

DRAFT

COOPERATIVES AND YOUTH
EMPOWERMENT, EMPLOYMENT, ENGAGEMENT



**A youth forum held as part of the closing events of the
International Year of Cooperatives**

UN Headquarters, New York
19 November 2012
NLB CR 1

Concept Note

Cooperatives and Youth: Empowerment, Employment, Engagement, is a youth forum to be held as part of the closing ceremony of the International Year of Cooperatives 2012. The forum will provide an opportunity for youth, international organizations, Member States, and other relevant stakeholders to engage in dialogue on the benefits and challenges associated with youth engagement in cooperatives, with particular emphasis on issues of empowerment, employment and civic engagement. The forum will be held in conjunction with an online consultation with youth and other stakeholders to ensure the broadest possible scope of participation. The cumulative outcome of the forum and consultation will be an International Statement on Youth and Cooperatives.

The forum will be held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on, 19 November 2012, in the United Nations North Lawn Building, Conference Room 1, 3:00-6:00 p.m. It is being organized by the Division for Social Policy and Development, in the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization and Rabobank.

Background

In naming 2012 the International Year of Cooperatives, the United Nations General Assembly gave credence to the real and latent agency of cooperatives in supporting and enabling efforts at social and economic development. Youth development has been an urgent concern in promoting social and economic development across the globe, and, in the wake of the recent global crises, the issue has taken a more central focus for decision-makers at all levels, particularly with regard to employment.

The economic crisis abruptly ended the gradual decline in global youth unemployment rates during the period 2002–07. Since 2007 the global youth unemployment rate has started rising again, and the increase between 2008 and the height of the economic crisis in 2009 effectively wiped out much of the gains made in previous years. Today, nearly 75 million youth are unemployed around the world, an increase of more than 4 million since 2007. Medium-term projections (2012–16) suggest little improvement in youth labour markets. By 2016, the youth unemployment rate is projected to remain at the same high level. However, the biggest challenge is poverty or the working poor (not only unemployment). It is estimated that more than 200 Million young people today live with less than 2 USD per day.¹

¹ ILO Global Employment Trends for Youth 2012

These employment figures are a small demonstration of the depth of disempowerment and disengagement being faced by young men and women around the world. Through engagement with cooperative enterprises and organizations, youth can work to overcome these challenges. Youth engagement with cooperative enterprises and organizations is one of the options for youth in transition.

Cooperatives are member owned, community based business organizations that can empower young people to start enterprises. By creating their own cooperative enterprises, tailored to local needs, young entrepreneurs encourage economic development in their community, simultaneously contributing to their individual capacity-building and skill-development. As such, cooperatives make a strong contribution to the prevention and eradication of poverty, the creation of social safety-nets, and the empowerment of youth.

Objective

Together, the online consultation and forum will seek to:

1. Identifying examples of and opportunities for effective youth engagement in cooperatives, with particular emphasis on issues of empowerment, employment and civic engagement.
2. Identify challenges to youth engagement in cooperatives, with particular emphasis on
 - a. If and how youth are exposed to cooperative values and principles;
 - b. How the extent and format of this awareness affects the knowledge about and perceptions of cooperatives among young people;
 - c. How cooperative structures, as well as the social, economic and policy environments affect the way that young people engage with cooperative enterprises and organizations
3. Develop an International Cooperative Youth Statement, which will inform policy dialogues and be considered in formulating an international plan of action for cooperative development beyond 2012.

Organization

Consultative Process:

- Consultation survey available at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CQVFGXF> through October 24, 2012 (extended deadline).
- Circulation of Draft Youth Statement to all respondents
- Draft Youth Statement available for comments and discussion until November 16, 2012

Youth Forum (at UN Headquarters, NY):

1. Welcoming Remarks
2. Interactive Dialogue: *Cooperatives and Youth: Empowerment, Employment, Engagement*
3. Interactive Dialogue: Overview and Discussion of Draft International Youth Statement

Working Group – Dinner meeting

- Small working group develops final version of youth statement
(Statement to be delivered in IYC Closing Session on 20 November 2012)

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