What Difference Do Cooperatives Make?

Global Outcomes Report
Kenya, Peru, Philippines, and Poland

Dr. Judith A. Hermanson
Director, ICRG, OCDC

Leah Marie Lucas
Research Manager, ICRG, OCDC

Nicholas Hung
Research Assistant, ICRG, OCDC

May 2021
Table of Contents

3 Tables and Figures
4 Key Acronyms
5 Acknowledgments
6 About Us
7 WDDCM at a Glance
8 Introduction
9 Key Findings
11 Methodology
13 Economic Impacts on Cooperative Households
15 Economic Impacts on Communities
17 Cooperatives and Social Capital
19 Social Impacts on Communities
21 Cooperatives Provide Pathways for Women
25 The “Cooperative Difference”
27 U.S. Overseas Cooperative Development Council Members
Tables & Figures

10 Figure 1. Member Average Economic Class Ranking (Standardized) Compared to National Averages
12 Table 1. WDDCM Survey Sample Distribution
14 Figure 2. “Do cooperatives positively benefit your household economically?”
14 Figure 3. Members report that cooperatives directly improve their...
16 Figure 4. Non-members report that cooperatives contribute to their communities...
18 Figure 5. “Would you say that most people in your community can be trusted?”
18 Figure 6. Members report that in emergencies, they relied primarily on their...
20 Figure 7. Non-members report that cooperatives positively impact their communities’...
20 Figure 8. Awareness and Access of Socially Oriented Cooperative Programs (%)
22 Figure 9. Gender Gap of WDDCM Countries
22 Figure 10. Women Member Average Economic Class Ranking (Standardized) Compared to National Averages
24 Figure 11. “Do cooperatives positively influence the economic status of women?”
24 Figure 12. Women members report positive impacts of cooperative membership, including...

Key Acronyms

FLECO First Laguna Electric Cooperative, Inc.
ICRG International Cooperative Research Group
OCDC U.S. Overseas Cooperative Development Council
SACCO Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization
TBSI The Bridgewater School, Inc.
USAID United States Agency for International Development
WDDCM What Difference Do Cooperatives Make?
About Us

The U.S. Overseas Cooperative Development Council (OCDC) advances cooperative development through support and advocacy for its members’ work in countries around the world. The International Cooperative Research Group (ICRG), OCDC’s research arm, leads independent research on the impact and effectiveness of cooperative development in developing countries and emerging markets. Using academically rigorous methods, the ICRG compiles new evidence to expand the global body of knowledge about cooperative development.

The ICRG conducts both policy-oriented and practice-focused research focused on two thematic areas: (1) The potential for cooperatives to alleviate poverty and promote broad-based inclusive economic growth; and (2) The enabling and inhibiting factors for the success of cooperatives. Key to the ICRG’s research process is active engagement with local stakeholders and research institutions. Committed to local ownership of research outcomes and to the application of new knowledge to expand and deepen cooperative impact, the ICRG facilitates discussion and collaboration between local, national, and global policymakers and cooperative leaders through diverse learning opportunities and events.

OCDC’s website (ocdc.coop/research) serves as a knowledge platform for international cooperative development, and the ICRG actively disseminates research outcomes through participation in international conferences, publication of research reports, and development of tools to support research application.

Acknowledgments

The ICRG designed and led WDDCM as a collaborative global research project, made possible by the participation of stakeholders throughout the process and the support of the USAID Cooperative Development Program and the ICRG Research Advisory Committee. Major research and field partners are:

- Co-operative University of Kenya
- Dalberg Research Kenya – Kenya
- Global Communities
- Institute of Peru – Universidad de San Martin de Porres
- Ipsos Perú
- Stratbase ADR Institute for Strategic and International Studies (ADRi) – Philippines
- Centrum Doradztwa Rolniczego (CDR) Krakow (Agricultural Advisory Center, Krakow) – Poland
- Biuro Badan Społecznych OBSEWATOR - Poland
- Cooperative Development Authority, Republic of the Philippines
The purpose of this research is to understand whether there is a measurable "cooperative difference" for members of primary cooperatives and the communities in which cooperatives operate. In answering the key research question, "What Difference Do Cooperatives Make?" the project goes directly to the source, asking members and communities their perspectives on cooperatives' impact. From 2017 to 2020, the ICRG used a rigorous mixed methods research design and scientific sampling method to survey over 8,000 people—including cooperative members and a comparison group of non-members. This new primary data informed detailed analyses for each country, which considered the potential of cooperative development to raise the incomes of members and promote the social and economic well-being of their communities. Engagement with stakeholders, including focus groups and key informants, leaders of cooperatives and communities, community and cooperative members, and senior policymakers, among others, provided insights into the quantitative data. The Global Outcomes Report ties together the four country studies and considers whether there are commonalities across the diverse regions, countries, and sectors of the study. The report explores what the findings might suggest for policies to support inclusive economic growth.

To demonstrate how cooperative membership contributes to members’ success, this report also shows the “human face” of the numbers through member profiles from each country. The member profiles serve as tangible examples of the cooperative difference in practice.

Introduction
The “headline” findings from WDDCM are that across all four countries, members of cooperatives are outperforming national averages. They are more likely to have higher than average incomes, and less likely to be very poor. Figure 1 compares the average economic class ranking across all four countries of the study, demonstrating cooperative members’ consistently higher economic status compared to national averages.

Across the board, economic reasons are the primary motivation for people to join cooperatives. However, the data show that valued cooperative benefits extend beyond the impacts on income and include social and community advancements.

Economically, cooperative members are more likely than the population in general to have average or above average incomes and are less likely to be poor or very poor.

Holistically, cooperative members enjoy a better sense of overall well-being, financial security, and trust in their community than non-members. During times of need, cooperative members have improved access to social support systems and other resources that support their resilience and ability to weather adverse events.

Women members gain independence and agency from cooperative membership. Cooperatives offer training, support, and leadership opportunities to women, with wide-reaching impacts on their well-being.

Cooperative members value the cooperative principles and share a common identity. A key cooperative principle is “care for community,” which is reflected in cooperatives’ social program offerings.

How do cooperatives achieve this powerful and multi-faceted impact on members and communities?
By letting members decide.

The evidence shows that cooperatives are especially effective at improving the economic and social well-being of their members, given that members are active participants in cooperative decision-making processes. Cooperative members attribute their improved economic standing to their cooperative membership and the direct and indirect ways that cooperatives support their development. Cooperatives help members achieve greater prosperity directly—through access to credit and higher earnings—and indirectly, by facilitating financial education, mentorship, and training. The combined result is that members are better prepared to serve as effective business owners and leaders in their communities.

Cooperatives offer a socially conscious business model, inherently concerned with community well-being. Members of a cooperative are also active members of their communities. Cooperatives allow members to work together and learn from one another, improve themselves, and pool their knowledge and resources to advance their household and community prosperity. Inclusive economic development can be built on a cooperative-enabled model for members and communities.
Methodology

The WDDCM comparative research design analyzes data from a scientifically drawn sample of cooperative members, representative of the four countries’ geographic and sectoral distributions, together with a counter-factual group of comparable respondents who are not members of cooperatives. Focus group discussions and key informant interviews add additional qualitative insight and help contextualize the quantitative results. WDDCM interviewed more than 8,000 people across the four countries, distributed as shown in Table 1.

While this study seeks to measure the impact of cooperative membership, it is not an impact evaluation in the strictest sense. The research does not address causation directly but identifies differences between cooperative members and non-members by creating a valid comparison group and analyzes perceptions between the two groups. The study’s sample is triangulated with national statistics to refine the analysis and nuance the interpretation.¹

¹ The ICRG contracted a professional research firm in each country to lead the in-country data collection using the ICRG Instruments. Data was gathered based on the ICC/ESOMAR International Code on Market, Opinion, and Social Research and Data Analytics. For a more detailed explanation of the WDDCM methodology, refer to the Country Reports.

A supplementary survey of 250 individuals (126 women and 124 men) was completed in 2020 to confirm the trends observed from the non-member sample in the Peru study. These additional 250 individuals are not summed in Table 1’s figures as the methodology of the study was complementary and not comprehensive.

### Table 1. WDDCM Survey Sample Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Cooperative Members</th>
<th>Non-Members</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>572</td>
<td>1,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>1,232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>1,022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,092</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,915</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,007</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 A supplementary survey of 250 individuals (126 women and 124 men) was completed in 2020 to confirm the trends observed from the non-member sample in the Peru study. These additional 250 individuals are not summed in Table 1’s figures as the methodology of the study was complementary and not comprehensive.
Across the board, cooperative members report higher average incomes and are less likely to be in the lowest socioeconomic groups than the general population in each of the four countries of the study. Cooperative members’ perceptions coincide with these positive economic trends. Figure 2 demonstrates that most members in all four countries agree or strongly agree that their household benefits economically from cooperative membership.

Beyond reporting their enjoyment of cooperative-derived economic benefits, the majority of cooperative members in each country attribute their relative prosperity and economic well-being to their cooperative membership. They report greater financial security and purchasing power, increased access to educational opportunities, and improved quality of life. Figure 3 displays the top-cited improvements from the cooperative member sample, with percentages by country.

Members attest that their cooperatives help them to make better decisions, both at home and in their businesses. John’s story demonstrates the quality-of-life improvements that his family has received from cooperative membership.

John Maina Mwai was able to overcome challenging odds of poverty and unemployment, and become a businessman and homeowner, one step at a time, supported by his SACCO.

John was unemployed until he learned that Nanyuki Boda Boda (NABOSA) could help to finance a loan for him to invest in a motorcycle. This was all that John needed to launch his business as a boda boda motortaxi driver. John was good at his trade, and with time, he paid off his loan and bought a second motorbike, expanding his business and offering employment to another driver.

John had another dream to have a place to call his own. With the support of NABOSA, John and his family were able to move out of their rental property and into a 3-bedroom home. Through NABOSA, we own our own house and also this plot (of land). We even have a kitchen garden. John glowed. At present, John has left the motobike behind, upgrading his taxi services with the purchase of a full-sized vehicle. He now serves as a taxi driver, which offers him greater security and peace of mind in his profession.

John’s hard work and entrepreneurial spirit yielded significant quality of life improvements for his family. His cooperative was there to facilitate his dreams and connect him to the resources that could catalyze these positive life changes.
Cooperatives are highly regarded by members and non-members alike for their contributions to communities’ economic development. Cooperative businesses are reported to support a robust business environment, create jobs, attract investment, and support infrastructure development. Figure 4 presents non-members’ perceptions of cooperatives and their positive community impact in key areas.

For the farmers of Puerta Pulache, Peru, economic development has come through agricultural innovation, thanks to 26-year-old Elpido Aguilar, and his partnership with the Norandino cooperative.

Elpido learned of a new variety of cacao that could thrive in local conditions and yield high value as an export crop – white cacao. Highly treasured by food and confectionary enthusiasts, white cacao appeared gold in Elpido’s eyes. I realized that my community had a treasure, and we were not taking advantage of it, Elpido explained.

Turning the idea into reality was a challenge, Elpido explained. The people in my town did not believe in my project. There was resistance to change... [So] I knocked on the door of the Norandino cooperative.

The Norandino cooperative worked in the production and exportation of white cacao. Elpido shared this vision for his community and asked for Norandino’s support. Norandino welcomed Elpido and Puerta Pulache residents to their cooperative, offering access to seeds, technical agricultural support, and market access by including their production in Norandino’s marketing chain.

At first, it was not easy. In Puerta Pulache’s first year of white cacao production, they produced only 60 kilos of white cacao. But persistence and continuing support paid off. Now seven years later, Elpido’s town is trading 70 tons annually (!) and production continues to rise.

With white cacao and the cooperative’s support, many of us have managed to get out of extreme poverty. For me, it is a great pride to have achieved this, Elpido reflected.

Elpido Leonidas Viera Aguilar

New Ideas Lead a Community out of Poverty

The Norandino cooperative worked in the production and exportation of white cacao. Elpido shared this vision for his community and asked for Norandino’s support. Norandino welcomed Elpido and Puerta Pulache residents to their cooperative, offering access to seeds, technical agricultural support, and market access by including their production in Norandino’s marketing chain.

At first, it was not easy. In Puerta Pulache’s first year of white cacao production, they produced only 60 kilos of white cacao. But persistence and continuing support paid off. Now seven years later, Elpido’s town is trading 70 tons annually (!) and production continues to rise.

With white cacao and the cooperative’s support, many of us have managed to get out of extreme poverty. For me, it is a great pride to have achieved this, Elpido reflected.
Cooperatives and Social Capital

Cooperatives are integrated in their communities and provide a comprehensive support network for their members, which can help strengthen communities’ social capital and resilience.

Social capital was measured in the WDDCM global study through proxy variables such as trust, social networks, and access to support during crises.

Considering the trust proxy, cooperative members across all four countries indicate higher levels of trust in their community than non-members, as shown in Figure 5.

In analyzing two other proxies for social capital, whether the individual has someone to talk to in case of problems, and whether the individual can count on assistance from their neighbors, the study found cooperative members to be more resilient during crises. Seventy percent (70%) of cooperative members in Kenya and 80% of cooperative members in the Philippines affirmed that their cooperatives offer support to members during emergencies, which was appreciated by members. Similarly, 46% of Peru cooperative members confirmed that they “relied on other cooperative members more than any other source” when facing difficult times. When compared to non-members, cooperative members reported higher degrees of self-reliance, as they were more likely to rely on their own savings for support in times of crisis, rather than other sources of support, such as family, relatives, or friends.

Cooperative members’ increased earnings may facilitate their ability to save, increasing their resilience in the face of financial hardships. Additionally, cooperatives’ access to finance programs offer cooperative members an additional source of institutional support.
Social Impacts on Communities

Non-members and members alike appreciate the positive social impacts that cooperatives have on communities. Over half of non-members sampled perceive cooperatives’ positive impact on communities’ quality of life, as presented in Figure 7. Cooperatives’ concern for community leads some cooperatives to offer basic health and education support for members and the wider community. Figure 8 compares member and non-member awareness of cooperative-sponsored social programs (plotted on the x axis), and, of those who are aware, the percent that has accessed the cooperative-sponsored social program (plotted on the y axis). Preventative health initiatives are the most widely-utilized social benefit reported. There is a high awareness of programs that support youth development and education, but a low percentage of access (perhaps due to eligibility criteria).

The study’s results demonstrate that there is interest among both members and non-members for cooperative-sponsored social programs. Such offerings could be increased in an economically viable way for cooperatives, with important impacts on communities’ social well-being.

In the aftermath of the collapse of communism and the rising prosperity of the 1990s, Ola, disillusioned by the old soviet-style housing blocks and the unaffordability of better living conditions, heard of a small democratically-run housing cooperative – Green Meadow.

The Homeowner Association Green Meadow consolidated member resources and built houses at a lower price, allowing Ola and others to become homeowners – some of them for the very first time.

The cooperative members began to bond over the first winter, as they cleared snow from their driveways. Over time, the community’s picnics, children’s playdates and small talk turned into true friendships.

For Ola, cooperatives are all about building community, and that is the highest value. It is not only about investment, not only about houses, but first of all, about people... I feel like I am part of a big family.

Aleksandra (Ola) Czyzewska
Finding Friends and Community in her Cooperative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>1003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>1007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 7 Non-members report that cooperatives positively impact their communities’...
Cooperatives Provide Pathways for Women

The Global Gender Gap Report led by the World Economic Forum measures gender equality around the world by leveraging a comparative gender analysis within countries included in the study. This measurement allows for cross-country insights to be gleaned from women’s economic equality, without regard for absolute levels of economic development.

In 2021, the Philippines ranked impressively in 15th place (with a 1st place ranking signifying the lowest gender gap among the 156 countries included in the study), Peru ranked in 62nd place, Poland in 75th place, and Kenya in 95th place. All four countries of the study (even the Philippines) demonstrate room for growth and improvement to close the gender gap between men and women in their countries.

We include the Gender Gap country scores over the past 15 years in Figure 9 to provide a sense of the overall context of women’s economic standing in the formal economies of the four countries sampled in WDDCM.

This section will provide insight on cooperatives’ impact on women’s economic equality and opportunities. However, the Gender Gap does not systematically quantify income derived within the informal economy, which in the cases of Kenya, Peru and the Philippines, is where a substantial group of the population, including women, work.

Cooperatives have a positive observable impact on women’s economic status, as displayed in Figure 10, with women outperforming national averages across all regions and all countries. This demonstrates that cooperatives can help to diminish the gender gap globally. Because cooperatives also include in many instances those working in the informal economy, this finding provides an even more promising opportunity for positive impact.

To read more on the study’s methodology, see here: https://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/appendix-b-the-global-gender-gap-index-methodology-and-technical-notes/.


---

**FIGURE 9** Gender Gap of WDDCM Countries

**FIGURE 10** Women Member Average Economic Class Ranking (Standardized) compared to National Averages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Average Member</th>
<th>Average Non-Member</th>
<th>Phillipines Average Member</th>
<th>Phillipines Average Non-Member</th>
<th>Poland Average Member</th>
<th>Poland Average Non-Member</th>
<th>Kenya Average Member</th>
<th>Kenya Average Non-Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>479</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>479</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>479</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Women’s perceptions align with the positive impact of cooperative membership on women’s economic status, as demonstrated in Figure 10. The data show that cooperatives are valued by women respondents for the agency and independence that they gain, as displayed in Figure 11. These benefits are both reinforced and informed by women members’ improved economic standing in Kenya, 57% see agency and independence resulting from their membership, while in the Philippines and Peru, 48% and 63% respectively see the same, deriving from the inter-linked benefits identified in Figure 12. Women cooperative members also cite cooperative benefits such as opportunities for business creation and growth.

Through their direct economic benefits, enhancement of social capital, and the opportunities they offer for leadership and skills development, cooperatives in all four countries are playing a pivotal role in increasing women’s incomes and agency. Women’s economic empowerment has wide-spread positive impacts on women’s families, communities, and the next generation.

My husband and I came from poor families, said Fely. When we were starting, we barely made enough to make both ends meet. But we had a dream: A dream of giving a brighter future to our children.

To achieve this dream, Fely and her husband began with hard work. First, they established a tailoring business, NLR Tailoring, which was made possible by sourcing electricity powered by the First Laguna Electric Cooperative, Inc. (FLECO).

Our cooperative supplied us with reliable and affordable electricity, which made all the difference, especially when we were starting, said Fely.

Without access to reliable and affordable electricity, NLR Tailoring could not have grown so quickly and effectively. A watershed moment occurred when they received a contract to supply all the uniforms for the Philippine National Boy Scouts Jamboree.

Next, Fely dreamed of giving back to the area through support for education, and she founded a privately-owned school: The Bridgewater School, Inc. (TBSI). Again, FLECO powered Fely’s dream. FLECO provided the school’s power supply and even installed a separate transformer for TBSI.

They believed in our dream and that was more than enough for us. Now, 15 years after opening our doors, our school has more than 500 students who are studying online because of the pandemic.

With FLECO’s support and Fely’s determination, she has accomplished her life’s largest dream. Four of her children have graduated from college, they own two successful businesses, and plan for so much more!

Fely remarked: We all have dreams. For us, God blessed us with a cooperative that powers dreams.

Filipina (Fely) P. Ramo
Realizing Dreams for Her Family and Community

Next, Fely dreamed of giving back to the area through support for education, and she founded a privately-owned school: The Bridgewater School, Inc. (TBSI). Again, FLECO powered Fely’s dream. FLECO provided the school’s power supply and even installed a separate transformer for TBSI.

They believed in our dream and that was more than enough for us. Now, 15 years after opening our doors, our school has more than 500 students who are studying online because of the pandemic.

With FLECO’s support and Fely’s determination, she has accomplished her life’s largest dream. Four of her children have graduated from college, they own two successful businesses, and plan for so much more!

Fely remarked: We all have dreams. For us, God blessed us with a cooperative that powers dreams.

Filipina (Fely) P. Ramo
Realizing Dreams for Her Family and Community

Next, Fely dreamed of giving back to the area through support for education, and she founded a privately-owned school: The Bridgewater School, Inc. (TBSI). Again, FLECO powered Fely’s dream. FLECO provided the school’s power supply and even installed a separate transformer for TBSI.

They believed in our dream and that was more than enough for us. Now, 15 years after opening our doors, our school has more than 500 students who are studying online because of the pandemic.

With FLECO’s support and Fely’s determination, she has accomplished her life’s largest dream. Four of her children have graduated from college, they own two successful businesses, and plan for so much more!

Fely remarked: We all have dreams. For us, God blessed us with a cooperative that powers dreams.
The “Cooperative Difference”

Cooperative-enabled development is both inclusive and member-driven. Cooperative development strategies dovetail with government development plans, and as demonstrated by the countries in this report, have already proven to be powerful allies in driving equitable growth and reducing poverty. Cooperatives are an engine of change that advance broad and inclusive growth. They are rooted at the grassroots level and extend to the national and international arenas. As members of both the cooperative and the wider community, cooperative members concentrate their voices and economic potential through collective action. Cooperatives advance local priorities due to their democratic and inclusive decision-making structures, offering new economic and social opportunities for their communities’ growth and development.

Cooperatives are guided by the seven cooperative principles, an ethos that can motivate cooperatives to provide services and programs to their extended communities, offering valuable economic, infrastructural, and social benefits for members and non-members alike. Due to cooperatives’ presence, communities can experience a chain reaction of positive developments, from investment, to infrastructure, to employment opportunities. Cooperatives increase social capital in their communities, providing vital services and support networks for their members. Non-members affirm that cooperatives not only participate in the daily life of the community, but also improve the quality of life of the entire community. Some cooperatives freely facilitate access to basic services and expand the reach of public health and education initiatives to those who would be otherwise left behind. Communities’ well-being and cooperatives’ well-being go hand and hand.

In a world still contending with the impacts of COVID-19 and its aftermath, cooperatives’ concern for community and support for other cooperatives (Principles 7 and 6) are two of the characteristics that suggest the value-based cooperative business model can play a strategic role in “building back stronger”. The evidence from the WDDCM study suggests that cooperatives can be an important “re-building block” for everyone, importantly including a focus on women, who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Cooperatives provide valuable services and support in almost every sector and are already integrated in their local communities. Cooperatives are wholly prepared and well-organized. They are sustainable and self-reliant, and in turn, foster the sustainability and self-reliance of their members. Cooperatives are not capital intensive, due to their emphasis on investing in the capabilities of members and the community, as well as mobilizing member resources. Even so, a conducive enabling environment, as well as targeted support by governmental and international entities, will be vital to cooperatives’ continued growth and success.

External financing and support have strengthened the cooperative sector throughout time, supporting countries’ national development plans, and facilitating progress toward the UN Sustainable Development Goals, such as eliminating extreme poverty and achieving gender equality (SDG Goals 1 & 5). Support from the US government, cooperative development organizations, and international organizations have helped to professionalize the cooperative business model throughout time.

Cooperatives undoubtedly contribute to stable, resilient, and prosperous countries. With the aggregating power of cooperatives, the high level of trust among members, and the strong evidence base of positive economic performance for members, cooperatives can play a pivotal role in reducing inequality.

Drawing on the positive economic and social impacts associated with cooperative membership, as documented in the WDDCM global research study, the ICRG recommends that international development agencies incorporate cooperative programming as a development strategy to advance inclusive development and increase prosperity.
U.S. Overseas Cooperative Development Council Members

Equal Exchange
Frontier Cooperative
Global Communities (Formerly CHF International)
GENEX
HealthPartners
Land O’Lakes Venture37
National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA CLUSA)
National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA International)
World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU)