ENGAGING CO-OPERATIVES IN ADDRESSING LOCAL AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES:
Building Strong Membership and Human Resources to Strengthen Co-operatives

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Abstract

Co-operatives are value-based private sector enterprises that are member-based, member-owned and democratically controlled. The primary purpose of a Co-operative is to satisfy the social and economic needs of its members. A strong membership base is the foundation of a strong Co-operative enterprise: everywhere, every time and for everyone. Building strong membership and human resources, not necessarily capital, is the basis for building Co-operatives that both economically strong and sustainable.
“If we had to start our movement afresh and if we were given the choice between two possibilities - that of starting without capital but with enlightened membership ... (or) starting with a large amount of capital and ill-informed members – our experience would incline us to choose the first course”. (Shimelles, 1995).
WHO ARE THE MEMBERS OF A CO-OPERATIVE?

• Membership in Co-operatives may be divided into four categories according to their relationship with Co-operatives:
  1. Shareholding members including elected officials;
  2. Employees including managers;
  3. Government officials who are engaged in the promotion and supervision of Co-operatives at the various levels of the state administration; and,
  4. The general public that constitutes potential members and supports of Co-operatives.
COOPERATIVE PHILOSOPHY
Development through Mutual Self-Help

Co-operatives:
Past, Present and Future
WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE MEMBERSHIP IN CO-OPERATIVES?

1. Clarity and sharing of vision;
2. Participation for self and group development;
3. Commitment to common good;
4. Placing priority on moral character;
5. Commitment to gender parity and solidarity;
6. Practice democracy and equity
7. Basic management and leadership skills.
HOW CAN WE BUILD STRONG MEMBERSHIP A STRONG MEMBERSHIP BASE IN CO-OPERATIVES?

1. Continuous Co-operative education
2. Meaningful members participation
3. Effective communication mechanism
4. Continuous human capital development
5. A non-bureaucratic management system
6. Self-financing Co-operatives
7. Effective members services
8. Research
9. Effective support services
10. School-based Co-operative education
WHAT ROLE CAN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM PLAY TO BUILD STRONG CO-OPERATIVE MEMBERSHIP?

- Offer co-operative education and training as part of the general education at all levels from school and Universities to vocational training institutions.
- Establish alternative system of education for co-operative members and the public outside the formal school system (study circles, adult education, distance education, etc.)
CONCLUSION

• Co-operatives are value-based private sector enterprises that are member-based, member-owned and democratically controlled.
• The primary purpose of a Co-operative is to satisfy the social and economic needs of its members.
• A strong membership base is the foundation of a strong Co-operative enterprise: everywhere, every time and for everyone.
• Building strong membership and human resources, not necessarily capital, is the basis for building Co-operatives that both economically strong and sustainable.
Thank You

Asante Sana

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