

powered expert committee report on urban infrastructure has recommended that a municipal cadre of officers trained in town planning be made. According to this report,

- As large scale public investment is required for the urbanization process to go on smoothly, revenue generation will have to be from within the cities. Additionally, cities will have to be able to raise debt funds through the market.
- The attitude of citizens towards migrants, especially from economically weaker sections of the society, is a cause of worry. It is essential to include citizens in the planning process and make them aware of the long term benefits of planning policies.
- The efficiency and execution of the service delivery process in cities need to be improved. Further, initiatives need to be taken by citizens themselves to ensure better standards of services and service delivery.

Integrated and sustainable urban development is the need of the hour and India has a long way to go in terms of addressing these issues in uneven development across space and inequality of opportunities across different sections of the society.

References

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The Relevance of Cooperatives

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“Cooperatives are a reminder to the international community that it is possible to pursue both economic viability and social responsibility.” –Ban Ki Moon, UN Secretary General

The year 2012 has been recognized by the United Nations as the international year of cooperatives (IYC), highlighting the contribution of cooperatives to socio-economic development. With its slogan “Cooperative enterprises build a better world” the initiative seeks to encourage the growth of cooperative organizations. But what exactly is a cooperative and how have they suddenly become so crucial in the present world?

According to the statement of ICA on cooperative identity, a cooperative may be defined as an autonomous association of people who voluntarily cooperate for their mutual, social, cultural and economic benefit. ICA or the International Cooperative Alliance is an independent nongovernmental organization with 277 member organizations from 98 countries which unites, represents and serves cooperatives worldwide. Founded in 1985, ICA today serves to be the major connecting tool between cooperatives across the globe.

Also, as a part of its statement on cooperative identity, it lays down seven principles that define cooperatives:

- Voluntary and open membership: Cooperatives are voluntary organizations open to all people

able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

- Democratic member control: Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in settling their policies and making decisions. Men and women, as elected representatives, are accountable to membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights and cooperatives at other levels are also organized in a democratic manner.
- Member economic participation: Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their cooperative, possibly by setting up their reserves, part of which would at least be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.
- Autonomy and independence: Cooperatives are autonomous, self help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.
- Education, training and information: Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and

employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of the cooperatives. They inform the general public particularly the young people and opinion leaders about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

- Cooperation among cooperatives: Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, regional, national and international structures.
- Concern for community: Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of the communities through policies approved by their members.

Indeed, the above stated principles highlight the regard for both economic viability and social responsibility in cooperative structures as has been stated by the UN Secretary General.

Together these principles guarantee the conditions under which members own, control and benefit from the business, ensure that they effectively contribute to the development of cooperative and to the sustainable development of their communities.

And hence, in today's era, where no one can escape globalization, these have a crucial role to play as they encourage self reliance and empower people by providing employment opportunities and securing the livelihoods of nearly a quarter of the world's population and thus help in poverty alleviation as well.

With the intensification of liberalization and globalization, cooperatives have become all the more important as tools that bridge the gap between market and human values. What makes these organizations so different from the others is their member

driven nature. Because cooperatives are business enterprises owned and controlled by the very people they serve, their decisions are balanced by pursuit of profit and the local interests. As the world becomes increasingly borderless and the advent of multinationals in the developing countries raises fears in the minds of small scale producers and workers, the role of the cooperatives becomes more and more significant. With no protectionist policies and opening up of markets by the government, cooperatives are an efficient way of organizing the small scale sector in the developing countries as these have immense potential to neutralize the adverse effects of globalization. Initially the idea of cooperatives in India emerged from the growing menace of rural indebtedness but over time it has come to occupy a central place in the measures to strengthen our economy.

Cooperatives are considered by some as an ideal model for local economic development because with local ownership and control and proportionate distribution of net profits among the members, it has the potential to foster economic growth at the regional and community level based on the spirit of cooperation that exists predominantly in the rural areas. They give a boost to the rural economy which is largely based on agriculture as they provide real economic benefits to farm families through increasing the stability of farming sector and by improving market access for their products. Often traditional companies find it very costly to provide services in the rural areas and there also the cooperative sector fares quite well as unlike the traditional profit seeking companies which anticipate unacceptable levels of economic return and hence do not venture into the areas, cooperative enterprises respond to the local needs and act as a provider of services such

as electricity or management of water resources.

One of the major advantages of the cooperatives, due to the member owned nature, is that they meet community needs and objectives and place greater importance on them and have flexible profit objectives. Investor owned firms on the other hand have considerable pressure to raise profits and grow as fast as possible. Not only do the cooperatives add sustainability to the development, also as people pool their limited resources to achieve a goal they combine people, resources and capital into larger more viable and economically competitive units.

Moreover, they have certain financial advantages as well as they become eligible for loans and grants from various agencies. Cooperatives are stable employers and often they strive to find innovative ways to retain jobs ensuring job security. The democratic nature and values (self help, democracy, self responsibility, equality, equity and ethics) of the cooperative institutions allow the local people a voice in policy matters which gives a sense of empowerment to the people. Of late cooperatives have been associated with women empowerment as well as today one comes across various success stories of women organizing various cooperative ventures in countries like India and Nigeria and across the globe. They respond to both the practical and strategic needs of women and chart their route to economic political and social empowerment. As self help organizations they contribute to the eradication of poverty, stimulate the local economies, and enhance the social fabric of the communities. They generate employment and promise job security and better living standards for their members. By empowering marginalized sections of people, women and other socially

disadvantaged groups they encourage social integration and cohesion and perform a very important task of social development and fostering equality and peace building.

Despite challenges like mismanagement and manipulation in the affairs of elections to the governing body of the cooperative, excessive government interference, local politics, lack of awareness among members, inadequate promotion, restricted coverage and several other functional weaknesses like that of inadequacy of training personnel and lack of quality management; the inherent advantages of cooperative ventures have made it increasingly significant to promote the growth of these institutions.

In the words of Kofi Annan – “In an age where community involvement and partnerships with civil society are increasingly being recognized as indispensable, there is clearly a growing potential for cooperative development and renewal worldwide.”

WORLD AFFAIRS

The Pitfalls of Generalized Generosity

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“Nay, be a Columbus to whole new continents and worlds within you, opening new channels, not of trade, but of thought.”

- Henry David Thoreau

Let us suppose there are 2 ways of reaching one destination and let that destination be Ecoland. You are a trader who wants to sell silk to the free and prosperous dwellers of Ecoland. Most other traders are taking the first way – the road is a little rough in places and the fear of being looted by bandits is real, but they walk towards the checkpoint where they are all taxed equally and allowed entry. You are told you will be treated differently, even preferentially, because you are not free and prosperous. Thanking Ecolanders for their generosity, you take the second path. The road is rough, the bandits are at your heels but you manage to reach the checkpoint. The man at the checkpoint looks at the rolls of silk you are carrying and asks you if the silk was spun in the same place as the silkworms came from. You say no, silkworms are bred in a village adjacent to yours and the silk was spun in your village. He frowns and asks you how you have added value to the silk to make it more exquisite. You say you haven't because you don't have the embroidery machines. His frown deepens. He asks you if you provide 4 course meals, health insurance and tickets to local football matches to all employees. You say no. He denies you entry. You protest vehemently but he holds his ground. Dejected and angry, you head to the traders community centre in your village to tell the other traders suggest your experience. You suggest they establish trade links with neighboring villages instead of relying on Ecoland but the traders vote your proposal down in unison- the land of the free and prosperous holds exponential promise, they say. A few years later, you take the same path to Ecoland in hopes that the situation has changed. The road is rough and the bandits are at your heels. You reach the checkpoint and you are asked the same questions. You sigh in exasperation and ask the frowning man why there is a need to