

IMPROVING CAPACITY IN THE CO-OPERATIVE SECTOR:
Need to Support Co-operative Institutions in Africa

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Dr. Esther Gicheru (PhD), HSC; MKIM

Introduction

- It thank the conference organizers for the opportunity to sit among champions of Co-operatives in Africa
- Indeed you are the key players of the future of Co-operatives in the world, for Africa holds that future.

Key Questions

- What is capacity?
- Capacity for what?
- Capacity for who?
- How do we improve or build capacity?
- Who builds the capacity of capacity builders?

Definitions

- Capacity is the ability to understand or do something
- The Co-operative sector refers to the Co-operative Movement and the institutions that support the development of Co-operatives including the Government and Government agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), donors and other development agencies.

Definitions

Co-operative institutions that need to be supported in order to improve the capacity of the Co-operative sector are relevant service providers including:

- Co-operative organizations,
- training institutions,
- Government departments and
- Government agencies,
- firms and individuals.

Milestones

- The 1995 ICA Statement of Co-operative Identity that gave us a new set of Co-operative values and principles that help us to put into sharper focus our vision and mission as economic and social enterprises.
- The UN International Year of Co-operatives, 2012 that gave us opportunity to reflect on the Co-operative Movement, its purpose and need to reposition its business model in light of the global economic crises.

Milestones

- UN General Assembly 2010: Coops promote the fullest possible participation in the economic and social development of all people; including women, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities and indigenous people.
- Provide opportunity for self determination and empowerment of poor people.

Milestones

- Foster a culture of good citizenship
- Enable their members to have a voice
- Conflict resolution, Peace builing
- Social inclusion and social cohesion
- Social stability

Milestones

- UN Secretary General says that Co-operatives are a reminder to the international community that it is possible to pursue both economic viability and social responsibility
- Saccos provide millions and create jobs, individual participation, self confidence and resilience, personal wealth and social capital.

Milestones

- Co-operatives in African are about 100 years now and fastest growing in the world
- A blue-print for a Co-operative Decade aims to transform the Co-operative form of business by 2020 to become: the acknowledged leader in economic, social and environmental sustainability, the model preferred by people, and the fastest growing form of enterprises.
- ICA warns that unless there is concerted action over the next few years the moment will be lost

The State of Co-operatives in Africa

- The African continent is presently facing one of the most serious challenges in its history.
- Among the instruments used by the state to implement its development policy has been the development of Co-operatives.

The State of Co-operatives...

- The cooperative form of enterprise despite its significant and positive impact on economic and social development continues to be underutilized and poorly understood by the general population, academia and private sector.
- Critics say Co-operatives are dens of corruption, infighting among their leaders and constant demands by members for their rights.

The State of Co-operatives...

- They fail to realize that Co-operatives are part of the social, economic and political milieu in a country and what happens in and to them is a mirror reflection of what happens to other institutions in the same country including companies, churches, schools, political parties, media organizations, etc.

The State of Co-operatives...

- Sometimes Co-operatives become soft targets of their business competitors, competing political interests and they are perceived to lack a critical mass of defenders.
- Despite the many setbacks faced over time, Co-operatives remain the enterprises of choice in many countries for the majority of people who want to satisfy their common needs by maximizing on economies of scale and the synergy that arises from joint action.

Old and emerging role of Government

- Governments in Africa are now transiting from the past when they played a domineering, overwhelming, almost paternalistic role vis-a-vis co-operatives.
- The emerging role of Government is that of a facilitator and an enabler, not that of a controller, a protector or an initiator.

Old and emerging role of Government

- This way Governments in Africa will contribute towards the development of economically viable, socially-responsive, member-owned and member-controlled Co-operative Movement that is sustainable in the long term.

Justification for Support in capacity building

- Given the Challenges and opportunities for a vibrant coop movement, there is need to support coop institutions in Africa to improving capacity in the cooperative sector to deliver on its social and economic mandate.

What Capacity Does the Co-operative Sector Require?

- Improving the capacity of policy makers and regulatory agents to make and implement policies and laws that empower rather than dis-empower Co-operatives;
- Improving the capacity of Co-operatives to ensure good governance, efficient operations and strategic management; and
- Improving the capacity of capacity builders such as training institutions and firms.

Improving Capacity of Policy Makers and Regulatory Agents

- The main mandate of Governments: ensuring a policy and legal framework that establishes a conducive business environment for Co-operatives to survive and thrive as social and economic enterprises
- The institutions responsible for in-county co-operative education and training in the African Countries are diverse in nature.
- They include Government departments, Co-operative Colleges, Universities and private institutions

Improving the Capacity of the Co-operative Movement

- Capacity improvement for the Co-operative Movement needs to be done at three levels: membership, leadership and management.
- The process of capacity building can be education, training or education and training combined.
- Capacity builders for the Co-operative Movement include Government and related Government agencies, Co-operative Colleges, private firms and individuals, the Co-operative Movement itself

... Co-operative Movement

- The 8th ICA African Ministerial Co-operative Conference in 2005, emphasized the initial importance of member empowerment as an integral part of co-operative development in Africa.
- Two types of empowerment – subjective and objective.
- Subjective empowerment: individuals acquire the capacity to influence other individuals but not major changes in society.
- Objective empowerment aims at bringing about social transformation, change of structure of power and authority

Capacity Building for Capacity Builders

Capacity building for capacity builders may be focus in four key areas of

- (i) content or subject matter
- (ii) process or delivery methods
- (iii) programme management and
- (iv) network building for continuous learning.

Government and related Government agencies

- Governments use several strategies that include sponsoring its personnel for training in local and international training institutions, organizing in-house training for its personnel and inviting experts to facilitate, sponsoring its personnel to acquire academic qualifications in Co-operative colleges and universities.

Government ...

- Governments tend to have some of the most qualified people in most countries.
- However, sometimes there is a tendency for participants to feel intimidated during training conducted by Government people holding positions higher than their own due to the hierarchical nature of Government bureaucracy.

Government ...

- Engaging seniors in an exploratory debate on issues may sometimes be seen as questioning authority or insubordination.
- This may affect the quality and utility of training. For this reason, capacity building for this category of capacity builders is best supplemented by experts from outside Government.

Government ...

- Key areas of capacity building for capacity builders are not necessarily in content or subject matter but rather on the process or delivery methods and network building for continuous learning.
- Capacity builders for Governments and Government agencies include Colleges, universities and private sector service providers.

Co-operative Colleges and Universities

- Co-operative Colleges and universities are the main capacity builders for the Co-operative sector in Africa.
- The core business of academic institutions is research, teaching and community engagement.
- A key criteria for employment of academic staff in any university is academic qualification, research output and level of publications achieved.

Co-operative Colleges ...

- However qualified university staff may be in their respective disciplines not many possess higher qualifications in the field of Co-operatives and teaching methods.
- The main areas of capacity building for this category of capacity builders is therefore teaching methods followed by Co-operative theory and practice.
- The capacity builders in these areas include organization of in-house training, sponsorship of individuals or groups to other institutions either locally or outside the country.

Co-operative Movement Capacity Builders

- Building the capacity of capacity builders in the Co-operative Movement is perhaps the oldest mandate of Government Ministries responsible for Co-operatives, Government agencies, Co-operative Movement itself, Co-operative Colleges and Universities.
- Capacity builders in the Co-operative Movement itself include national apex organizations, sectoral federations, Unions and individual primary Co-operative entities.

Co-operative Movement...

- The Co-operative Movement tends to have personnel who are highly qualified and experienced in the field of Co-operatives, sometimes people who have grown with the Co-operative Movement.
- This is often considered important for acceptability and rapport building with the clientele.
- However, this apparent advantage tends to breed a new disadvantage: being part of status quo and being expected to transform the status quo.

Co-operative Movement...

- Whereas some people may be dynamic and able to transform themselves into catalytic agents of change, many others may not be able to do the same.
- Such people need to undergo training to unlearn old ways of doing things and learn new ways of doing things.
- Capacity building for capacity builders in this area is best done through experiential learning through study visits or intensive training outside or within the work place.
- The focus is not content but rather change of mindset.

conclusion

- After celebrating and reflecting on the successes, opportunities and challenges during the UN International Year of Co-operatives in 2013, the focus of the global Co-operative Movement is now on the Blue Print: A Co-operative Decade that promises to transform the Co-operative form of business by 2020 to become: the acknowledged leader in economic, social and environmental sustainability, the model preferred by people, and the fastest growing form of enterprises. But unless there is concerted action over the next few years, ICA warns that the moment may be lost.

Thank you!
