

**71<sup>st</sup> All India Cooperative Week** **2024**

**14<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>st</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**

**GUIDELINES FOR**

**71<sup>st</sup>**

**ALL INDIA COOPERATIVE WEEK**



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७१वां अखिल भारतीय सहकारी सप्ताह  
**71<sup>st</sup> All India Cooperative Week**

(१४ से २० नवंबर २०२४)/ 14th - 20st NOVEMBER 2024

७१वें अखिल भारतीय सहकारी सप्ताह समारोह का मुख्य विषय

Main Theme of 71<sup>st</sup> All India Cooperative Week

“विकसित भारत के निर्माण में सहकारिताओं की भूमिका”

“Role of Cooperatives in Building Viksit Bharat”

विभिन्न दिनों के विषय  
**Nomenclature for Days**

14-11-2024	सहकारिता मंत्रालय की नई पहलों के माध्यम से सहकारी आंदोलन को सशक्त बनाना <b>Strengthening cooperative movement through new initiatives of Ministry of Cooperation</b>
15-11-2024	सहकारी संगठनों में नवाचार, तकनीक और कुशल शासन <b>Innovation, Technology and Good Governance in Cooperatives</b>
16-11-2024	उद्यमिता, रोजगार और कौशल विकास को बढ़ावा देने में सहकारिताओं की भूमिका <b>The Role of Cooperatives in Fostering Entrepreneurship, Employment, and Skill Development</b>
17-11-2024	सहकारी उद्यम में परिवर्तन <b>Transforming Cooperative Enterprises</b>
18-11-2024	सहकारी संगठनों के बीच सहयोग को मजबूत करना <b>Strengthening Cooperation Among Cooperatives</b>
19-11-2024	महिलाओं, युवाओं और कमजोर वर्गों के लिए सहकारी संगठन <b>Cooperatives for Women, Youth, and Weaker Sections</b>
20-11-2024	SDGs के ध्येय को हासिल करने में सहकारी संगठनों की भूमिका और बेहतर दुनिया के लिए आगे का मार्ग <b>Role of Cooperatives in Achieving SDGs and way forward for Better World</b>

## **An Introduction**

India's cooperative movement, spanning over a century, has emerged as one of the largest and most impactful socio-economic endeavors in the world. The 71st All India Cooperative Week, will be celebrated from 14th to 20th November 2024, highlighting the critical role cooperatives play in realizing the vision of a 'Viksit Bharat' – a developed India. The chosen theme reflects the government's agenda of inclusive growth, good governance, and sustainable development, with cooperatives acting as key agents of change.

In a country where 65% of the population resides in rural areas, cooperatives offer a significant solution for bridging the economic and social divide between rural and urban India. Cooperatives are not just an economic model; they represent a way of life built on democratic values, self-help, and collective responsibility. Today, India is home to over 8.5 lakh registered cooperatives, representing approximately 28 crore members, making the cooperative sector a vital force in India's journey towards becoming a developed nation.

### **Cooperatives and Rural Development**

India's rural economy is still largely dependent on agriculture and allied sectors, where cooperatives have a transformative impact. Agricultural cooperatives, for instance, handle approximately 36% of the country's total agricultural credit distribution, and play a significant role in the procurement and distribution of essential goods. They are responsible for procuring around 40% of India's total sugarcane, with sugar cooperatives contributing about 45% to the country's sugar production.

The dairy sector is another remarkable success story of cooperatives in rural India. The Indian dairy cooperative network, led by iconic organizations like Amul,

collects over 30 million liters of milk per day from more than 1.6 crore farmer members, most of whom are smallholders. These cooperatives empower rural families, particularly women, by providing them with a stable income source. The success of dairy cooperatives has not only improved livelihoods but also contributed to India becoming the largest milk producer globally, with an annual production of over 220 million metric tonnes.

In addition to agriculture and dairy, cooperatives are playing a leading role in fisheries, rural credit, housing, and textiles, which provide critical employment opportunities. The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) estimates that rural cooperatives account for nearly 20% of the total credit disbursed in rural areas, significantly boosting financial inclusion and entrepreneurship.

### **Social and Economic Contributions**

Cooperatives contribute to India's economic growth in numerous ways. With a cooperative network spanning nearly every sector, from consumer goods to healthcare, education, and housing, these organizations facilitate access to essential services for the underserved sections of society. According to the Ministry of Cooperation, cooperatives collectively control over 30% of India's agricultural produce storage capacity and manage 18% of the rural transport sector.

Importantly, cooperatives have also become drivers of employment. They provide direct employment to over 20 million people and indirect livelihood opportunities to millions more. In rural regions, cooperative societies, especially in farming, dairy, and handicrafts, enable small producers to scale up operations and access larger markets, often through collective bargaining and shared infrastructure. This has significantly contributed to poverty reduction and the upliftment of marginalized communities.

Women's participation in cooperatives is another pivotal factor for societal development. Nearly 12% of all cooperatives in India are women-led, providing an

inclusive platform for female entrepreneurs to access resources, training, and market opportunities. These women-run cooperatives, particularly in self-help groups (SHGs), have proven highly successful in promoting financial independence among rural women, thereby contributing to gender equality and empowering communities.

### **Cooperatives in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

As India pursues the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), cooperatives are uniquely positioned to contribute to targets related to poverty alleviation, zero hunger, and inclusive economic growth. The cooperative model's focus on mutual benefit and sustainability aligns with the principles of SDG implementation. Cooperatives promote equitable growth, ensuring that the fruits of development are widely shared.

For instance, cooperatives involved in renewable energy, such as solar power projects, are bringing clean energy solutions to rural India, reducing dependency on non-renewable sources and fostering environmental sustainability. Similarly, cooperatives engaged in organic farming are supporting India's transition towards more sustainable agricultural practices.

### **Conclusion**

The 71st All India Cooperative Week, with the theme "Role of Cooperatives in Building 'Viksit Bharat'," provides a crucial platform to celebrate the contributions of cooperatives and explore new avenues for their growth. As India marches towards becoming a \$5 trillion economy by 2025, cooperatives will continue to be at the forefront of the nation's socio-economic transformation, particularly in rural areas. By fostering entrepreneurship, promoting inclusive development, and creating sustainable livelihoods, cooperatives are essential for realizing the vision of a developed, self-reliant India – truly embodying the spirit of a 'Viksit Bharat.' This week-long celebration will emphasize on main theme and sub-theme further promoting their role in shaping India's future. Through various discussions,

workshops, and public engagement activities, the week aims to reinforce the cooperative movement's enduring relevance and expand its impact across the nation. The Guidelines for celebration of the Cooperative Week discuss in detail the significance of each day based on the thematic area of the Cooperative Week celebrations. The programs/activities to be organized on each day are also mentioned. While the messages for strengthening the cooperative movement must reach the policymakers, the common people must be made aware about the strong presence of cooperative sector in the Indian economy.

# **71<sup>st</sup> All India Cooperative Week, 2024**

## **14<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**

**Theme: Strengthening Cooperative Movement through New Initiatives of Ministry of Cooperation**

**Sanjay Verma, Advisor, NCUI & Veena Sachdeva, Director, NCUI**

The creation of a separate Ministry of Cooperation in July 2021 marks a pivotal step in reshaping India's cooperative movement. The Ministry of Cooperation provides a unified framework to support, regulate, and promote cooperatives across the country. After the formation of the Ministry of Cooperation, the government has taken several steps to strengthen the cooperative movement. These initiatives have covered almost all the sectors of the cooperative movement. The cooperatives sector has also been provided with many concessions and privileges due to which a level playing field has been provided to them due to which they do not feel discriminated against as compared to the public or private sector. Cooperatives are now the focal point of government policies and programs. They are considered key for the success of government economic policies, achieving UNSDGs and building up Viksit Bharat. Amongst the 54 initiatives taken by the government (Major Initiatives of the Ministry | Ministry of Cooperation) to strengthen the cooperative movement, the following are worth mentioning;

- Model Bye-Lawas for making PACS multipurpose
- Strengthening PACS through Computerization
- Establishment of Multipurpose PACS/ Dairy/ Fisheries Cooperative Societies in every Panchayat/Village
- World's Largest Grain Storage Program in cooperative sector to ensure food security

- Eligibility of PACS for LPG distributorship
- Priority to PACS for new Petrol/ Diesel Pump dealerships
- PACS as Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samridhhi Kendras (PMKSK)
- Micro- ATMs to Bank Mitra Cooperative Societies with the help of NABARD
- Formation of new Multi- State Cooperative Society for Exports, National Level Multi-State Cooperative Society for Certified Seeds and National Level Multi-State Cooperative Society for Organic Farming.
- Reduction in surcharge on Income Tax and MAT on Cooperative Societies
- Steps taken to redress difficulties faced by urban cooperative banks
- Formulation of new National Cooperative Policy
- New National Cooperative Database
- Establishment of Cooperative University
- Computerization of ARDBs

Amongst the various initiatives, initiatives to strengthen PACS, which have been the weakest foundation of the cooperative movement, have played an important role in taking the cooperative movement to new heights. Model byelaws for PACS have been adopted by 31 States/UTs. PACS will be able to serve as multi-service centers, improve their operational efficiency, transparency and provide agricultural credit and non-credit services in rural areas. The Model byelaws will also boost the income of PACS as they will be able to successfully diversify their business activities. In an important initiative to expand the horizons of PACS, they will provide more than 300 e-services provided by Common Service Centers. More than 30,000 PACS have started providing services as CSCs and transactions worth Rs 10, 08 crores have been done through these PACS. As far as computerization is concerned, 62, 318 functional PACS/, LAMPS are being linked with NABARD through a single national software network. The implementation of digital



platforms and e-governance solutions has ensured greater transparency and efficiency in the working of cooperatives.

The world's largest grain storage plan in the cooperative sector has been launched with inauguration of 11 godowns in PACs in 11 states. Hon'ble Prime Minister of India has also laid the foundation stone for additional 500 PACS across the country for the creation of godowns. 700 lakh tons of storage capacity will be created over the next five years by constructing thousands of godowns and storehouses in PACS. The new Multi- State Cooperative Societies Amendment Act will make the cooperatives more autonomous and democratic institutions capable of adapting to the demands of modern business practices. There are high hopes that the new National Cooperative Policy will professionalize the working of cooperatives at all levels. Similarly, the setting up of the new Cooperative University will also be a big step towards professionalizing cooperative education in the country.

During the Cooperative Week, the cooperative organizations may organize the following activities/programs.

- Conferences/seminars/workshops on important initiatives of Ministry of Cooperation with a focus on their implementation. For example, focus may be on revitalization of PACS.
- Competitions like debate, essays, quiz, etc may be organized for the students on the issues related to initiatives of Ministry of Cooperation.
- The best research paper writing competition may be organized for the students on these subjects.

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# **71<sup>st</sup> All India Cooperative Week, 2024**

## **15<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**

**Theme: Innovation, Technology, and Good Governance in Cooperatives**

**Dr Sagar Wadkar, Advisor, NCUI and Ashish Dwivedi, Executive Director,  
NCUI**

In an increasingly interconnected and fast-paced world, cooperatives must adapt to emerging challenges in order to remain practical and sustainable. As organizations based on shared ownership and democratic decision-making, cooperatives have long played a critical role in promoting economic inclusivity and community development. However, the success of cooperatives today depends on embracing innovation, adopting new technologies, and ensuring robust governance practices. To understand this, it is essential to explore the evolution of industrial revolutions and their impact on cooperatives, as well as the ways in which innovation and technology can lead to improved governance.

### **The Industrial Revolutions and Cooperatives**

Cooperation as a concept has existed since the earliest stages of human society, as people banded together to share resources, labour, and skills. However, it was not until the First Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century that formal cooperatives emerged as organized entities. This period was defined by the transition from manual labor to mechanized production. New machines, such as the spinning jenny and steam engines, revolutionized industries like textiles, iron, and transportation. While this mechanization made production faster and cheaper, it also had far-reaching consequences on workers and communities.

With the rise of machines, manual laborers found themselves increasingly displaced. The need for skilled labor reduced, wages fell, and unemployment rose. Communities that were once self-sufficient were now dependent on large factories and industries. The cost of production dropped, but so did the livelihoods of many workers. This societal disruption encouraged the need for new forms of economic organization, and cooperatives emerged as a response.

It was during this time of disruption that cooperatives began to take root. In 1844, a group of 28 weavers and artisans in Rochdale, England, formed what is widely regarded as the first modern cooperative—the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers. This cooperative was born out of necessity. They aimed to provide affordable, unadulterated food to their members while ensuring that any surplus generated was used for the betterment of the community. This simple, yet powerful model became the foundation for the cooperative movement that we know today.

The Second Industrial Revolution in the late 19th and early 20th centuries introduced mass production, powered by new technologies such as electricity and the assembly line. While this led to tremendous economic growth, it also widened the gap between industrial producers and local communities. Cooperatives, particularly in agriculture, credit, and housing sectors, played a crucial role during this time by ensuring that workers and producers were not left behind in the economic shift. Amul, a dairy cooperative founded in India in the 1940s, is an excellent example of how cooperatives responded to the industrial changes of the time. It revolutionized India's dairy sector, empowering farmers and ensuring fair prices for their milk, all while competing with larger industrial players. This was possible because cooperatives adapted and upgraded themselves alongside the changing industrial landscape.

The Third Industrial Revolution, or the Digital Revolution, started in the mid-20th century with the rise of electronics, computers, and telecommunications. This revolution fundamentally changed how industries operated, as automation and digital technologies became integral to business processes. While some cooperatives struggled to adapt, others that embraced these innovations continued to grow. The Fourth Industrial Revolution, or Industry 4.0, built on digitalization, incorporating cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, blockchain, and the Internet of Things (IoT). These advancements are reshaping industries and present new opportunities and challenges for cooperatives to remain competitive.

### **Innovation and Technology: Keys to Good Governance**

As cooperatives move into the era of Industry 4.0, the integration of innovation and technology becomes important for improving governance. Good governance is essential for cooperatives, as it ensures that decision-making processes are transparent, accountable, and aligned with the interests of members. Technology can play a transformative role in enhancing governance by making operations more efficient, promoting transparency, and ensuring compliance with cooperative principles.

For instance, blockchain technology offers cooperatives a way to create secure, transparent, and tamper-proof records of financial transactions and member activities. This level of transparency is important for maintaining the trust of cooperative members and for adhering to regulatory standards. Blockchain also enables self-regulation, as it allows members to monitor the actions of leaders and managers, ensuring that decisions are made in the best interest of the entire cooperative rather than a select few.

Moreover, technologies such as AI and data analytics provide cooperatives with tools to optimize their operations, predict market trends, and make informed decisions. AI can automate administrative tasks, reducing costs and improving productivity. By incorporating these tools, cooperatives can not only streamline their processes but also make data-driven decisions that enhance governance and accountability.

One of the key benefits of technology is its ability to promote democratic participation. In cooperatives, where each member typically has an equal vote, technology can make it easier for members to engage in decision-making processes. Digital platforms, for example, can facilitate member participation in voting and discussions, allowing for broader engagement and more inclusive governance.

### **Leadership and Good Governance**

While technology provides the tools for good governance, it is the responsibility of cooperative leaders to drive the organization forward. The role of leadership in cooperatives is particularly important, as leaders must embody the cooperative values of selflessness, transparency, and community-focused decision-making. If a cooperative leader is not driven by these values, the organization may struggle to meet its goals, no matter how advanced its technological systems.

Leadership in cooperatives is unique compared to traditional businesses because it is not only about profit maximization but also about promoting social and economic well-being for the members. Cooperative leaders must have a strong vision for the organization and be committed to the success of the community they serve. In today's competitive environment, cooperative leaders face additional challenges, as they must ensure that their organizations can compete with private enterprises while staying true to cooperative principles.

Good governance becomes even more essential when cooperatives compete with private enterprises, which often have more resources and greater flexibility in responding to market demands. Cooperatives, by their very nature, rely on collective decision-making, which can sometimes slow down the decision-making process. However, with the right governance structures in place—supported by technology—cooperatives can remain competitive by ensuring that they operate efficiently and transparently.

### **Creating Resilient Cooperative Systems**

In addition to strong leadership, cooperatives must have resilient systems in place that can support long-term success. A well-established cooperative system provides a structure that can withstand challenges, even if leadership changes or falls short. Such a system ensures that the cooperative continues to operate smoothly, with checks and balances in place to maintain accountability and transparency.

A clear example of how important it is to adapt can be seen in the contrasting experiences of two sectors: the handloom cooperatives and the Uralungal Labour Contract Co-operative Society (ULCCS).

The handloom sector, a significant part of India's economy for centuries, has not adapted well to industrial changes. As the world moved from handlooms to power looms and now to automated production, many handloom cooperatives did not keep pace. They failed to adopt new technologies and modernize their production processes. As a result, private firms that embraced these innovations grew rapidly, generating significant profits and securing their place in the market. Meanwhile, many handloom cooperatives struggled to remain competitive, losing market share, capital, and influence.

In contrast, the Uralungal Labour Contract Co-operative Society (ULCCS), established in 1925, has shown how a cooperative can thrive in the modern industrial environment. ULCCS, which started as a labor cooperative, has continually upgraded its skills, embraced technological advancements, and expanded into new sectors. Today, ULCCS is globally recognized, ranking second worldwide in the industrial and utility sectors. They have even ventured into the tech industry, establishing UL CyberPark to cater to the needs of the IT sector. This remarkable success story proves that with the right vision and willingness to change, cooperatives can lead in even the most technologically advanced industries.

### **Competing with Private Enterprises**

In today's globalized economy, cooperatives must compete with private enterprises that are often more agile and resource rich. To remain competitive, cooperatives must leverage technology to improve operational efficiency and governance. By adopting modern business practices, such as data-driven decision-making and digital management platforms, cooperatives can enhance their productivity and reduce costs, allowing them to compete more effectively in the marketplace.

Additionally, cooperatives must continue to promote a culture of good governance that ensures accountability and transparency in all operations. This governance model, combined with the adoption of cutting-edge technologies, will enable cooperatives to offer high-quality services and products while remaining true to their social and ethical values.

### **Conclusion**

Since its inception, the Ministry of Cooperation has rolled out various initiatives to transform cooperatives into diverse sectors. By streamlining governance structures, encouraging the integration of cutting-edge technology, and stimulating innovation,

these efforts aim to build a resilient cooperative ecosystem that can address contemporary challenges while maintaining its core values.

The future of cooperatives depends on their ability to integrate innovation, technology, and good governance into their core operations. From the mechanization of the First Industrial Revolution to the digital innovations of Industry 4.0, cooperatives have continuously evolved to meet the demands of changing times. By embracing new technologies like AI, blockchain, and data analytics, cooperatives can enhance their governance structures, improve transparency, and ensure that they remain competitive in today's global market.

At the heart of every cooperative's success is strong leadership and a commitment to the cooperative principles of democracy, equality, and community well-being. By combining visionary leadership with advanced technology and good governance, cooperatives can continue to play a critical role in shaping a more inclusive and sustainable economy. Furthermore, multiple cooperative institutions, including national federations and the ministry, need to undertake various sectoral activities, such as documenting best practices in governance, organizing presentations of social or technology startups addressing community issues, and hosting discussions with exemplary cooperative leaders.

With the right strategies in place, cooperatives have the potential to thrive in the 21st century and beyond, ensuring their place as key contributors to economic and social development worldwide.

### **Future Vision for Cooperatives**

To ensure continued growth, several strategic initiatives need to be undertaken.

-Scaling Up Digital Infrastructure; While PACS have seen significant digital upgrades, expanding digital infrastructure to secondary and tertial cooperative



levels will enhance operational efficiency. AI-driven analytics can be employed for smarter decision-making and market trend analysis.

**Sector-specific Innovation;** Creating innovation hubs tailored to industries such as agriculture, dairy, and fisheries will drive R& D efforts focused on process enhancements, product innovation, and financial model development.

**Promoting Sustainable Practices;** A stronger push towards sustainability, particularly in renewable energy and organic farming, can position cooperatives as leaders in environmental stewardship.

By maintaining a strong focus on innovation, technology, and governance, cooperatives are poised to meet future challenges while staying true to their core values. These ongoing efforts ensure that cooperatives will continue to play a pivotal role in promoting inclusive growth across India.

During Cooperative Week following activities/programs may be organized.

- Seminars and workshops on the vital issues of innovation, technology and good governance
- Youth-based competitions in innovation and technology upgradation through cooperatives
- Research studies/projects may be undertaken in the area of good governance in cooperatives.

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# **71<sup>st</sup> All India Cooperative Week, 2024**

**16<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**

**Theme: The Role of Cooperatives in Fostering Entrepreneurship,  
Employment and Skill Development**

**Ved Prakash Setia, Executive Director, NCUI and Dr. Shrija Sinha, Research  
Officer, NCUI**

The Indian economy is currently grappling with significant challenges, particularly in the realm of unemployment. According to the India Employment Report (2024), while the working population grew from 61% in 2011 to 64% in 2021, youth participation in economic activities fell to 37% in 2022. Additionally, despite an increase in the Labour Participation Rate to 41.4% in June 2024, the unemployment rate rose to 9.2%, as reported by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE). In this context, cooperatives emerge as a viable solution, offering sustainable employment opportunities and supporting initiatives from both the public and private sectors. By emphasizing collective responsibility, cooperatives play a vital role in fostering employment, entrepreneurship, and skill development, which are essential for economic recovery.

A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. Cooperative are competitive players in many economic sectors. The 97<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act incorporated the term 'cooperatives' into Article 19 (1) (c), granting the right to form cooperatives, and introduced Article 43(B) in the DPSP (Part IV) to support the promotion of these societies. Recently, the creation of separate ministry

signifies the importance our present government associate with the potential of cooperation in achieving inclusive growth through ‘Sabka Sath Sabka Vikas’.

### **Role of Cooperatives in promoting Employment**

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), third-sector organizations, which include cooperatives, operate between the public and private sectors to advocate, redistribute resources, and meet social goals. Cooperatives are autonomous associations of individuals who unite to address their common economic, social, and cultural needs through democratically controlled enterprises. Grounded in values of self-help, democracy, equality, and solidarity, cooperatives follow seven core principles that guide their operations and decision-making. In India, the cooperative sector has historical significance dating back to 1904, functioning as a vital means for employment and service delivery. The establishment of the Ministry of Cooperation in July 2021 has led to strategic initiatives aimed at revitalizing this sector, which now includes approximately 810,000 cooperatives serving 290 million members and contributing significantly to employment and self-employment opportunities.

The relationship between youth and the cooperative sector is mutually beneficial, as cooperatives offer meaningful employment while relying on the skills and dynamism of young individuals to remain relevant. The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) has proposed a 5‘E’ model—Employment, Education, Equality, Engagement, and Entrepreneurship—to guide the development of strategies for attracting youth to cooperatives. Cooperatives generate employment through various forms: they employ staff to operate their businesses; they create Labour/Workers/Professional Cooperatives, where members jointly own and control their employment; and they engage self-employed producers such as

farmers and artisans. With a significant percentage of India's workforce in the unorganized sector, cooperatives like the Uralungal Labour Contract Cooperative Society and the Indian Coffee House have demonstrated how this model can enhance livelihoods and improve living conditions.

The future of work is rapidly changing, characterized by the rise of remote work, automation, and the gig economy, which are transforming traditional employment structures. This shift emphasizes flexibility, digital skills, and adaptability. As we navigate this evolving landscape, new areas of employment are emerging within the cooperative sector. Although still in their early stages, these new opportunities hold significant potential. Examples include:

- **Jobs in Institutions Created to Support Cooperatives:** These positions arise due to the existence of cooperatives, such as central and state cooperative departments, cooperative education and training institutions, audit companies, and national/state-level federations.
- **Jobs in Related Businesses:** These include positions created in businesses that maintain commercial relations with cooperatives, such as IT companies, infrastructure firms, the service industry, manufacturing, and finance sectors.
- **Gig Economy Opportunities:** Cooperatives offer short-term contracts, freelance work, and flexible, project-based jobs, allowing individuals to engage in diverse roles across various industries.
- **Opportunities from the Ministry of Cooperation's Initiatives:** Recent amendments to the bye-laws governing Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) aim to transform them into multipurpose business units that can provide various services, including dairying, fisheries, credit services, agricultural production, marketing, storage, common service centers, and

agri-tourism. This transformation is expected to create numerous job opportunities for both young and experienced professionals. Additionally, the Ministry has established three new multi-state cooperatives focused on seeds, organic products, and exports, currently inducting many professionals across various positions.

### **Role of Cooperatives in Skill Development**

Knowledge and skills are vital for social development and economic growth, especially in a youthful nation like India, where the median age is under 28. Skill development enhances productivity, employability, and adaptability, contributing significantly to economic growth. Harnessing the potential of this demographic is crucial for fostering innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurial thinking within cooperatives, thereby driving inclusive welfare and sustainable development.

To achieve this, various institutions, including the National Centre for Cooperative Education (NCCE), the National Council for Cooperative Training (NCCT), and the Vaikunth Mehta National Institute of Cooperative Management (VAMNICOM), offer specialized training programs. Additional organizations, such as the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) and the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), along with Junior Cooperative Training Centers (JCTCs) and cooperative unions, also provide comprehensive education to equip aspiring professionals with the essential skills and knowledge needed for success in the cooperative sector. Some of the courses offered are:

**Post Graduate Diploma in Cooperative Business Management (PGDCBM)**, VAMNICOM, Pune designed to ensure quality management education for cooperative executives in India and SAARC nations.

**LINAC-NCDC Fisheries Business Incubation Centre (LIFIC), Gurgaon:** The center is the country's first dedicated initiative to support young professionals collaborating with fisheries cooperatives, offering a six-month incubation program with practical exposure. LINAC also conducts training across sectors, including Integrated Cooperative Development Projects, IT skill upgrades, and Management Development Programs for various types of cooperatives.

**IIT Kanpur and BIRD Partner to Promote Skill Development:** IIT Kanpur, through its IITK Foundation for Advanced Consulting, Education, and Training (IFACET), has partnered with the Bankers Institute of Rural Development (BIRD) to enhance skill development in key sectors.

**NABARD's Role in Promoting Skill Development:** With the support of NABARD, three skill development and upgradation programs were conducted to empower members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs). The first program, a 30-day training in Jhardoshi Arya works, saw enthusiastic participation from 30 SHG members. Another initiative, the NABARD-MEDP Hand Embroidery and Painting Program, provided 13 days of specialized training to 30 selected members from mature SHGs. Additionally, a 6-day NABARD-MEDP Bouquet Making Program offered practical skills training to enhance participants' entrepreneurial capabilities. These programs, fully funded by NABARD, highlight its commitment to skill development and economic empowerment.

**Leadership Development Programmes (LDP)** are regularly conducted by these institutions to build managerial capacities in the coming generation to join the 'Cooperative Sector'.

**Certificate Courses:** A range of certificate courses including the diploma courses are offered by these institutions for those seeking to learn more about the cooperative sector. NCDC also provides a four-month internship program, allowing

graduates to gain hands-on experience in the cooperative sector, enhancing their career prospects.

**Coops4SRD Programme:** The Cooperative for Sustainable Rural Development course is a unique course of NCUI designed for students in any Agri-professional courses like Agribusiness Management (ABM) and Rural Development, providing valuable insights into how cooperatives contribute to sustainable rural development. This is a five-day course.

**CoopConnect Programme:** An exclusive initiative by NCUI, this program aims to raise youth awareness about the cooperative business model. It highlights the model's relevance and its potential to create gainful employment opportunities, while also contributing to the growth and strengthening of India's economy. Students from various colleges and schools visit NCUI for this one-day program, while NCUI experts also visit universities, colleges, and schools to promote cooperative awareness.

**Cooperative Extension and Advisory Service-Learning Management System Portal (CEAS-LMS Portal):** The CEAS-LMS portal offers online, free, self-paced courses on various aspects of cooperatives, including management, governance, and operations

Additionally, the “**Sahakar Mitra,**” Scheme on Internship Programme (SIP) was initiated by the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) in 2012-13 to provide students of professional courses with practical work experience in NCDC's core and specialized fields, while also showcasing its contributions to cooperative development.

## **Role of Cooperatives in promoting Entrepreneurship**

Cooperative entrepreneurship blends the principles of cooperation with entrepreneurial spirit, enabling individuals to collaboratively achieve common goals while fostering innovation and creativity. This model stands apart from traditional entrepreneurship by emphasizing shared decision-making, equitable profit distribution, and collective resource utilization, which ultimately leads to cost reduction and enhanced market access. By pooling resources, cooperative entrepreneurs can secure better deals and collaborate on marketing efforts, making their ventures more resilient in today's competitive landscape. This cooperative approach not only mitigates risks but also strengthens the community by empowering its members, creating a sense of ownership, and promoting long-term sustainability.

Moreover, cooperatives play a vital role in fostering youth employment and self-employment opportunities. They provide young people with the chance to pool limited financial resources and engage in business activities that address diverse community needs. Through cooperatives, youth gain access to essential services, financial literacy, and hands-on experience in business management. However, to fully leverage the benefits of cooperative entrepreneurship, it is crucial to invest in education and training. Many cooperative movements have established educational programs that promote skills development, entrepreneurship, and cooperative governance, thus equipping members with the tools needed for success in their enterprises and fostering a collaborative environment.

For the upcoming Cooperative Week 2024, a series of activities can be organized to highlight the importance of cooperatives in employment, skill development, and entrepreneurship. Workshops and training sessions can be conducted, focusing on



key areas such as business management, digital marketing, and modern agricultural practices tailored for young entrepreneurs. Additionally, panel discussions featuring successful cooperative members can inspire participants and share best practices. Youth entrepreneurship competitions can be organized to encourage innovative ideas and cooperative projects, fostering a spirit of collaboration and creativity. Partnering with local educational institutions to host cooperative fairs could also help showcase the benefits of the cooperative model, promoting awareness and engagement among the youth.

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# **71<sup>st</sup> All India Cooperative Week, 2024**

**17<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**

**Theme: Transforming Cooperative Enterprises**

**Dr V.K Dubey, Advisor, NCUI and Ritesh Dey, Executive Director, NCUI**

The cooperative system in India came into existence to provide financial support to agriculturists so as to extricate them from the clutches of money lenders. However, poor agricultural conditions, absence of legal institutions to provide finance to farmers and rural weaker communities during the later part of nine & tenth century led to mounting distress and discontent among the population. As India is an agrarian country, the primary agricultural society had played an important role in farming business. Since 1904, the situation has changed to a great extent in the wake of increasing needs and demands of the people, industrial structure, technological needs, wide use of information, etc.

The cooperative system, which was started as lending institution to farmers, now has diversified itself with various functions spreading its wings to all parts of the country. At present, more than 8.5 lakh cooperatives are functioning in the country with their formidable presence in almost all the areas of socio-economic activities. They are involved in production, processing, marketing, export & import, human resource development, technology transformation, developing information systems and providing various services to the masses.

Today cooperatives are now acknowledged as enterprises equivalent to public and private enterprises. Hence, they should be run on professional lines through optimum use of technology, human resource development and application of management principles based on cooperative principles and values. The cooperative

federations and some big cooperatives are financially strong and manage their enterprises professionally based on innovative technology, but primary agriculture societies, fishery, labour, handloom, handicrafts, dairy, and service cooperatives are facing difficulties transforming due to financial crunch, small scale of the business and lack of professionalism. Recent years have witnessed a new interest in cooperative organisations, especially as a consequence of their transformation and expansion in new fields of activities. These two phenomena are connected, since transformation appears to be the prerequisite for expanding activities in new areas and is worthy of specific analysis. In particular, the capacity of cooperatives to assume a number of forms consistent with the socio- economic environment in which they are situated deserves special attention.

### **Formation of Ministry of Cooperative and their Transforming Initiatives**

In 2021 a long pending step was taken by establishing Cooperative Ministry at Centre based on far-sighted vision “Sahakar Se Samridhhi” of Hon’ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi Ji. Considering the importance of Primary Agriculture Cooperative societies, Ministry of Cooperation, Govt. of India, has been taking strong steps for strengthening of these institutions. Model bye laws of PACS have been developed and almost all the states have adopted these as a result of which multipurpose business activities have been started by PACS. These legal changes have enhanced the business of cooperative societies. The Ministry of Cooperation, Govt. of India, has taken various steps to increase efficiency of PACS through computerization. A common software will directly link with District Central Banks, State Cooperative Banks, NABARD and PACS. The government has also taken the initiative to open doors of GEM portal for cooperatives through which the cooperatives can purchase required items at reasonable rates and sell the products at better price.

The working scenario of the cooperative credit structure has witnessed a changing phase. A pilot project for providing Rupay Kisan Credit Cards (KCCS) to account

holders has started through which loans will be available to the members of cooperative societies at reasonable rates and members can also use this card for other financial transactions. The Micro ATM facility provided to Bank mitra cooperative societies is also crucial for transformation phase of cooperative enterprises. This will ensure ease of doing business and facilitate transparency & financial inclusion by providing “Doorstep” financial services.

Around 58 initiatives have taken by the Govt. of India which has led to transformation of cooperative enterprises. These are - addressing the problems of cooperative institutions like increase in limit of cash deposit & cash loan by PACS & PCARDB, reducing the tax on cooperatives, convergence of PM – Kusum Scheme at PACS level, reducing surcharge on cooperatives, upgradation of PACS as Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samridhi Kendra (PMKSK), PACS acting as Jan Aushadhi Kendras, and the largest decentralised grain storage program in the cooperative sector through PACS. The National Cooperative Policy, which will be announced shortly, will provide all round development of the cooperative movement.

### **Strategies to Augment the Transforming Cooperative Enterprises**

For any transformative journey a holistic approach, encompassing regulatory reforms, infrastructure development, technology adoption, governance improvements, and professional management is a prerequisite. Some of the important areas to work on for accelerating the transformation of cooperative enterprises are::

- **Legal Framework: Building a Uniform Ecosystem**

India's cooperative sector faces challenges due to its fragmented legal framework, which varies by state, creating operational inconsistencies. To address this, uniform cooperative laws aligned with best practices are needed to promote growth and sustainability. Currently, cooperatives are regulated by State Cooperative Acts and the Multi-State Cooperative Societies (MSCS) Act, overseen by the Registrar of

Cooperative Societies (RCS) and the Central Registrar (CRCS). These bodies regulate and foster growth, innovation, and compliance. However, strong internal governance within cooperatives is essential to prevent inefficiencies. A balance of self-regulation and external oversight will ensure transparency, accountability, and democratic decision-making.

- **Infrastructure and Technology: A Road to Modernisation**

The success of cooperatives hinges on adopting modern infrastructure and technology to enhance efficiency and scale operations. The government, through cooperative federations, must provide necessary infrastructure and tech support, such as cold storage, better transportation, and digital trading platforms, especially for agricultural cooperatives. Embracing Industry 4.0 technologies like AI, IoT, and digital platforms will streamline operations, reduce costs, and improve communication. These advancements enable cooperatives to optimize production, predict market trends, and offer better services, ultimately improving profitability and competitiveness.

- **Professional Management: Enhancing Governance and Operational Efficiency**

For cooperatives to thrive, they must adopt professional management practices and strengthen their governance structures. Traditional member-driven management often lacks the expertise needed for growth, making technology-driven governance crucial for transparency and accountability. Tools like real-time monitoring, digital voting, and blockchain can enhance decision-making and secure record-keeping. Additionally, cooperative leaders need entrepreneurial skills to make strategic decisions and drive innovation. This requires setting clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), appointing the right talent, and investing in ongoing education and training to align with modern business practices.

- **Cooperative Member Education and Training**

Education and training are vital for the transformation of cooperatives. While members often learn about cooperative principles, there is a need to expand their education to include business acumen, financial management, and market dynamics to boost productivity and profitability. Training programs should target three key areas: the Board of Directors, focusing on effective management and entrepreneurial skills; management employees, emphasizing technology adoption and customer service; and non-member stakeholders, educating them about the benefits of cooperatives to build trust and expand networks. By investing in education and training, cooperatives can enhance governance, drive innovation, and compete effectively while serving their members' interests sustainably.

The transformation of cooperative enterprises in India based on Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of "Sahkar Se Samridhhi", has become a reality. The following activities/programs may be organized by cooperative organizations during the 'Cooperative Week' to create a conducive environment for transformation of cooperative enterprises.

- Organise awareness programs on benefits of cooperatives amongst youth in schools, colleges and universities.
- Organise seminars on schemes for the benefit of cooperatives and their members.
- Organise awareness programs on cooperative products and exploring the potential of their availability on various platforms.
- Organise cooperative exhibitions to provide a marketing platform for cooperative societies.

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# **71<sup>st</sup> All India Cooperative Week, 2024**

**18<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**

**Theme: Strengthening Cooperation Among Cooperatives**

**Rajeev Sharma (Executive Director), NCUI and Yashank Kalyani, Research Officer, NCUI**

Cooperatives have long been a cornerstone of community-driven economic development, offering a model that prioritizes people over profit. With their roots in collective ownership, shared responsibility, and mutual benefit, cooperatives hold the potential to empower communities, especially in areas underserved by traditional business models. However, to fully unlock this potential, it is essential for cooperatives to foster deeper collaboration among themselves. Strengthening cooperation among cooperatives can catalyze their growth, resilience, and impact on local and global economies.

## **The Importance of Cooperation Among Cooperatives**

The principle of "Cooperation among Cooperatives" is one of the seven foundational principles outlined by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA). This principle highlights the need for cooperatives to work together at the local, regional, national, and international levels to strengthen the movement. By collaborating, cooperatives can leverage shared resources, knowledge, and networks, creating a stronger foundation for collective success.

Cooperation allows cooperatives to pool their resources for greater impact, leading to shared innovation, economies of scale, and enhanced market access. Additionally, working together fosters solidarity, enabling cooperatives to weather economic challenges, adapt to evolving markets, and address global issues such as climate change, inequality, and food security.

## **Key Benefits of Cooperation Among Cooperatives**

**1. Economies of Scale:** By collaborating, cooperatives can achieve greater scale in production, distribution, and marketing. This allows them to reduce costs, increase purchasing power, and compete more effectively with larger corporations.

**2. Resource Sharing:** Cooperatives often face similar challenges, such as limited access to capital, technology, and skilled labour. Through cooperation, they can share resources such as infrastructure, knowledge, and technical expertise, reducing duplication and increasing efficiency.

**3. Increased Market Access:** Cooperation can open doors to new markets. By forming alliances or federations, cooperatives can negotiate better terms, enter new regions, and develop joint marketing strategies. For example, agricultural cooperatives that collaborate can create larger networks for product distribution, enhancing their ability to access both local and international markets.

**4. Advocacy and Collective Voice:** Cooperatives that work together have a stronger collective voice when advocating for policies that support the cooperative movement. They can lobby for legal frameworks, financial incentives, and government support that benefit the sector as a whole, ensuring that the cooperative model is recognized and protected.

**5. Innovation and Learning:** Cooperation encourages the exchange of ideas and best practices. Cooperatives can learn from each other's successes and failures, fostering innovation in areas such as sustainable business practices, governance, and community engagement.

## **Strategies to Strengthen Cooperation Among Cooperatives**

**1. Establishing Networks and Alliances:** Cooperatives can form networks or federations that bring together organizations within the same sector or geographic region. These networks can serve as platforms for dialogue, collaboration, and joint



initiatives, allowing cooperatives to align their goals and work towards shared objectives.

**2. Collaborative Marketing and Branding:** Cooperatives can develop joint marketing campaigns that highlight the cooperative difference. By promoting the unique value of cooperative products and services, they can build consumer awareness and loyalty, which is essential for differentiating themselves in competitive markets.

**3. Shared Technology and Infrastructure:** Technological innovation is essential for the growth of cooperatives, but many smaller cooperatives lack the resources to invest in advanced technology. By pooling resources, cooperatives can develop shared digital platforms, logistics systems, and production facilities, helping them stay competitive in a rapidly evolving marketplace.

**4. Cooperative Education and Training:** Building a culture of cooperation requires ongoing education and capacity-building. Cooperatives should invest in training programs that promote the values of cooperation, teach best practices in governance and management, and help members develop the skills needed to thrive in a collaborative environment.

**5. Joint Ventures and Partnerships:** Cooperatives can pursue joint ventures with other cooperatives to launch new products, enter new markets, or create new services. These partnerships allow cooperatives to share risks and rewards, while also expanding their reach and impact.

**6. Policy Advocacy:** Cooperatives need to work together to advocate for policies that support their growth and sustainability. By forming coalitions and engaging with policymakers, cooperatives can influence legislation that fosters a more favourable business environment, including access to financing, tax incentives, and supportive legal frameworks.

## **Case Studies of Successful Cooperation**

1. **Mondragon Corporation:** One of the most well-known examples of cooperation among cooperatives is the Mondragon Corporation in Spain. Mondragon is a federation of worker cooperatives that operate across industries such as manufacturing, finance, and education. By working together, the Mondragon cooperatives have built a robust and resilient economic system that provides employment, social services, and education to thousands of members.

2. **Coop Italia:** In Italy, Coop Italia is a federation of consumer cooperatives that has become one of the country's largest retail chains. By pooling resources and working together, Coop Italia cooperatives have developed a strong brand, created efficient supply chains, and leveraged their collective bargaining power to benefit consumers and members.

3. **Agricultural Cooperatives in East Africa:** In East Africa, agricultural cooperatives have formed alliances to improve market access for smallholder farmers. By working together, these cooperatives can aggregate produce, negotiate better prices, and access international markets, leading to improved incomes and livelihoods for their members.

India has **19 National Federations** and **237 State Federations**, which ensure coordinated efforts across different levels of operation. These federations provide a platform for smaller cooperative societies to pool resources, influence policies, access markets, and address common challenges. Through vertical expansion, cooperative societies can strengthen their services, better negotiate with external stakeholders, and ensure the sustainability and scalability of the cooperative movement.

### **Role of Federations**

Cooperative federations, at both state and national levels, serve as the backbone of the cooperative movement. Their roles include:

1. **Advocacy for Policies:** Federations lobby for favorable policies and regulations, ensuring that the interests of cooperative societies are protected. They provide a unified voice to cooperatives, helping them influence policy decisions at the state and national levels.
2. **Economies of Scale:** By pooling resources and centralizing functions such as procurement, marketing, and training, federations help smaller cooperatives benefit from economies of scale. For example, a federation can negotiate bulk purchasing deals on behalf of multiple smaller cooperatives, reducing costs.
3. **Training and Technical Assistance:** Federations provide training and technical assistance to cooperative societies, enabling them to strengthen governance, management, and operational efficiency.
4. **Market Access:** Federations aggregate products from multiple societies, negotiate better deals, and help cooperatives access larger markets. This allows cooperatives to compete with larger players in the market while providing more value to their members.

### **Horizontal Expansion: Collaboration Across Different Sectors**

Horizontal expansion focuses on collaboration between cooperatives operating in different sectors. This approach promotes cross-sectoral partnerships that allow cooperatives to diversify services and create new business opportunities.

For instance, an agricultural cooperative might collaborate with a consumer cooperative to market its products, or a financial cooperative could provide credit services to a transport cooperative. By working together across sectors, cooperatives can enhance resilience, increase profitability, and expand their member base.

Such horizontal linkages are crucial for encouraging innovation and adapting to changing market and societal needs. Diversifying services enables cooperatives to

reach new markets, offer more value to their members, and create synergies that benefit all parties involved.

### **Ministry of Cooperation's Role in Facilitating Linkages**

The creation of the **Ministry of Cooperation** in India in July 2021 marked a significant milestone in efforts to promote cooperation among cooperatives. Under the leadership of Hon'ble Minister Shri Amit Shah, the Ministry aims to provide a distinct administrative, legal, and policy framework to strengthen the cooperative movement.

One of the key initiatives of the Ministry is encouraging linkages between **Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)** and **Multi-State Cooperative Societies (MSCS)**, modelled on successful examples like **IFFCO** and **KRIBHCO**. This linkage ensures that PACS, which operate at the grassroots level, can access the resources, expertise, and market reach of larger, well-established MSCS. These partnerships allow PACS to modernize their operations, access national markets, and better serve their members.

Additionally, the Ministry's focus on **digitizing cooperatives** and promoting transparency through computerization enhances the operational efficiency of cooperatives, building trust among members. By streamlining processes and facilitating collaboration through technology, the Ministry aims to create a more integrated cooperative network.

### **National Cooperative Database: A Key Driver for Strengthening Cooperation**

To further strengthen cooperation among cooperatives, the Ministry of Cooperation has initiated the development of the **National Cooperative Database**. This database will serve as a comprehensive repository of information on all cooperative societies in India, including their financial status, operational efficiency, and areas of specialization.

## **Conclusion**

The cooperative movement in India is poised for significant growth, driven by **vertical expansion within the federal structure** and **horizontal expansion across sectors**. Active collaboration among cooperatives, facilitated by the Ministry of Cooperation, is essential for building a sustainable and inclusive cooperative ecosystem.

The role of **federations** and **national cooperative societies** is critical in driving these linkages, as they provide the necessary support, resources, and market access to smaller cooperatives. The creation of the **National Cooperative Database** will further enhance these efforts by promoting transparency, improving decision-making, and encouraging cooperation across the sector.

With the Ministry's interventions, including PACS and MSCS linkages modeled after successful examples like IFFCO/KRIBHCO, the future of India's cooperative movement looks promising, with the potential to uplift rural economies and achieve the goal of "**Sahakar se Samriddhi**" (Prosperity through Cooperation).

## **Proposed Activities for Cooperative Week Celebration**

To celebrate Cooperative Week, the following activities can be undertaken:

### **1. Workshops on Business Diversification and Linkages:**

- Sectoral cooperatives can organize workshops focused on exploring opportunities for business diversification and forming linkages with other cooperatives.

### **2. Focused Group Discussions:**

- Personnel from sectoral cooperatives can participate in focused group discussions to identify and discuss potential linkages and collaborative opportunities.

### **3. Workshops and Seminars by Cooperative Education and Training (CET) Institutions:**

- CET institutions can organize workshops and seminars based on the specific theme for the week.
- They may also conduct brainstorming sessions with officials from sectoral cooperative federations to explore possible linkages and collaborative initiatives.

## **Conclusion**

Cooperation among cooperatives is not just a principle; it is a powerful strategy for achieving sustainable growth and resilience in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. By fostering collaboration, cooperatives can amplify their impact, drive innovation, and build stronger, more inclusive economies. Strengthening cooperation requires intentional efforts to build networks, share resources, and advocate for supportive policies, but the rewards—both for cooperatives and the communities they serve—are well worth the investment.

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# **71<sup>st</sup> All India Cooperative Week, 2024**

**19<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**

**Theme: Cooperatives for Women, Youth and Weaker Sections**

**Sandhya Kapoor, Director, NCUI and Anurag Dang, Deputy Director, NCUI**

Cooperatives are making a significant impact across various sectors of economic activity, playing a crucial role in promoting inclusive growth by creating opportunities for diverse groups. From an empowerment perspective, cooperatives serve as platforms for youth to acquire the necessary skills and capabilities to become agents of change, enabling them to positively influence not only their own lives but also contribute to the broader community, organizations, and society. By integrating youth into cooperative structures, these organizations help foster a sense of responsibility and leadership, driving both personal and collective growth. Similarly, women's empowerment focuses on enhancing their social, economic, political, and legal strength, ensuring equal rights, and giving them the confidence to assert these rights. At the same time, cooperatives are also working to uplift weaker sections of society those from socio-economically and politically disadvantaged backgrounds by creating inclusive opportunities for growth and participation. Together, these efforts by cooperatives are fostering an ecosystem where women, youth, and weaker sections can collaborate and contribute meaningfully to economic and social development.

## **Role of Cooperatives in Youth Empowerment:**

Currently, nearly 75 million young people are unemployed, with an increasing number not engaged in employment, education, or training, especially in developed countries. This lack of decent work opportunities poses risks to young individuals and threatens societal stability, potentially leading to increased social conflict and

political unrest. The underutilization of youth in the labor market represents a significant loss of potential, perpetuating cycles of intergenerational poverty and social exclusion. Young people often face unique challenges when entering the workforce, including an "experience gap," where they struggle to secure jobs due to insufficient experience, which further hinders their ability to gain the necessary qualifications for future employment. During economic downturns, they are typically the last hired and the first let go under the 'last in, first out' principle. Compounding these challenges is the inadequate quality and relevance of education and training, creating a mismatch between labor supply and demand. As a result, young people find it difficult to secure jobs that align with their qualifications, while employers struggle to find candidates with the appropriate skills. In developing economies, where 87% of the world's youth reside, many young individuals are underemployed and work in informal sectors under poor conditions. Thus, the challenge lies not only in generating new employment opportunities but also in improving the quality of available jobs.

Girls and young women face particular disadvantages; despite narrowing gender gaps in education, these improvements have not yet translated into equal opportunities in the labor market. Empowering youth is crucial for a nation's prosperous future, as they drive economic and cultural transformation. This empowerment entails fostering personal agency through skill development, critical awareness, and active participation in community change. At the societal level, it requires creating environments and systems that support personal growth, leadership, and decision-making. Cooperatives significantly contribute to youth empowerment by focusing on education, access to information technology, poverty alleviation, social and political empowerment, environmental protection, and youth entrepreneurship. They help overcome barriers to youth inclusion and provide decent work opportunities, encouraging youth-driven enterprises. Cooperatives prioritize people over profit, embracing values such as self-help, democracy,



equality, and solidarity. Their democratic structure fosters participation, broadens ownership, and strengthens youth empowerment. Globally, cooperatives provide an estimated 100 million jobs, although the precise proportion of youth employment remains unclear. They serve as a crucial source of job creation, offering both salaried positions and opportunities for self-employment. The cooperative model is adaptable to rural and urban settings and caters to individuals across a wide range of skill levels, including recent graduates. Cooperatives are particularly appealing in countries where young people seek work that meets their economic needs while aligning with their desire for democratic, socially responsible, and people-centered businesses. Additionally, cooperatives enable young people to pool financial resources and knowledge into enterprises that address various needs, making it an attractive option due to low capital requirements, limited liability, and flexibility for self-employment.

Moreover, cooperatives help formalize informal employment by providing a collective voice, economies of scale, and access to social protection. Entrepreneurs' cooperatives, especially in Africa, are emerging as small and medium-sized informal businesses unite to share services and resources. However, cooperatives often lack systematic inclusion in business development services or education curricula, limiting young people's ability to consider them as viable business options. To bridge this gap, many cooperatives offer entrepreneurship training and education, frequently in partnership with academic institutions. They also facilitate school-to-work transitions by providing on-the-job training through internships and apprenticeships. School cooperatives, prevalent in regions like Asia and Europe, introduce young people to cooperative models while offering pre-employment experience. In some cases, cooperatives have established training centers and colleges that develop skills for job mobility both within the cooperative sector and in other enterprises.

In addition to creating jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities, cooperatives provide essential services such as food and retail, financial services, healthcare, housing, utilities, and communication, benefiting young people and their communities. Access to finance is critical for young entrepreneurs, and financial cooperatives play a vital role in delivering credit and financial services. Resilient even during economic crises, financial cooperatives have introduced tailored services to meet the needs of young entrepreneurs, enabling them to start and grow their businesses. By addressing gaps in education, employment, and financial inclusion, cooperatives empower young people to overcome labor market challenges and contribute to sustainable economic development and social stability.

### **Role of Cooperatives in Women Empowerment:**

Despite comprising nearly half of the global population, women have historically faced exploitation and significant inequalities, including violence, limited access to education, healthcare, legal aid, and denial of property rights. Their decision-making roles have often been suppressed, skills undervalued, and they frequently earn less than men for the same work, perpetuating ongoing injustices. The United Nations, established in 1945, initiated efforts to address these issues, culminating in the creation of UN Women in 2010. In 2015, gender equality was designated as one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, highlighting a global commitment to advancing women's rights. Despite these advancements, gender inequality persists in various aspects of society, with women remaining underrepresented in political, social, and economic decision-making and lacking access to financial services.

Cooperatives are tackling these challenges by developing tailored programs that enhance financial inclusion and provide women with opportunities to participate in operations and decision-making processes. By facilitating access to credit, welfare services, and empowerment training, cooperatives create platforms for women to collaborate, support one another, and work towards a more secure future.

Empowering women is crucial for safeguarding their basic rights, including self-respect, dignity, and the freedom to make their own choices. Women should have equal opportunities to engage in social, religious, and public life, attain financial independence, receive quality education, secure employment, and work in safe environments.

In India, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) exemplifies this commitment, focusing on empowering women in the informal sector. SEWA's initiatives align with global efforts, demonstrating how local actions can contribute to broader gender equality and empowerment objectives.

### **Role of Cooperatives in empowering Weaker Sections:**

Cooperatives are among the oldest and most significant socio-economic organizations worldwide. Over time, the cooperative movement has established itself as a stable, competitive, and widely embraced model due to its focus on addressing the needs of both its members and society. Cooperatives embody democracy in its truest sense, aligning with Abraham Lincoln's definition of governance: 'for the people, by the people, and of the people.'

The cooperative model serves as a powerful vehicle for socio-economic transformation, particularly in underdeveloped sectors where collective action fosters self-reliance. It has been consistently recognized in planning documents as a tool for rural development, with many considering it one of the most socially purposeful instruments available. By pooling resources and efforts, members with limited means can achieve goals that would otherwise be unattainable.

While corporate and economic organizations often adhere to the Darwinian principle of "survival of the fittest," cooperatives operate on the principle of "survival of the weakest," often with state assistance. As social organizations, cooperatives possess unique characteristics that must be preserved, with the state acting as a trustee supporting disadvantaged members who unite for a common economic objective. Globally, cooperatives represent a vast socio-economic

movement, with approximately 600 million members. According to the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), there were 674,967 cooperative societies worldwide as of 1988, with over 500,000 in developing nations. These cooperatives function across diverse economies and sectors, adapting to the cultural and political landscapes of their respective societies.

Every individual is born free and equal in dignity and rights, making it imperative to restore dignity among marginalized segments of society, with education serving as the cornerstone of genuine empowerment. India has made remarkable progress in reducing its poverty rate from 45% in 1994 to 22% in 2012, a significant achievement that paves the way for further advancement. Comprehensive empowerment must address eight fundamental needs: food, energy, housing, clean water, sanitation, healthcare, education, and social security, ensuring that all citizens have access to a decent standard of living. Key enablers of this empowerment include education, employability, entrepreneurship, and sustainable economic resources. In this context, cooperative banks and microfinance institutions play a crucial role in supporting marginalized groups by providing the financial resources necessary to enhance their social and economic status.

The formalization of the cooperative movement in the 18th century was a response to the harsh realities of industrialization and capitalism, offering an alternative to exploitative conditions. Notable figures like Robert Owen pioneered cooperative initiatives, reflecting the deep-rooted human inclination towards cooperation. While cooperation had long existed informally, the formal structure of cooperatives evolved to meet society's changing needs.

### **Strategies to Engage Youth, Women, and Weaker Sections in Cooperatives:**

To effectively empower marginalized groups, it is essential to implement targeted strategies that foster their engagement in cooperatives, including:

**Awareness and Education:** Conduct workshops and community outreach programs to educate marginalized groups about the benefits of cooperatives.

**Access to Financial Resources:** Establish financial cooperatives that offer tailored microfinance options and credit facilities for entrepreneurial initiatives

**Collaborations:** Partner with local NGOs, government bodies, and global cooperative networks to enhance resource sharing and skill development.

**Tailored Cooperative Models:** Develop cooperative models focused on the specific interests of youth and women, such as technology cooperatives or artisan groups.

**Policy Advocacy:** Advocate for supportive legislation and incentives to empower marginalized groups within the cooperative framework.

**Digital Empowerment:** Leverage digital platforms for marketing cooperative products and provide training in digital skills for youth and women in e-commerce.

**Family-Friendly Policies:** Implement childcare facilities and flexible working arrangements to encourage participation from working mothers.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish frameworks to assess the impact of cooperative initiatives, ensuring continuous improvement through feedback mechanisms.

**Establishment and Promotion of Social Cooperatives in India:** To promote social cooperatives in India, inspired by Poland's successful model, a comprehensive approach is required, including a supportive legislative framework, capacity-building training, dedicated funding mechanisms, and community awareness campaigns.

During the Cooperative Week celebrations, following programs may be organized'

= Seminars/workshops on various issues of cooperative development related to women, youth and weaker sections of the society

- Quiz, debates and essay competitions on cooperatives for youth.
- Best innovative business ideas contest for youth.
- Awarding best youth/student cooperative consumer society.

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# **71<sup>st</sup> All India Cooperative Week, 2024**

## **20<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**

**Theme: Role of Cooperatives in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Way Forward for Better World**

**Savitri Singh, Deputy Chief Executive, NCUI and Shruti Kulkarni, Research Officer, NCUI**

In facing the intertwined challenges of poverty, inequality, and climate change, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have become a crucial framework for global action. Adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, the SDGs aim to create a more equitable, sustainable, and prosperous world by 2030. Within this framework, cooperatives—democratic organizations dedicated to meeting the shared economic, social, and cultural needs of their members—are increasingly recognized as key contributors to these goals.

The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) defines a cooperative as an autonomous association of individuals who voluntarily unite to achieve common aspirations through jointly-owned enterprises. Rooted in mutual aid and self-help principles, cooperatives have evolved as effective responses to historical inequities intensified by the industrial revolution. Globally, cooperatives engage approximately one billion people, employ over 100 million individuals, and significantly impact the livelihoods of nearly half the world's population. The economic influence of cooperatives is substantial, with the largest generating revenues comparable to those of major economies.

Cooperatives inherently support the SDGs by fostering job security, equitable wages, and social inclusion, while also backing community initiatives like healthcare and education. Their participatory approach uniquely addresses the SDGs' economic, social, and environmental dimensions. The article emphasizes the

important role cooperatives play in contributing to 12 out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## **The Role of Cooperatives in Achieving SDGs**

### **1. SDG 1: No Poverty**

Cooperatives are pivotal in poverty reduction by creating economic opportunities and ensuring equitable resource distribution. Through collective ownership and management, cooperatives empower marginalized communities to access markets, secure fair wages, and improve their livelihoods. This is especially effective in agriculture, where cooperatives help small-scale farmers access essential resources, technology, and fair-trade opportunities, thereby enhancing economic stability.

Organizations like the United Nations, International Labour Organization (ILO), and ICA recognize cooperatives for their unique ability to tackle poverty and exclusion. Examples include savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs) that provide financial capital, agricultural cooperatives that support farmers, and consumer cooperatives that offer quality goods at affordable prices.

Notable examples include Amul Dairy, IFFCO, KRIBHCO, and Kerala's Milma and Uralungal Labour Contract Cooperative, which have improved the livelihoods of small farmers and labourers through fair wages, affordable inputs, and employment opportunities.

### **2. SDG 2: Zero Hunger and Well Being**

Cooperatives significantly contribute to food security by helping small-scale farmers, fishers, and producers overcome challenges such as limited market access, high input costs, and inadequate infrastructure. They provide collective purchasing, marketing, and credit services while building farmers' skills and strengthening their influence in policy decisions. Consumer cooperatives ensure access to safe food and help preserve indigenous crops, improving nutrition and food availability.

### **3. SDG 3: Good Health and Well Being**



Cooperatives play a vital role in promoting healthy lives by developing healthcare infrastructure, financing services, and providing home-based care, particularly for individuals with HIV/AIDS. Healthcare cooperatives come in various forms, including worker cooperatives that deliver services, patient- or community-owned cooperatives, and multi-stakeholder models. They offer services ranging from homecare to operating full-scale hospitals. Globally, more than 100 million households are served by health cooperatives.

#### **4. SDG 4: Quality Education**

Education is integral to the cooperative model, with many cooperatives investing in educational initiatives that benefit members and the broader community. By supporting vocational training, literacy campaigns, and scholarships, cooperatives enhance skills and knowledge, leading to better economic and social outcomes. This commitment to lifelong learning fosters a more educated workforce essential for sustainable development.

Cooperatives promote inclusive and accessible education through financial support, assisting teachers and schools, and sometimes establishing their own educational institutions. For instance, SACCOs in Kenya offer loans for school fees, and cooperatives in Ghana and Ethiopia finance classroom construction and school enhancements. Additionally, cooperatives like the Cooperative College in Manchester, UK, establish trust schools committed to social justice and moral purpose.

Through knowledge sharing and collaboration, cooperatives create supportive communities that empower individuals and address governance challenges, significantly contributing to the achievement of quality education for all.

#### **5. SDG 5: Gender Equality**

Gender equality is a core principle for many cooperatives, which actively promote inclusive decision-making and equal opportunities for women's leadership and participation. Cooperatives, such as women's savings and credit groups and

women-led agricultural cooperatives, empower women to achieve economic independence, enhance their social status, and contribute to community development. By challenging traditional gender norms, cooperatives advance both gender equality and social justice.

The International Cooperative Alliance's Gender Equality Committee highlights cooperatives' unique position to address challenges disproportionately affecting women, particularly poverty and well-being. Globally, cooperatives expand women's access to economic resources and opportunities. In Japan, women make up 95% of cooperative members, while in Spain and Italy, women hold significant membership and leadership roles in various cooperatives.

In India, women's cooperatives, such as the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and the Lijjat Papad Cooperative, promote self-employment and empowerment. SEWA supports women in the informal sector through microfinance and handicrafts, while Lijjat Papad enables women from underprivileged backgrounds to earn a stable income by producing papad at home.

## **6. SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitisation**

Cooperatives are increasingly stepping in to provide clean water and sanitation services where public and private sectors fall short. They offer alternative solutions for urban and remote communities, such as in India's Olavanna panchayat, where water cooperatives now serve over significant number of households. Cooperatives also address sanitation and housing issues, with the National Cooperative Housing Federation (NCHF) organizing the housing cooperatives in India, benefiting members, and constructing homes, primarily for low-income families.

## **7. SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy**

Energy cooperatives are playing a key role in advancing sustainable energy goals by improving energy access, boosting efficiency, and reducing emissions. They are actively involved in generating and distributing electricity, while also promoting the use of renewable sources like solar and wind power globally. Rural

electrification cooperatives are particularly notable for bringing electricity to rural areas in both developed and developing nations. In the U.S., consumer-owned utilities buy electricity at wholesale rates and distribute it directly to consumers. In developing countries, successful examples of energy cooperatives can be seen in India. One notable instance is a biomass-based power cooperative located in Karnataka, which has effectively harnessed biomass energy. Additionally, the Multistate Energy Consumers' and Producers' Cooperative Society Ltd. in Sikkim capitalizes on the region's hydropower resources to generate energy. These cooperatives demonstrate innovative approaches to energy production and sustainability within their communities. However, energy cooperatives face challenges due to the high capital costs involved, making public-private partnerships a potential solution.

## **8. SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth**

Cooperatives drive sustainable economic growth by promoting inclusive and equitable employment opportunities. They create jobs, support local entrepreneurship, and enhance economic resilience through fair labor practices and equitable profit distribution. This focus on social responsibility fosters better working conditions and income security, particularly in rural communities and among those traditionally excluded from the economic mainstream.

SDG 8 aligns closely with cooperative values, which prioritize worker well-being and democratic control. Cooperatives generate millions of jobs and reinvest profits into communities, amplifying their positive economic impact. For example, cooperative members in India's dairy industry enjoy higher and more secure incomes, while agricultural cooperatives in Ethiopia benefit from increased incomes and reduced input costs.

Cooperatives also facilitate collective bargaining, giving members a stronger voice in negotiations with public authorities. Initiatives like afforestation projects by the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) and other cooperatives

demonstrate cooperatives' role in enhancing food security and creating secure employment opportunities. By aligning operations with sustainable development principles, cooperatives are essential to achieving inclusive and equitable economic growth.

### **9. SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities**

Effective governance is essential for socio-economic transformation and reducing structural inequality as it promotes a fairer society where resources are equitably shared and individuals have a greater voice in decision-making. Cooperatives play a vital role through their democratic member control, ensuring equal voting rights and facilitating social dialogue, particularly in rural and informal economies. With good governance attributes like transparency and accountability, cooperatives empower even the most disadvantaged members to engage in economic progress and local development. They also serve as models of democracy, allowing members to influence global governance discussions. Despite challenges like unclear property rights and member disengagement, cooperatives are implementing innovative solutions, such as management codes of conduct, to enhance their governance.

### **10.SDG 13: Climate Action**

Cooperatives are at the forefront of environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation. They engage in practices such as organic farming, renewable energy initiatives, and sustainable resource management. Renewable energy cooperatives, for example, provide clean energy solutions and promote energy efficiency, significantly reducing carbon footprints.

The democratic structure of cooperatives allows members to prioritize long-term environmental goals over short-term profits, fostering a stronger commitment to climate action. Insurance cooperatives offering "climate insurance" and collaborative approaches to sustainability challenges exemplify how cooperatives can effectively address climate-related risks.

By working together, cooperatives amplify their impact and drive meaningful reforms necessary to combat the climate crisis, aligning their efforts with global environmental protection initiatives.

### **11.SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institution**

Cooperatives often play a crucial role in rebuilding communities after violent social conflicts by fostering social capital, participation, and inclusion among members. In post-genocide Rwanda, they provided emotional support and addressed structural grievances. During crises, cooperatives offer sustainable solutions to establish robust economic systems, revitalizing struggling sectors, recovering local economies, and creating jobs for women and youth in both rural and urban areas. New forms of cooperatives are emerging to address specific needs, such as social care cooperatives for aging populations and orphans. Women's cooperatives have been particularly effective in promoting peace and development, as seen in Nepal, where they helped women manage livelihoods post-insurgency, and in Gujarat, India, where the Self-Employed Women's Association supported riot victims. Additionally, a women's cooperative in Lebanon revitalized traditional products after the 2006 shelling, helping to restore cultural memory in the village.

### **12.SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals**

Cooperatives are essential in creating a global environment that supports sustainable development by bridging trade gaps between developed and developing countries, stabilizing financial systems during crises, and promoting financial deepening. They help eliminate trade barriers through fair trade practices, connecting cooperatives in the Global South with markets in the Global North to support ethical production and local social development initiatives. Cooperatives export a diverse range of fair-trade products, including coffee, tea, and handicrafts. Additionally, financial cooperatives provide crucial financial services, especially in remote areas where they may be the only formal institutions available, enabling

members to save, borrow, and access micro insurance, thus enhancing financial stability.

### **Challenges Faced by Cooperatives**

Cooperatives significantly contribute to sustainable development but face numerous challenges that limit their impact. They often struggle with limited financial resources, hindering investments in technology and sustainability. Competition with profit-driven entities affects their market presence, while member engagement declines when individuals are dissatisfied with decision-making processes. Inconsistent policies, lack of training, and complex coordination among cooperatives further complicate their effectiveness. Additionally, climate variability and gender inequality in leadership and resource access pose further obstacles. Addressing these issues is essential for cooperatives to fully realize their potential in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### **Strategies for Improvement**

To enhance their effectiveness and tackle existing challenges, cooperatives can adopt several key strategies. First, securing better access to financial resources is essential. Cooperatives can diversify funding by partnering with government agencies, NGOs, and private investors for grants and low-interest loans. Additionally, establishing cooperative banks tailored to their financial needs can offer specialized products and services. To boost market competitiveness, cooperatives should focus on strong branding that emphasizes quality, sustainability, and community impact, while pooling resources for collective marketing to expand their visibility and reach. Strengthening member engagement is also critical cooperatives should offer ongoing education on governance and sustainability, and foster inclusivity by encouraging member participation in decision-making processes.

Advocating for supportive policies is another important step. Cooperatives can use their collective influence to engage policymakers and build alliances with other

organizations to push for favorable regulatory frameworks. Capacity building is crucial, with cooperatives benefiting from skill development workshops and mentorship programs that focus on leadership and sustainable practices. To improve coordination between cooperatives, creating networking platforms and launching joint projects can help address common challenges, like climate change or community development, through shared resources and expertise.

Adapting to climate change is also essential for long-term success. By implementing sustainable practices like organic farming and renewable energy, cooperatives can build resilience. Providing climate education equips members with strategies for adaptation and mitigation. Promoting gender equality should be a priority too—cooperatives can create leadership development programs for women and ensure equal access to financial resources and training for all members, particularly marginalized groups. Embracing technology is another important strategy, with cooperatives benefiting from investments in digital tools for marketing, management, and communication. Offering digital literacy programs will further empower members to effectively use these technologies.

Lastly, monitoring and evaluation are key to continuous improvement. Establishing clear performance metrics and feedback mechanisms ensures cooperative initiatives stay aligned with community needs and remain accountable. By adopting these strategies, cooperatives can boost resilience, drive meaningful progress toward the SDGs, and foster a more sustainable and equitable future for their members and communities.

### **The Way Forward to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals**

Cooperatives are essential to realizing the SDGs, operating across all areas of sustainable development. However, their potential is often underrecognized in national and international discussions, leading policymakers to overlook their significant contributions. It is crucial for the cooperative movement to actively

engage in these conversations, ensuring their experiences and insights inform SDG formulation and implementation.

Historically, the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) highlighted the importance of cooperative participation in achieving sustainable outcomes. Stakeholders, including United Nations agencies like the ILO and ICA, agree that cooperatives are uniquely positioned to address poverty and exclusion by creating economic opportunities, empowering marginalized individuals, and enhancing access to essential assets.

Cooperatives are advancing gender equality by increasing female membership and expanding opportunities for women in local economies. They support quality education through financial aid, school establishment, and educational programs. In healthcare, cooperatives develop infrastructure, finance medical initiatives, and provide care for vulnerable populations. They enhance food security by supporting small-scale farmers and ensure access to clean water and sanitation, filling gaps left by other sectors.

With over 100 million jobs globally, cooperatives contribute significantly to employment and income generation. They demonstrate greater resilience during economic downturns, making them vital for economic stability. Environmental cooperatives lead sustainable resource management, while their governance models promote transparency and accountability, collaborating with communities to achieve sustainable development.

In post-conflict regions, cooperatives foster social capital, promoting community cohesion and empowerment. Women's cooperatives, in particular, play a critical role in peacebuilding and development. Additionally, cooperatives create a global enabling environment by bridging trade gaps, stabilizing financial systems during crises, and supporting financial inclusion worldwide.



In summary, cooperatives have the potential to be key drivers of sustainable development. Their active involvement in shaping and achieving the SDGs is essential for creating a more equitable and sustainable future.

### **Conclusion**

Cooperatives are instrumental in advancing the SDGs across different sectors, including poverty reduction, gender equality, quality education, decent work, and environmental sustainability. Their member-centered approach empowers individuals and communities, fostering economic resilience and social inclusion. Despite their significant contributions, cooperatives often lack sufficient recognition in national and international discussions, limiting their potential impact on sustainable development initiatives. For this Cooperative Week celebration community workshops and educational campaigns can be organized to highlight how cooperatives promote inclusive growth and sustainability. Engaging media platforms and social networks to share success stories of cooperatives contributing to SDGs can inspire action. Additionally, collaborating with schools, universities, and local governments to incorporate cooperative principles into curricula and policy discussions will further spread awareness.

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**71<sup>st</sup> All India Cooperative Week**

**2024**

**SPECIAL ISSUE  
OF  
'THE COOPERATOR'**

**REQUEST FOR ARTICLE**

**Dear Cooperators,**

As we approach the **71<sup>st</sup> All India Cooperative Week**, scheduled to be celebrated from 14th to 20th November 2024, the National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI) invites insightful contributions for a special issue of 'The Cooperator'. This year's theme, "**Role of Cooperatives in Building Viksit Bharat**", highlights the significant potential of cooperatives in driving the nation's progress toward becoming a developed country. We invite you to submit articles that explore the main theme, and the sub-themes.

Articles should offer fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and practical insights into how the cooperative movement can accelerate India's development. Contributions can be between **3 to 6 pages (not exceeding 5000 words)**.

**Submission Guidelines:**

**Deadline for submissions: 31th October 2024**

Articles should be sent via email to **ncui.pub@gmail.com**.

We look forward to your valuable contributions to this special issue, which will amplify the cooperative sector's critical role in shaping a prosperous, developed India.