V. Pictures on pages 67 and 68 courtesy of LAMA. Caption page 67: *Mentor and mentees during a visit to a catering enterprise in Tripoli, Lebanon.* Caption page 68 Left: *Sensing journey to a beekeeping farm in Nabatieh, Lebanon.* Caption page 68 Right: *Mentor and mentees during a visit to a flower shop in Fanar, Lebanon.*

VI. Picture on page 93 courtesy of CONFRAS, supported by We Effect, photo by Jesper Klemmedsson

VII. Pictures on page 97 and 100 courtesy of RevoluSolar

VIII. Pictures on page 107 courtesy of Legacoop

IX. Picture on page 114 courtesy of AJEEC-NISPED

X. Picture on page 119 courtesy of Armadilla

XI. Pictures on pages 123 and 126 courtesy of GVC, photos by Fadi Arouri

**Cooperatives Europe (Development Team)**

Avenue Milcamps 105, 1030 Brussels, Belgium

www.coopseurope.coop

+32 (0) 2 743 10 33

development@coopseurope.coop

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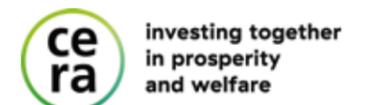
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