Seven Co-operative Principles

1. Voluntary Membership

Co-operatives are voluntary, co-operative organizations, offering services to people willing to accept the responsibilities and benefits of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

2. Democratic Member Control

Co-operatives are democratic organizations owned and controlled by their members, one member one vote, with equal opportunity for participation in setting policies and making decisions.

3. Members' Economic Participation

Members are the owners. As such they contribute to, and democratically control, the capital of the cooperative. This benefits the members in proportion to the transactions with the cooperative rather than on the capital invested.

4. Autonomy and Independence

Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If the cooperative enters into agreements with other organizations or raises capital from external sources, it is done so based on terms that ensure democratic control by the member and maintains the co-operative autonomy.

5. Education, Training and Information

Cooperatives provide education and training for members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of the cooperative.

6. Co-operation Among Co-operatives

Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, provincial, regional, national, and international structures.

7. Concern for Community

While focusing on member needs, co-operatives work for the sustainable development of communities, including people of modest means, through policies developed and accepted by the members.

These seven principles are founded in the philosophy of co-operation and its central values of equality, equity and mutual self-help. They express, around the world, the principles of human development and the brotherhood of man through people working together to achieve a better life for themselves and their community.

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