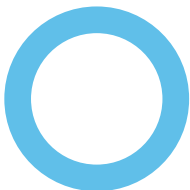


# WOMEN POWERMENT IN COOPS

*Italian cooperative experiences toward the  
achievement of gender equality in the world*



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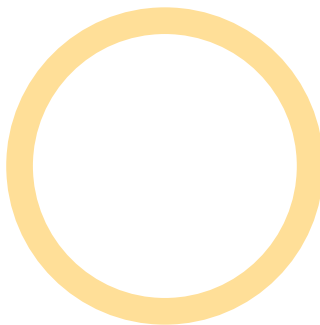


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# PREFACES

In the whirlwind daily effort, it can become difficult to reflect and act towards the other; solidarity can turn out to be a burdensome movement, which makes us forget to dedicate ourselves to those individual or collective actions that can go beyond the contingent opportunity. In a world where money has become the center of any relationships, the essence of exchange is being lost, when it should focus firstly on people and then on the use of goods and services

It is in this sense that the WomeNpowerment initiative, which started over a year ago, has proved able to bring a renewed attention in the key principles of cooperation, such as solidarity and mutuality, and has gained the immediate approval and support from of Confcooperative.

Moreover, this remarkable project gave me an input for a new reflection on how cooperatives can act differently in being enterprises that put people before capital at the center of their business. They appeal to the principle of cooperation among cooperatives, considering that mutual aid, the exchange of knowledge and techniques, the relationship for mutual benefit is a basis for living and working better. Mutualism is a fundamental principle for the enrichment of each individual, in ours and other countries that are different from ours but are vital and fruitful even more than ours. International cooperation allows us to act in those countries where our experience and our passion can provide change through the enrichment of everyone. Confcooperative is itself active in this respect through Coopermondo, a partner in international cooperative development and among NGOs excellencies.

Sometimes, due to incorrect habits or attitudes, women and their potentialities and visions are penalized, weakening processes of growth and inclusion.

Again in this, Confcooperative wants to emphasize the centrality of gender balance policies; about 30% of cooperatives have a majority presence of women, cooperating leaders and entrepreneurs. The continuous and active work with the Commission for Cooperators, both with the National and Regional Network, promote the priority of gender issues, fostering empowerment and collective social development.

The WomeNpowerment project has the benefit of putting together the experiences of Coopermondo and those of the Women Commission: it is an example of the synergies that Confcooperative, through the Department for Development Policies, puts in place to enhance cooperation and cooperative paths, different but complementary.

The example of a path that gives birth to ideas and new projects, from the passion and action of those who believe in the mission of building an increasingly cooperative world, a world built around people and relationships.

**Marco  
Venturelli,**  
*Secretary  
General of  
Confcooperative*

**Claudia Fiaschi,**  
*Vice President  
 of Coopermondo  
 - Confcooperative*

**Promoting a new model of economic and social development** is already a clear global necessity. Finding new forms of sustainability to reduce inequality in communities; ensuring economic development as well as the well-being of people in a widespread and inclusive way; fostering real economy rather than financial economy, having a direct impact on people and communities. All this is very important for Confcooperative.

**Coopermondo's development cooperation** is based on these ideas and is rooted in three pillars:

- 1) The promotion, in difficult contexts, of the sensibility of cooperative enterprises towards people, territory and economic and social value. Sharing the model of Italian cooperatives, through technical assistance and training.
- 2) The collaboration with **local authorities**: there is no development without a productive dialogue with local territorial administrations.
- 3) The support in **twinning**s between our cooperative enterprises and local organisations in difficult environments.

It is fundamental to link these elements to a fourth, transversal one, which today plays a pivotal role in all projects of international development cooperation: **the issue of gender**. Women, especially in subsistence contexts, represent the greatest part of the workforce. According to many studies, when it comes down to credit and the repayment of the loans, women reliability is decisively higher than that of men. Moreover, considering the **migrant crisis** that Italy and the Mediterranean countries are experiencing, it is necessary to take into consideration the design of reception projects aimed to the conscious return of migrants supported by investments and technical assistance as well as promoting the role that women may play in the **processes of social inclusion and integration**.

Reflecting the experiences of women all around the world. **The project WomeNpowerment** is firstly this: a space where cooperative and cooperating women can exchange their ideas in order to find, in Coopermondo's words, **common solutions to individual problems**. Each one of us has tackled many challenges and often, thanks to the creation of a cooperative, we have reached **economic independence** and the **solidarity** needed for going forward. Discussing, creating practical instruments and using them, together, in a cooperative way, is the beginning of a path to that new model of sustainable development we are looking for.



According to the **Commission of Women Cooperative Managers**, the priority objective is to work concretely **to contribute to the change** and to the **cooperative innovation**, through the study and the divulgation of instruments supporting **female entrepreneurship**, employment growth and a greater **women involvement in social, professional and economic processes**.

**Anna Manca,**  
*Coordinator of  
the Commission  
of Women  
Cooperative  
Managers*

The project **WomeNpowerment**, excitingly shared by Coopermondo, represents a step forward of this work, to extend the attention to **gender policies** and to the affirmation of our goals and to take significant steps towards the full achievement of a fair and **sustainable development** model by starting with the role of women as stated in the **Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations**.

This text widely describes a great number of paths, confirming that at the root of the action of the Commission there is **the continuous research to find alternative projects**. They may have a positive effect on the meeting with other thoughts and on the creation of a space of exchange and growth, where similar or different qualities and characteristics, by combining, will never be the same and for this reason will be widely creative and productive. Collective or individual initiatives and movements that be-come shared proposals and projects.

**WomeNpowerment** is a space to explore and to know, highlighting that is always possible to learn and to comprehend, by taking a path that goes forward, along with Coopermondo. It is a good work, both for its evolution and for the planning of this **handbook**: a powerful product that can reach many women to increase **women cooperative world**. It is a precious collection of development processes aiming at reaching out to other women ready to receive notions and indications for new approaches to implement together, **addressing differences**, such as political and cultural differences, **in order to create inclusive business models**, fostering the assertion of women's professionalism and competencies, even in more remote areas.

This is a new impulse to our **training** and to the increase of those wide-ranging experiences, which very often are not focused but instead represent a full force, when organised and developed, may become an opportunity to access to an improved energy, to further common growth and to sustainable development for all, thanks to women.

Special **thanks** go to those women, who made efforts to contribute to this project: an important piece of that puzzle which men and women are creating together, always guided by cooperative principles.



# ABSTRACT

The objective of the handbook “WomeNpowerment in Coops. Italian cooperative experiences toward the achievement of gender equality in the world” is to offer basic notions on development cooperation and on how to tackle gender issues in difficult contexts. The lens through which these problems are addressed is the model of the Italian cooperative enterprise.

The Handbook reports the experiences and good practices of Italian cooperatives and international cooperative development to show how cooperative entrepreneurship contributes to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The working group led by the Women’s Commission of Women Cooperative Managers of Confcooperative and Coopermondo, the NGO of Confcooperative, has gathered experiences from different sectors (agriculture, fisheries, tourism, social, credit) on three continents (Latin America, Africa and Europe).

The case studies show how the cooperative enterprise, which guarantees participation, democracy, flexibility and attention to people and territories, is an effective tool, in many contexts, to offer women not only economic but also social and personal empowerment.

Sustainability  
Competencies  
reception  
wishes  
Talents  
RELATIONSHIP  
Exchange  
inclusion  
Awareness  
Communication  
Well-being  
KNOWLEDGE  
r  
Values  
CHANGE  
Knowledge  
emotions  
Reflection

# INTRODUCTION

WomeNpowerment in Coopss is a project promoted by **Coopermondo** and the Commission of Women Cooperative Managers of **Confcooperative**, the Confederation of Italian Cooperatives. The project, launched in September 2016, is a critical process of research, study and action for knowledge sharing on **gender equality issues and for the comparison** between Italian cooperative experiences and those in developing countries. This project contributed to develop relationships and to discuss women entrepreneurship, labour inclusion, professional and personal empowerment, services and innovative solutions to improve the work-life balance.

By  
**Camilla  
Carabini,  
Desirée  
Degiovanni**

The first step of this process has been the collection of information that emerged from these exchanges and pieces of research, carried out during the meetings between women involved in cooperatives or aid work. The first concrete output is the creation of a practical handbook for both **Italian women cooperators**, who want to delve into gender issues and **international development cooperation**, and (women) aid worker **cooperating on the field**, who can use the described ideas and **good practices** to support the promotion of gender equality in different and more complex contexts.

The handbook “**WomeNpowerment in Coops**” aims at offering a wider perspective on gender issues, by taking into account the points of view of different cultures and people. The narrative has been chosen as an opportunity for investigating through ours and others languages, through the different use of words and their meanings.

The engine of the project has also been the possibility to **contribute to the Goal #5 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda** “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”, in line with the mission and strategies of Confcooperative and the partners joining the Sustainable Development Network (ASvIS).

Moreover, this handbook is a chance to emphasise how the cooperative model is replicable in different sectors and contexts. In those places where people are ready to implement virtuous economical circuits, the cooperative movement offers instruments and trainings for enterprises to grow. However, too often in those places, women live in limiting and disempowering conditions focus is therefore on the **woman** and the promotion of **women cooperatives through** the enhancement of **gender equality** as a social and civil pillar and by taking advantages from the knowledge and ideas exchanged among **the WomeNpowerment group**.

The **National Commission of Women Cooperative Managers** has strengthened its key role **in over ten years of work** in Confcooperative. **Women participation in member cooperatives has increased in quantity and visibility, also thanks to the** advocacy work of the Commission. Women cooperators has now triggered in the productive system of Confcooperative and also in that of Italy as a country.

**Coopermondo** is the NGO of Confocooperative, which since 2007 has been working to **promote the Italian cooperative model in impoverished countries**. **Coopermondo believes in the benefits of cooperativism: an environment of trust**, a democratic governance, an active participation of members in the enterprise, a particular attention to local communities and an equal redistribution of profits are crucial to promoting a fully sustainable and inclusive development. **Democracy** and **equality** go hand in hand with the promotion of all genders' education, first of all that of women who still in too many countries do not enjoy the same rights and opportunities as of men.

The handbook **Women empowerment in Coops** is divided in four chapters.

- The first one offers a **brief overview of international development cooperation** and of the role of the cooperative enterprise model in development.
- The second chapter analyses, in a no-exhaustive but basic way, **gender issues in development cooperation** through historical stages. It observes economy and feminist philosophies, through a different point of view to that of Europe, and reflections on feminist ideas, in Latin America and Africa, of cooperative women of the Gender Committee for International Alliance of Cooperatives.
- The third chapter explains the **goals and working methodologies of Coopermondo** and the **Commission of Women Cooperative Managers**. It also tells about stories of women cooperation in different business sectors (fishing, agriculture, social cooperatives), in order to show the results achieved by Italian women, in addition to some **international cooperative development projects** focusing on **women empowerment**.
- The fourth chapter briefly introduces some **instruments**, created and completed during this path.



# 1. WHAT IS DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION?





The word international development cooperation is a multifaceted word, which is difficult to relate to just one meaning.

In the past, it was associated with financial assistance to the so-called ODA “**Official development assistance**”, which the governments of the industrialized countries had decided to assign to those generally called “developing countries” (DC)<sup>1</sup>. More recently, it has acquired a wider and more modern meaning, up to involve cooperation actions of **NGOs, of non-profit organizations, of voluntary organizations, of private foundations, of enterprises and even financial fluxes** which move in the international market, such as **migrant’ remittances** to their communities of origin. International development cooperation mainly, if not exclusively, deals with **developing countries**, which are those classified by the World Bank as *low-income and lower-middle income countries, up to include, in some cases, upper-middle income countries*<sup>2</sup>.

As Italian law set forth, “development cooperation, recognizing the centrality of the human person in its individual and community dimension, follows, in compliance with the international programs and strategies established by the EU and the UN, fundamental goals turned to:



a) **To eradicate poverty and reduce inequality**, to improve living conditions of the populations and to promote a sustainable development;



b) **To safeguard and to assert human rights**, the dignity of the individual, gender equality, equal opportunity and principals of democracy of the State of law;



c) **To prevent conflicts** and to support processes of peacemaking, of reconciliation, of post-conflict stabilization, of consolidation and reinforcement of democratic institutions.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Alonso, J.A. e Glennie, J. (2015) What is development cooperation? 2016 Development Cooperation Forum Policy Briefs, February 2015, No. 1 <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/nairobi16/policy-brief.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> In 2016, the World Bank officially reached the decision not to use the word “Developing Countries”, but to classify them exclusively according to their GDP per capita.

<sup>3</sup> Law 11 August 2014, n. 125 General Discipline on international development cooperation. Article 1 paragraph 2



Development cooperation is an activity meeting four criteria:

**1. Supporting the priorities of national and international development.**

Not all non-profit public activities at international level are part of development cooperation. For instance, safety maneuvers coordinated at international level or the support to DC military capability may call for international cooperation, but they are not classified as development cooperation. Generally speaking, it is sufficient to take into account development goals established at international level (such as Sustainable Development Goals BOX 1.2) or at specific agreements of development at regional level.



**2. Non-profit.** This is the critical surplus value of development cooperation, which means acting in a non-profit way or accepting lower levels of economic sustainability than those that the market would offer. The actions of the cooperation would not exist if there were enough incentives on the market: the aim is to correct market failures. In this way, development cooperation aims also to foster the creation of for-profit activities of inclusive businesses with positive impact promoting local communities.



**3. Discriminating in favour of developing countries.** Only if an action specifically aims for creating new opportunities for developing countries, in a discriminatory way, by taking into consideration structural impediments, which limit the development in impoverished countries, we can contemplate development cooperation. This criterion is very important, above all in the implementation of sustainable development goals of the Agenda 2030: the difference between development cooperation and an international action to sustainable development is based on this criterion.



**4. Strengthening of DC ownership.** Development cooperation must be based on cooperative and non-dependence relationships between international partners, that want to increase their resources and improve the opportunities for development purposes. These relationships must respect the sovereignty of states and follow strategies defined at national level.



Lastly, in order to be more precise about development cooperation, three macro intervention areas can be distinguished:

**1. Transfer of financial resources** (or in-kind). When talking about “assistance” or “public assistance” public opinion tends to associate the word to the transfer of financial resources. Clearly, this remains the first assistance tool for development cooperation also because it is a data easy to measure. However, the resources that the governments of richer countries donate or transfer to those impoverished are still not enough. At the conference on financing for development in Addis Ababa,

<sup>4</sup> United Nation (2015). Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 27 July 2015: Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) (A/RES/69/313). New York. from [http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA\\_Outcome.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA_Outcome.pdf)

the countries reconfirmed their will to reach the target of 0.7% of the GDP to public assistance, but also the need to increase the amounts of resources to transfer to impoverished countries, by studying new ways of financing (for instance the blending) and involving also new actors in development cooperation (such as private sector). The donations of subsistence were used more in the past: there is today a trend to diminish this approach – if not in emergency situations in countries in transition – because it does not bring development, but undermines also the market and the local demand of products.



2. **Technical assistance.** Many countries are gradually emerging from economic impoverishment. In the post-2015 development agenda, technical assistance is increasingly relevant besides being the main form of South-South cooperation.



3. **Changes in policies.** The creation of an environment fostering the development, through the draft of effective and innovative laws, is one of tools with which rich countries may contribute to help impoverished countries. At a national level these actions can be articulated with a revision of the public policies at the light of the effects on the agenda of the development and the strengthening of the rules that support it.

Acotrs of of development cooperation could be divided in:

- **OECD DAC countries:** the Official Assistance Committee of OECD that imposes to all member states to achieve the goal of giving 0.7% of their GDP to public assistance. In 2015 Italy gave 0.21% of its GDP to Development Assistance.
- **South-South cooperation:** this is a cooperation between countries not joining the OECD, which are considered “emerging” or “developing” (for example Brazil, China and India). In 2011 South-South cooperation is estimated at between USD 16.1 billion and USD 19 billion, from which 75% was invested in capacity-building and training<sup>5</sup>. In 2015 China stands out for its investment in numerous infrastructures (roads, telephonic antennas) in different stated in Africa.
- **Foundations:** they are among the most active player of civil society. Often, banks and multinational enterprises use foundation instrument to manage funds and implement development projects in the areas where they work. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, for example, is the biggest philanthropic foundation in the world, with assets amounting to USD 42.9 billion (in March 2015). In 2015, it donated USD 4.2 billion to development cooperation and philanthropic projects.
- **NGOs:** civil society, of which Non-Governmental Organizations are the principal representatives, but also associations, committees and the movements has always been committed to operators in the field in individual areas. With a prepared staff committed to, they represent the people carrying out cooperation actions.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Council (2014) Trends and progress in international development cooperation E/2014/77

- **Private sector:** it consists of enterprises and the profit world in general. They have been the last to land in the development world and in the next years they may benefit from funds aiming to strength their role in international cooperation.

**Migrant remittances** are also considered as cooperation flows: in 2015, these flows amounted to USD 432 billion<sup>6</sup>, approximately four times more than development assistance from OECD countries (USD 131.6 billion in 2015)<sup>7</sup>.

Therefore, if States, through public assistance, seem to decrease their relevance in financial terms, on the contrary, the fragmentation of the reality of the development asks that the public authorities take over to be more a coordinating role<sup>8</sup>.

### Box 1.1 - An anthropological view on development

Development is a word with a multiple meaning. According to the Italian anthropologist Antonino Colajanni<sup>9</sup> the word “*development*” covers three different meanings:

1. An **historical process** that involved Western countries during the last two centuries, characterized by a steady increase of products and technological innovation.
2. An **international and institutional apparatus** composed of international organizations (FAO, World Bank, UNESCO, IFAD) of bilateral relationships between governments and organizations of the civil society.
3. A **theoretical-supporting system**, which ideologically through studies, researches and analysis, theorizes the existence of a mainstream ideology or thought of development seen as “no limits growth”.

<sup>6</sup> Dilip Ratha, Supriyo De, Sonia Plaza, Kirsten Schuettler, William Shaw, Hanspeter Wyss, Soonhwa Yi 2016 “Migration and Remittances – Recent Developments and Outlook” Migration and Development Brief 26, April 2016, World Bank, Washington, DC. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/24012/9781464809132.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>

<sup>7</sup> 13/04/2016 OECD. “Development aid rises again in 2015, spending on refugees doubles” <http://www.oecd.org/dac/development-aid-rises-again-in-2015-spending-on-refugees-doubles.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Severino, J., e O. Ray. (2009) The End of ODA: Death and Rebirth of a Global Public Policy. Washington: Center for Global Development.

<sup>9</sup> Colajanni, A. e Mancuso, A. (2008). Un Futuro Incerto. Processi di sviluppo e popoli indigeni in America Latina. Roma: CISU. pag. 5

It is important to bear in mind these three concepts of development, which often overlap and do not allow for a critical analysis of the reality surrounding us. If the first meaning is neutral and historical, the third one covers a strong ideological meaning: often, the institutional apparatus for development cooperation helped to promote and to impose, all around the world, an economic point of view and a social model, prevailing in some countries.

According to Amartya Sen<sup>10</sup>- Indian economist and Nobel Prize in 1998 - **development** coincides with the **possibilities of each person to express his/her own capabilities**. The assistance must aim to contribute to obtain resources in order to optimize these capabilities.

The concept of development goes hand in hand with that of well-being. There are countries and cultures, which consider well-being in a different way. For example, Bhutan (Southern Asia) has decided to measure its well-being through an index instead of calculating the total income of national activities (such as the Gross Domestic Product GDP), they take into account the “happiness” of their citizens (**GNH: Gross National Happiness**) as the most important data. Another example is the **concept of “buenvivir”** of the indigenous peoples in Latin America, which is based on an economic sustainability respecting Mother Earth and ancestral knowledge, that is very far from European development model.

Every social development model has its pros and cons. It does not exist a model better than another. When working with other cultures there is no greater mistake than trying to impose its own view. The unsatisfying results of some development cooperation projects are the confirmation of it.

Therefore, it is necessary to adapt to **local needs, to listen to cultural needs of peoples, to tell our experiences, to provide technological resources** and let populations decide which development model to seek. Development is a two-ways process, indeed it is not certain that we are those who may learn from others.

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<sup>10</sup> Sen, A. (2000) Lo sviluppo è libertà, Milano, Mondadori. [ed. or. (1999) Development as Freedom. New York: Random House Inc]

## 1.1 THE 2030 AGENDA AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

The UN approval of the Global Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals represents an historical event in many respects:

- It gives a clear opinion on the **un-sustainability of the current development model**, not only at environmental level, but also at economic and social level. This overcomes the idea that sustainability is only an environmental issue and affirms an **integrated view of different dimensions of development**;
- It **calls all countries** to bring a contribution to the effort to lead the world to a sustainable path: every single country must be committed to define its own sustainable development strategy which allows to achieve the SDGs and report its results in a process coordinated by the United Nations;
- It requires a **strong involvement of all components of society**, from the enterprises to the **public sector**, from **civil society** to **philanthropic institutions**, from **universities** and **research centres** to **information** and culture operators<sup>11</sup>.

The process of changing the development model will be monitored through a complex system based on 17 goals, 169 targets and more than 200 indicators. By taking into account these criteria every single country will be periodically judged at the UN and by national and international public opinion.

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<sup>11</sup> Text adapted and translated from the web site of the Alleanza Italiana per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile <http://asvis.it/agenda-2030/>

## Box 1.2 - The Sustainable Development Goals



End poverty in all its forms everywhere



End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture



Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages



Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning for all



Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all



Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all



Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all



Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation



Reduce inequality within and among countries



Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable



Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns



Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts



Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources



Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss



Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels



Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Although every country is called for playing its part to improve its domestic conditions, the **2030 Agenda** also imposes actions and policies to be carried out for development cooperation. In these cases it is even more evident the need to an **integrated action** which cannot focus on just one issue. For example, 96% of people living in extreme poverty lives in politically unstable countries or vulnerable countries at climate level or both of them. Therefore, it is fundamental to reach a sustainable and incisive growth without promoting a democratic education and suitable environmental policies.

**Multi-stakeholder partnership** is the most adequate approach to the new development cooperation standard. This conducts us to the motivations why the cooperative movement may carry out a function to be the **engine or the multiplier of the impact**, by implementing its sectoral technical expertise in favour of the experiences of Institutions and devoted NGOs.

## 1.2 THE ROLE OF COOPERATIVES IN DEVELOPMENT

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**. As a business model, cooperative enterprises are based on **the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity**. All cooperatives adhere to seven principles that serve to put their values into practice (see BOX 1.3). For these reasons cooperatives enterprises are important economic stakeholders contributing to process of growth and sustainable development.

Economic cooperative model focuses on **social inclusion**, attention to **environment** and **democratic governance**, which are elements well matching development policies aimed to end poverty, to improve the well-being of urban and rural communities and to promote decent work and consumption respecting the environment.

Cooperatives are **strategic partners** for development in order to raise awareness and independence to **social vulnerable** and at **risk of exclusion groups**, such as **impoverished people, youths, women and girls, the indigenous peoples and disabled**. They are an example of how to do business may be economically feasible as well as ethic, responsible at environmental level by putting people at the heart<sup>12</sup>.

Cooperatives are enterprises based on ethic values and principles, so they prioritize, over short-term profit, **the long-term needs** of their members. By bringing economic resources **under democratic control of members**, cooperatives work towards the well-being of all rather than the financial gain of a few. They focus on the sustainable development of the communi-

<sup>12</sup> Cooperatives Europe Development Platform (2015). Building Strong Development Cooperation: Partnership Opportunities between Cooperatives and the EU. Brussels: Cooperatives Europe.



ties in which they operate and serve their members. As a result, the cooperative business model brings the advantage of long-term **sustainability to enterprises**, an advantage that was demonstrated by the resilience of cooperative financial institutions in the aftermath of the global financial and economic crisis.<sup>13</sup>

### Box 1.3 - Cooperative principles<sup>14</sup>

*“Cooperatives are institutions for learning and practicing the values of democracy, solidarity, participation, inclusion, responsibility and accountability, elements that are essential for building peaceful, safe and inclusive societies”<sup>15</sup>*



#### **Voluntary and open membership**

Cooperatives are voluntary organizations open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, political, racial, or religious discrimination.



#### **Democratic Member Control**

Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. The elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one Member, one vote) and Cooperatives at the other levels are organized in a democratic manner.



#### **Member Economic Participation**

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. They usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes:

- Developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible;
- Benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

<sup>13</sup> Roelants, B., Dovgan, D., Eum, H., and Terrasi, E. (2012) The resilience of the cooperative model. Brussels: CECOP/CICO-PA.

<sup>14</sup> AA.VV., Impresa Cooperativa - Norme giuridiche, adempimenti e agevolazioni, I.RE.COOP Piedemont, Turin, 1997

<sup>15</sup> United Nations General Assembly (2015) Cooperatives in Social Development Report of the Secretary General A/70/161: <http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=A/70/161>

**Autonomy and Independence**

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their Members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

**Education, training and information**

Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so that they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

**Cooperation among cooperatives**

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

**Concern for community**

While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

In the final document of **the UN Conference on sustainable development**, taken place in Rio de Janeiro on 20-22 June 2012<sup>16</sup>, **Member States recognized the role of cooperatives in contributing to social inclusion and poverty reduction**, particularly in developing countries.

The United Nations recognize the triple role of cooperatives as stakeholders of the change:

1. As **economic stakeholders**, they create opportunity for decent work and for improving life conditions.
2. As social **organizations based on a common goal** and the principle of **solidarity**, they extend social protection and safety, by contributing to increasing social justice and equity.
3. As **associations of individuals democratically controlled**, they play a productive role in communities and societies at political level.

Regarding poverty, cooperatives may help small landowners, who represent the majority (82% of landowners in the world possess less than two hectares of land), to have access to local and international markets, to increase their incomes and to contribute in defeating food insecurity and hunger. This is the reality mostly in Africa, where cooperatives are very common in the villages and small landowners represent the majority of members of cooperatives. In rural and urban communities, cooperatives help the access to credit and financial services.

At global level, cooperatives are powerful economic actors with \$20 trillion in cooperative assets generating \$3 trillion in annual revenue, in 2015. The share of cooperatives is estimated at 32% in the global agricultural market and 27.3% in the global insurance market<sup>17</sup>. **Credit cooperatives** are among the main providers of microfinance for poor people, reaching more than **78 million of people living with less than 2 dollars a day**.

The United Nations have recognized the important role played by cooperative enterprises in contributing to social development of populations<sup>18</sup> and have identified different sectors where their contribution may be relevant.

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<sup>16</sup> Reference to the Conference called "The future we want", approved by UN General Assembly with the resolution 66/288.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations General Assembly (2015) Cooperatives in Social Development Report of the Secretary General A/70/161: <http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=A/70/161>

<sup>18</sup> United Nations General Assembly (2015) Cooperatives in Social Development Report of the Secretary General A/70/161: <http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=A/70/161>

## Box 1.4 - Cooperatives and SDGs

Goal #1 and #2	End poverty and hunger	Cooperative enterprises help to find economic opportunities for people living in poverty, by providing them the opportunity to defend their interests and encouraging them to participate to decision-making processes that concern them. By reducing the deprivation at many levels, they also help their partners to rise out of poverty.
Goal #3 and #4	Ensure healthy lives and quality education for all at all ages	Cooperatives had significant impacts on education, health and accommodation services, by providing to their members the necessary income to have access to services and opportunities in many remote areas: health cooperatives help more than 100 million of families all around the world and about 170 million of people receive social protection coverage from mutual aid societies.  Cooperatives improve education opportunities, by supporting direct access to education even in the form of loans to families for education costs and the reinvestment of profits in education infrastructures and supplying.
Goal #5	Gender empowerment	According to voluntary and open membership principles, cooperatives are open to all those are willing to accept the responsibilities, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination. Cooperatives have a positive impact on life conditions of women and girls, by providing them access to employment and decent work conditions, to leadership participation and social benefits.
Goal #8	Promote inclusive growth and decent work	Cooperatives use a participating approach between workers both in the production of goods and services and in the distribution of profits. By their nature, they are oriented towards social and economic inclusion. They are active in critical sectors where the action of governments is not enough: houses, social and health assistance services, legal support and children, elderly and disabled care.
Goal #7 and #13	Environmental responsibility	Cooperatives add environmental sustainability among their goals (at ICA level). They have the ability and institutional mechanism to mobilise a great number of people to respond to environmental degradation, in order to make public opinion aware and to promote a more sustainable production and consumption model respecting the environment.
Goal #10	Reduce inequality	Inequality strengthens poverty, by increasing the level of social exclusion and of tension, which destabilises societies and undermines economic growth. Cooperatives pay a particular attention to inequality issue, by offering an exemplary business model in promoting democracy and social, economic and political justice.
Goal #16	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice	Democratic principles of cooperative management: dialogue between members, workers and residents of the communities, equal voting rights, representation, responsibility, trust and social cohesion and the enhancement of relationship between stakeholders in the development process.
Goal #17	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The commitment of ICA to be active partners in the promotion of sustainable goals</li> <li>• Contribution of cooperatives in partner countries to the production of fair-trade goods at honest price, and to decent work conditions and ethic consumption and production.</li> </ul>

The **International Labour Organization (ILO)**, already in 2002, issued a recommendation to “promotion of cooperatives”, recognizing their role in the creation of new jobs, in terms of economic and social contribution to society and of democratic and complete development of people.<sup>19</sup>

Since 2012 – International Year of Cooperatives – the recognition of the contribution of cooperative enterprises to development cooperation has increasingly become greater.

The **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** stated that.

“Cooperatives play a crucial role in reducing poverty, improving food security and generating employment opportunities. The United Nations declared 2012 the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) to raise awareness of cooperatives’ important contribution to global socio-economic development and to promote the growth and strengthening of cooperatives all over the world”<sup>20</sup>.

Cooperatives have adopted a holistic approach that looks at all aspects of well-being, as planned by new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN. The sustainability issue is strategic in the program of **International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)**, which aims to make cooperatives an exemplary model for the achieving of sustainability by 2020<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> ILO official website <http://www.ilo.org/empent/units/cooperatives/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>20</sup> IFAD, WFP, FAO. 2012, Agricultural cooperatives: paving the way for food security and rural development <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/ap431e/ap431e.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Mills, C. and Davies, W., Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade, International Cooperative Alliance, 2013 <http://ica.coop/en/blueprint-co-op-decade#sustainability>

## 1.3 ITALIAN SITUATION

Italian Government, on August 2014, approved a **new law on international development cooperation (law 125/14)**<sup>22</sup> which led Italy to catch up other European countries but also to make it, in some respects, more innovative.

The law provides **the setting up of new bodies** aiming to make development cooperation more efficient, by working together. This collaborative works are divided within the **Agenzia per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo – AICS** (Agency for Development Cooperation) that deals with technical management of initiatives; the **Direzione Generale della Cooperazione allo Sviluppo** (the Directorate-General for Development) plans the political strategies; **Cassa Depositi e Prestiti – Cdp** (Body for Deposits and Loans) plays the role of financial institution for development cooperation.

### Private Sector

Among the most innovative elements of the Italian law on development cooperation there is the **involvement of private sector** in international development cooperation. This trend is confirmed, at EU level, by many strategic documents. In order **to attract new financial resources** and **to ensure a sustainable and mature development**, private sector may offer an important contribution with its investments, leveraging on those of donors and of Italian, European and international Institutions.

The **monitoring of the ethical nature of the investments** (in order to avoid any risk of financial speculation at the cost of populations living in lands rich in human and material resources) is sent back to enterprises's responsibility, transparency and accountability. The elements characterizing the role of private sector in international development correspond with their business model bound to the procurement rules provided by financial instruments supporting private sector in development.

The Working Group on Private Sector in development of the Consiglio Nazionale per la cooperazione allo sviluppo – CNCS (National Council for development cooperation)<sup>23</sup>, established by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, between 2016 and 2017 drew up, along with all Italian constituency, **a list of criteria and recommendations** to Italian Institutions<sup>24</sup> for development cooperation, which enterprises must adopt to participate to procedures **for public co-financing**.

<sup>22</sup> LEGGE 11 agosto 2014, n. 125 Disciplina generale sulla cooperazione internazionale per lo sviluppo. (14G00130) (GU n.199 on 28-8-2014). (General Protocol on international development cooperation).

<sup>23</sup> Required by article 16 of the law 125/24 it is a new institutional body where civil society, private sector and all the actors engaged in international development have a space to discuss strategies and create synergies with the Agency and the Ministry.

<sup>24</sup> Summary document of the proposals at CNCS on general criteria for private parties for-profit subjects (art. 27 l 125/2014)

Already in 2013, at a Senate hearing on the reform of Italian development cooperation, the Italian Cooperative Alliance proposed that the new law provided for, in case of initiatives proposed by for-profit business, **the obligation to stipulate a common code of ethical behaviour, transparency, competitiveness and social responsibility** with countries benefiting the intervention.

**Italian cooperative model** is considered as a model of efficiency, in the typical tradition of Italy, mostly made up of small and medium enterprises, **with a social, cultural as well as economic heritage**: cooperatives are distinguished from other enterprises since they **focus on people instead of profits** and their mission is based on improving the well-being of their members and not on profit maximizing<sup>25</sup>.

**The culture of democracy, solidarity and development** typical of **international cooperation** is closely related to values and principles on which cooperative movement is based: the fight against poverty is part of the **cooperative DNA**.

The role that **cooperatives**, as people-centred businesses, may play along with other actors of development cooperation **is strategic between public cooperation and inclusive business** for the development. The focus is the reinforcement of the cooperative private sector in partner countries.

**Multi-stakeholder partnership** is the most adequate approach to the new development cooperation standard: **the cooperative movement** may be **the engine or the multiplier of the impact**, by implementing its sectoral technical expertise in favour of Institutions and devoted NGOs.

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<sup>25</sup> Report (in Italian) "Le cooperative: partner strategico per una nuova cooperazione internazionale allo sviluppo multi-stakeholder" (Cooperatives: strategic partner for a new multi-stakeholder international development cooperation) draft by Italian Cooperative Alliance for the Conclusions of Italian Presidency to European Parliament in 2014. <https://cooperativesviluppo.wordpress.com/>

## 2. GENDER ISSUES IN DEVELOPMENT





*“Sixty years have passed since the founders of the United Nations inscribed, on the first page of our Charter, the equal rights of men and women. Since then, study after study has taught us that there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, or to reduce infant and maternal mortality. No other policy is as sure to improve nutrition and promote health including the prevention of HIV/AIDS. No other policy is as powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation”.*

Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General

28 February 2005

The gender equality theme in development has never been in the focus of attention as much as in the latest United Nations Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**The concept of gender equality** started to be in vogue from the Seventies. It stems from one of the first studies on the differences between the concept of gender and that of sex elaborated by the US anthropologist Gayle S. Rubin. In 1975, she wrote “Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex”<sup>26</sup>, a text analysing **the social and historical mechanisms** through which gender roles have been produced and re-produced. Rubin analyses how the practice of women exchange, intended as gift, in patriarchal society, is at the origin of the assignment of the secondary role to women in human relationships. Therefore, according to Rubin, **gender** is related to cultural aspects linked to women and men obligations while **sex** is only what is biologically certain and given.

**The Istanbul Convention**<sup>27</sup>, the most far-reaching Treaty on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, legally defines the concept of gender:

*“gender shall mean the socially constructed **roles, behaviours, activities and attributes** that a given society considers appropriate for women and men”<sup>28</sup>.*

Further efforts have been needed to reach gender equality and to make it the focus of international policies.

The next paragraph describes a concise (certainly non-exhaustive) path of the **developments in gender issue in international cooperation policies**, focusing at the same time on the **evolution of the thought of the humanistic disciplines** (philosophy, sociology and anthropology) and on the **dominant economic thought**. It must not be forgotten that development cooperation policies have firstly tried to promote a greater economic growth in impoverished

<sup>26</sup> Rubin, G.S (1975). “The Traffic in Women: Note on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex”, in Toward an Anthropology of Women, ed. Ryana R. Reiter. Basic Books: New York.

<sup>27</sup> The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, Istanbul, 11 May 2011, is based on the understanding that violence against women is a form of gender-based violence that is committed against women because they are women. It is the obligation of the state to address it fully in all its forms and to take measures to prevent violence against women, protect its victims and prosecute the perpetrators. Failure to do so would make it the responsibility of the state. On January 2018, it was signed and ratified by 28 Member States (among which Italy where it became law in 2013). Other 18 Member States have signed it, but they have not ratified it yet. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/210/signatures>.

<sup>28</sup> Art. 3, Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. 2011

countries due to the export of a strong Euro-centric economic model. However, it should be taken into account that the exportation of an economic model is always accompanied by that of a social model: this is why it is important to also have an all-round vision of what Western societies were like in different historical periods.

The second part of the chapter will focus on **local voices against the tide**, which tried to **promote different development models** and **gender philosophies**, both complementary and antagonist, as compared to those promoted by international cooperation in Western countries.

### Box 2.1 - SDG n.5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



**End all forms of discrimination** against all women and girls everywhere.



**Eliminate all forms of violence** against all women and girls both in the public and in the private sphere, including trafficking of women and sexual exploitation and any other types of exploitation.



Eliminate all **abusive practice**, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.



**Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work** through the provision of public service, infrastructures and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family, in accordance with national standards.



Ensure **women's full and effective women participation** and **equal opportunities for leadership** at every decision-making level in the political, economic and public sphere.



Ensure **universal access to sexual and reproductive health** and reproductive rights as agreed in the Action Program of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the documents produced in the subsequent conferences.



Undertake reforms to **give women equal rights of access to economic resources**, as well as to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.



Enhance the use of **enabling technologies**, in particular information and communication technologies, to promote women empowerment.



Adopt and strengthen **sound policies and enforceable legislation** for the promotion of **gender equality** and the empowerment of all women and girls, at all levels.

## 2.1 FEMINIST PHILOSOPHIES, THE ECONOMIC CONTEXTS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

### Years '50 - '68

The **first wave of feminism** developed from the end of the **19th century to 1968** and is divided into two phases. A first phase, which lasts until the outbreak of the Second World War, sees the emergence of liberal and socialist feminist thoughts. On the one hand, **liberal feminists** call for **equality of formal rights**: movements for women's right to vote, access to higher education and liberal professions, as well as laws on inheritance and private property arise. On the other hand, the **socialist feminists** seek **substantial equality**, since the achievement of formal equality at the legislative level does not change, concretely, the material conditions of women, who remain in a subordinate situation. The only way to achieve full equality is the advent of a socialist society that eliminates all possible inequalities.

**At the end of the Second World War**, Europe begins its economic reconstruction through the **Marshall Plan aid** while state welfare policies began to become increasingly widespread. These are the years of the **economic boom**, in which **social services** are expanding.

**With the establishment of the United Nations in 1945**, the **first international development cooperation programs** also began. **Women** are still considered outside of the productive processes: they are **seen exclusively as wives and mothers**. In development cooperation projects, they are considered **beneficiaries of welfare-type strategies**, mainly in the field of health and food assistance.

However **philosophy**, always anticipating the times that will follow, starts to to change.

In France, **Simone De Beauvoir** publishes the essay that will make history “The second sex”<sup>29</sup>. At the center of this discussion is the idea **that being a woman**, as “**Other**” from man, a subordinate and oppressed object, is not a natural fact, there are no biological or psychological reasons that define women as such. The status and condition of exploitation of women is therefore **historically and psychologically** defined by the abilities of each of one, it is the result of a social history, a culture, a society and a personal history. **Every woman has the power to choose her own destiny**, to go against the tide and rebel against the dominant thought. In every age, man has found a way to keep the power and the control of resources, but this does not mean that women can not reverse the trend.

At the same time, across the ocean, **the US feminist Betty Friedan** begins to talk about **women’s emancipation in terms of women’s occupation**. In her essay, “The Feminine Mystique”<sup>30</sup>, she elaborates an analysis through a series of interviews with her ex classmates to prove that being mothers or wives is often not enough for women to feel fully satisfied.

### Years ‘68 - ‘80

It is the period of the **Cold War**, in which the two powers (USA and Russia) fight each other to obtain the global domination. These are also the years of the **oil crises** (of ‘73 and ‘79) that show the world the importance and dependence of the economic system on non-renewable energy sources, determining the new supremacy of Arabic world in the sector.

Starting from the 70s, within the development cooperation environments, a new approach towards women, the **Women in Development** – WID, began to establish itself. This approach is the result of the two feminist waves previously described: the formal liberal and the substantial socialist one. Strong impetus for the elaboration and affirmation of the Women in Development approach also derives from the publication of the book “**Women’s Role in Economic Development**” by **Ester Boserup**<sup>31</sup>, which generated a real shock within the development organizations of the north of the world. The author, in fact, shows, through empirical results, **the work done by women and their role in development processes**. It shows how the increasingly specialized division of labor that is associated with development undermines and denies women’s work, especially in developing countries where women already have loads of works at home and for family care. The research conduct by Boserup makes visible, for the first time, the work done by **women inside and outside the home** and

<sup>29</sup> De Beauvoir S. original edition (1949), *Le deuxième sexe*, Editions Gallimard, Paris

<sup>30</sup> Friedan B. (1963) *The Feminine Mystique*, W. W. Norton and CO., New York

<sup>31</sup> Boserup E. (1970) *Women’s Role in Economic Development*, St. Martin’s Press, New York

explains why women lack an equal share of social benefits and economic gains compared to men.

**The WID approach**<sup>32</sup> (which the US Congress formally imposed on the US-AID International Cooperation Agency in 1973) aims at a greater social justice and fairness for women. It aims to **include women in the employment market in order to increase their productivity** and thus **improve their living conditions. Women must become like men (equity approach)**.

It is believed that the subordination of women stems from their exclusion from the market sphere and from their **limited access and control of resources** (anti-poverty approach). We therefore need to include women in development processes by promoting laws in favour of women and **promote their involvement in education and employment** (efficiency approach)<sup>33</sup>.

In 1975, the **First World Conference on Women** was held in **Mexico City**, where the World Action Plan was launched to achieve the goals set by the International Women's Year. The **Decade for Women '76-'85** is launched, which implements a strategy for the progress of the female world through **full equality between the sexes, the elimination of discrimination, integration, the full participation of women in development and greater, an greater contribution of women to global peace**.

There are a number of **objectives** to be achieved by 1980 - access to education, equal access to employment opportunities, political participation, health services, housing, nutrition and family planning.

The **WID approach** begins to receive various criticisms because, according to this perspective, **women** are considered as a homogenous group, re-proposing a **stereotyped image**. The WID approach in general focuses on **income inequality and access to resources** between men and women, when the **subordination of women to men** also depends on **social, formal and cultural rules** that these approaches do not take sufficiently into account. Furthermore, the so-called **reproductive work** and **care work** that in many countries is an **important obstacle to women's professional and occupational development** is not sufficiently taken into account. In short, **the WID approach does not address the structural roots of inequality** but merely imposes gender equality in terms of employment equality and access to resources.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> In the theoretical proposal of Caroline Moser (BOX 2.3) the WID covers three different perspectives: equity, anti-poverty and efficiency.

<sup>33</sup> The two approaches, anti-poverty and efficiency, are developed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which in that period were committed to give funds to impoverished countries and to implement projects based on this kind of policies.

<sup>34</sup> An example of WID approach project aims to the improvement of the access of water for women: if women spend less time in water supply, they will spend more time in education and work. Many of these projects result in failures. On one hand because they do not take into account the cultural factor: often the moment of water supply is the moment for gathering, for exchanging information that they do not want to renounce. On the other hand, reducing the time for water supply does not means a change to the increase of time for education.

Meanwhile, in Latin America the **Dependency Theory**<sup>35</sup>, according to which the conditions of “development” are inserted in a framework of **political relations**. The main **criticism** is moved against the **Latin-American bourgeoisie**, too tied to **foreign interests** and is unable to free the productive forces of their own countries. The core of the economic order is rooted in power relations. **The Western power** imposes economic choices on the **peripheral countries**, keeping them in a situation of “**underdevelopment**”, more convenient to increase its growth. How? Through a greater concentration of capital in rich countries and majority labour markets (low cost) in impoverished countries. The latter become exporters of raw materials (and not of semi-finished products with higher added value), creating a dependency with the central countries, or a barrier to their own development.

**Several women scholars** take up the Dependency Theory to apply it to the concept of **gender: macroeconomic choices**, at the roots of the underdevelopment of Latin America, (such as bringing women to work without guaranteeing adequate public and social services in education, care and health) **lead the woman to be dependent on the man as the peripheral countries are from the central ones** for political and power choices that favour this state of affairs.

Thus began a new approach to international cooperation, **Women And Development (WAD)**. The theoretical and ideological foundation goes back to the **theories of dependency** focuses on **explaining the relationship** between **women** and **the capitalist development process** in terms of material conditions that contribute to their exploitation. The WAD approach focuses in particular on the relationship between the concept of **patriarchy** and **capitalism**, stating that women have always contributed to economic development in both private and public spheres.

The WAD approach offers a more critical point of view than WID, which although studies the position of women in development processes, in analytical and strategic terms, does not seem able to keep an overview of the relationship between patriarchy, ways of production and oppression and subordination of women. WAD, on the other hand, seems to propose that the condition of women can improve if and when the **international power structures become more equitable**<sup>36</sup>. **Two criticisms** have been made of this approach: the first concerns the main element of analysis, namely the **structural inequality** between developed and developing countries and **the status of women**. The second concerns the **greater importance given to the productive sector with respect to the reproductive one**, thus following a western capitalist and modernized logic<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> Theory developed by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe CEPAL), which is a regional body of the UN established in 1948 in Santiago de Chile. For further information: Cardoso, F.H., Faletto, E., Dependencia y desarrollo en América Latina, Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores, 1977.

<sup>36</sup> Teoria elaborata in seno alla CEPAL (Comisión Económica para América Latina), un organismo regionale delle Nazioni Unite costituito nel 1948 a Santiago del Cile. Per maggiori informazioni: Cardoso, F.H., Faletto, E., Dependencia y desarrollo en América Latina, Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores, 1977.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem.

## BOX 2.2- Stages of women's rights at international level

1975 Mexico City	The First World Conference on the Status of Women (United Nations)	Increasingly involvement of civil society and international community. <b>World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year.</b>
1980 Copenhagen	The Second Conference on the Status of Women (United Nations)	The adoption of the <b>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.</b>
1985 Nairobi	The Third Conference on the Status of Women (United Nations)	Tension between first and third world women. The adoption of an Agenda. Equality, Development and Peace.
1993 Vienna	World Conference on Human Rights	It not only concerns women condition, it also <b>sets forth that women's rights are an integral part of human rights.</b>
1995 Beijing	The Fourth World Conference on the Status of Women (United Nations)	<b>The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action</b> based on 12 critical areas of concern (women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, violence against women, women and armed conflict, women and the economy, women in power and decision-making, institutional mechanism for the advancement of women, human rights of women, women and the media, women and the environment, the girl-child)  "Look at the world, from women's eyes"
2000 New York	United Nations General Assembly	<b>Millennium Development Goals:</b> involve women in the goals of human rights equality, eliminate any form of violence and promote sustainable development.
2005 New York	Beijing +10	<b>Beijing +10</b> - review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action
2011 Istanbul	Council of Europe	The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence
2015 Beijing, New York, Addis Ababa	Beijing +20 UN 2030 Agenda Financing for development	<b>Beijing +20:</b> 5 priority sectors (stereotype, macro-economic policy, participation, investments, mainstream) <b>Addis Ababa:</b> investments for mainstreaming gender, empowerment, against violence, equal opportunities. <b>Sustainable Development Goal #5</b> gender equality

### Years '80 - '90

In Western world, these are the years of the neo-liberal policies of **Margaret Thatcher** in the UK and of **Donald Reagan** in the USA. At a political and social level, the liberal school and the "**Trickle down effect**" theories begin to assert, according to which the increase in incomes of the wealthier classes (resulting from a tax cut for the latter) has positive repercussions on all levels of society.

Neo-liberal ideology is therefore imposed and translated also in development cooperation policies. **Structural Adjustment Plans** are outlined, a set of policies based on **the privatization of public assets and limitations on public spending**, that the DC had to adopt in order to receive

funds from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank – which go under the name of “**Washington Consensus**”<sup>38</sup>. Many of these policies (especially the cuts in public spending) **have had a heavy impact on women**, who have taken on themselves, once again, caring for themselves and their families.

In this period, **many African countries become independent** and in many of these **dictatorships are established**. Between 1960 and the end of the 1980s, more than 70 coups and 13 presidential assassinations occur in Africa. It is still the period of the Cold War in which every country must choose whether to stand on the side of the United States or Russia.

During this decade, psychology defines the word “**gender**” which will be followed by all Gender Studies in the years to come. The psychiatrists Stoller and Money<sup>39</sup> propose a **conceptual distinction between sex and gender**: the first refers to **biological and physiological characteristics** of men and women, while the latter refers to the **social construction of gender differences**. So sex is inherited, while gender is acquired through cultural learning. Precisely because of the profound association between gender and culture, anthropology took charge of the first studies on the concept of gender.

The US anthropologist Gayle S. Rubin emphasises the fact that **the link between sex and gender** describes a system of interactions, **changing in every society** and that the **oppression of women** and sexual minorities **depends on the sex/gender system**, that sets of rules that define the spheres of sex and procreation<sup>40</sup>.

According to the anthropologist Rubin, the concept of gender brings with it different ideas:



**Variability:** the concepts of gender vary both with time, the role of the woman in the Middle Ages is not the same as in the 18th century France, and geographically, it can also be different between regions in the same country, for this reason the definitions of gender (feminine and masculine) change according to the culture. Therefore, the concept of gender can not be universalized.



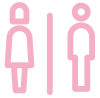
**Relationality:** gender is a social construction based on sexual differences between men and women.

<sup>38</sup> The austerity policies were based on the increase of exportations and extraction of resources, currency devaluation, liberalisations, increase of Foreign Direct Investments, budgetary balance and limitation of public spending, with the elimination of state subsidies and the privatisation of semi-public enterprises.

<sup>39</sup> Robert Jesse Stoller and John Money are two scientists, who theorise the concept of gender and gender identity. John Money in 1952 in his study “Hermaphroditism: An Inquiry into the Nature of a Human Paradox” theorized how “The term gender role is used to signify all those things that a person says or does to disclose himself or herself as having the status of a boy or man, girl or woman, respectively. It includes, but is not restricted to, sexuality in the sense of eroticism” (254). His colleague Robert Stoller has then theorized how the gender identity develops already in early stages of life, when the kid is one or two years old. Stoller, R. (1968). Sex and Gender: On the Development of Masculinity and Femininity. New York City: Science House.

<sup>40</sup> Rubin, G.S (1975). “The Traffic in Women: Note on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex”, in Toward an Anthropology of Women, ed. Ryana R. Reiter. Basic Books: New York





**Multiplicity:** the identity of the subject depends on multiple factors, including gender, that define it. Hence the importance to define men and women also according to their social class, ethnicity, age etc.



**Positioning:** each person can take different roles and positions on the same day (mother, professional, daughter, wife...)

All these elements determine an **identity**: if the identities of man and the woman depend on how individuals have been inserted and educated in society and refer to many facts that go beyond feminine and masculine, the challenge lies in being able not to **simplify all these different aspects** but to be able to study their generality.

It is therefore no coincidence that the feminist movement sees in these years the **multiplication of feminisms**. Women begin to approach the condition of women to other conditions (ethnic groups, social class, age...).

For instance, in the USA the “**Black feminism**” arises, supported by African-American women who associate the racial problem with the gender issue. An icon of this period is **Angela Davis**<sup>41</sup>, an African-American feminist philosopher in the forefront of the liberation movement of the black of America in the seventies.

In this context, a new approach to development programs is developed: **Gender and Development (GAD)**. Women **are related to men** and it is through these relationships that they can develop or see their activities hindered. Women are no longer considered to be the target of funds but rather as **active subject**.

A criticism that will be made of the GAD approach is the fact of supporting the liberal model, **lacking a profound analysis of the local social context**. Criticism that already emerges at the Third World Conference on the Status of Women held in **1985 in Nairobi** and in which women from developing countries **accuse “Western” feminists of imposing their gender vision**.

## Years '90 – 2000

In the mid-90s, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund **questioned the Structural Adjustment Plans**, not only because of the **high social costs** but also because they **failed** to achieve the goals of stabilization and growth they had set themselves. Meanwhile, the international debt cancellation agency has grown, the HIPC initiative (Heavily Indebted and Poor Countries) takes on an organized form at the G8 summit in Cologne in 1999. On the other hand, the fear is that resources released through debt cancellation can be used for purposes inconsistent with the

<sup>41</sup> For further information Davis A. (1974) An Autobiography. New York: Random House

development of the country, given the high level of corruption that characterizes the countries in Development.

The **Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)** are therefore elaborated; these documents are approved by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and become a point of reference for all those national institutions but also international donors who wish to engage in the fight against poverty in that particular country. The key words of these documents are: the **ownership of the countries**, ie a responsible participation in development activities by the beneficiary countries; **good governance**, or all those policies and conditions of accountability towards the citizens and social bodies of the countries that embark one path of renewal of the mechanisms of control of social and economic development; the **participatory and bottom-up approach**, ie the design of strategies together with the beneficiaries of international cooperation funds.

Unfortunately, these new actions have not achieved the complete human development. It is worth reminding that the **capability approach** – proposed by Amartya Sen<sup>42</sup> – is different from the **freedom of choice**: in order to reach a complete human development social development is necessary in ensuring the capability of choice for all, along with the freedom of choice.

Regarding gender policies, in 1995 in Beijing the Fifth World Conference on Women was held, where the concepts of **empowerment and mainstreaming**, still dominant in development policies, were defined.

**Empowerment** indicates the process, be it personal or collective, based on the increase the **self-esteem, awareness, self-efficacy and self-determination** to bring out latent resources and bring the individual (and the communities) to consciously take possession of their own potential.

**Empowerment** is a process to acquire “power”, collectively or individually. It represents the ability to **make decisions** but also to **act independently** about one’s life according to one’s own desires. Empowerment is fundamental to **create an identity**.

Empowerment must not only must allow access to decision-making or the distribution of resources, it must also must include **processes** that allow people to **perceive themselves as capable and designated to occupy the places and spaces of decision-making**.

Empowerment actions can address both women and men to free them from gender stereotypes and achieve their own identity.

**Gender mainstreaming** is instead a continuous **process of assessing the implications for women and men of every planned action**, (laws, regulations, policies, projects). It is a strategy that aims to make the concerns and experiences of both women and men an integral dimension of the planning, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs. The goal is for women and men to get the same benefits, and for gender inequality to not be perpetuated.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Sen, A. (1979). Equality of What? The Tanner Lecture on Human Values, Delivered at Stanford University, May 22 1979

<sup>43</sup> United Nations. “Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997”. A/52/3.18 September 1997

### From 2000 up to today

These years are characterised by an excessive **financialization of the economy**. All the large corporations employ most of their capital grow as **remuneration for shareholders** rather than to continue production. The acceleration and spread of new financial instruments such as derivatives and futures, allow capital to grow up to a situation where cash flows in financial markets are **19 times the world GDP**. This is the image of a hypertrophic finance, made up of speculative bubbles, that can put entire countries on their knees, as happened with Greece in 2011.

To this phenomenon is added the **exponential increase in inequalities**.

Finally, in 2015, the International Monetary Fund recognizes that the **“trickle down effect” does not exist**<sup>44</sup> and that the wealth of the super-riches does not “rain” down to improve the economy, but rather it is stored in tax heavens.

The 2007 economic crisis, for which we are still suffering the consequences, has shown that it is necessary to elaborate a different model of development, more focused on people and less on capital accumulation.

Although macro-institutions and governments continue to pursue policies dictated by shorterism that only invests in the short-term, always with a view to electoral gains and financial speculation, strategies appear to show important changes in the development system. With the new **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**<sup>45</sup>, **Sustainable Development** becomes a global theme, in which **all countries are called to play an active role, overcoming the old dichotomies between the North and the South of the world**. Eliminating **poverty**, fighting **inequalities** and combating **climate change** are **priorities** that affect the **whole world** and it is not only by joining the efforts of all countries that concrete results can be achieved.

The **gender equality issue** is treated in its entirety by implementing actions with a view to gender mainstreaming, including attention to both men and women so that policies lead to change in society.

Feminist theories and movements also reflect a different society. The Women's March, held on January 2016 in over 100 cities all around the world highlighted a new type of feminism, an **“intersectional feminism”**, that promotes **gender equality for all (all races, genders and sexualities)**<sup>46</sup>. As stated in the Manifesto of the March, it is clear that the term **feminism** takes on a broader approach **that opposes the systems of oppression that put some groups of people on a hierarchically higher level than other** (for instance white people, men, not-disabled people, heterosexual, adults etc...).

<sup>44</sup> Dabla-Norris, E. et al. 2015. Causes and Consequences of Income Inequality; A global Perspective. IMF Staff Discussion Notes 15/13, International Monetary Fund

<sup>45</sup> UN General Assembly (2015). Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

<sup>46</sup> For further information <https://www.womensmarch.com/>

*“We believe that Women’s Rights are Human Rights and Human Rights are Women’s Rights. We must create a society in which women - including Black women, Native women, poor women, immigrant women, disabled women, Muslim women, lesbian queer and trans women - are free and able to care for and nurture their families, however they are formed, in safe and healthy environments free from structural impediments”<sup>47</sup>.*

Their mission regards:

- **Ending violence**
- **Reproductive** rights
- Lgbt rights
- **Worker’s** rights
- **Civil** rights
- **Disabled** rights
- **Immigrant** rights
- Environmental justice

This approach mirrors the numerous social problems facing our times and which can be summarized in the need for gender equality that include ALL (women and men) in the processes of capacity acquisition as well as respect for human rights.

Even in development policies the approach has changed and has taken a more global and holistic dimension. In 2000 the Millennium Goals launched were launched, goals that all United Nations Members States have set themselves to achieve by 2015 and which have only been achieved in part.

It is only **with the 2030 Agenda**<sup>48</sup> that the United Nations have given gender equality a particular place as a goal to be achieved by 2030 and as a cross-sectoral goal to be taken into account in all its aspects. The novelty of this Agenda is that for the **first time it overcomes the dichotomy between North and South of the world**, by promoting sustainable development, in which all countries must commit in the same way: only with a collective effort can concrete results be seen. The **17 Sustainable Development Goals** are indicators of the promotion of the achievement of these objectives. The Goal **#5 concerns gender equality**.

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<sup>47</sup> From <https://www.womensmarch.com/mission/>

<sup>48</sup> UN General Assembly (2015). Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

## 2.2 FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF OTHERS

So far, the history of gender issues has been examined from a mainly Eurocentric point of view, as Western countries have been the strongest to make their voices heard.

However, this does not mean that there is no other side of the coin and that the same events can not be examined from the point of view of the countries that received – and in some cases immediately – international aid.

In fact, since the seventies, a new wave of feminisms has developed all over the world: from Asia to Africa, from Latin America to the Middle East. We have chosen to take into consideration the case of African feminism, which has most analyzed and criticized international development cooperation programs: moreover, we will go into the issue of women among the indigenous peoples of Latin America, who are also beneficiaries of many cooperation programs.

### Africa

African continent has a rich history to tell regarding feminism.

African feminism began to define itself as such from the early twentieth century with women like **Adelaide Casely-Hayford**<sup>49</sup>, the “African Victorian feminist”, activist for women’s rights in Sierra Leone, or as **Charlotte Maxeke**<sup>50</sup>, who in 1918 founded the Bantu Women’s League in South Africa or **Huda Sharaawi**<sup>51</sup>, who in 1923 founded the Egyptian Feminist Union.

Pan-African feminist movements<sup>52</sup> have also developed since the independence years. **Women across Africa**, but especially in Algeria, Mozambique, Guinea, Angola and Kenya, rose up **against the imperialist and patriarchal oppression**, demanding more political participation to challenge cultural and material oppression based on gender and sexuality. The African feminist icons of this period are women such as the rebels **Mau-Mau** and **Wambui Otieno**, and the liberals **Lilian Ngoy**, **Albertina Sisulu**, **Margaret Ekpo** and **Funmilayo Anikulapo-Kuti**.

**Modern African Feminism** has solidified during the UN Decade for Women (1975-1985), and led to the development of a real feminist activism with the spread of **scholarships** across the continent and with the African diaspora. Since then the African feminist movement has expanded to the **political, legislative and cultural spheres**. The main issues vary from basic to intellectual activism, **economic issues** such as the poverty **reduction**, prevention of violence and **reproductive rights**, health and procreation, and life style, popular culture, media, art and culture. On the one hand, it is about facing **patriarchal mythism** and on the other hand fighting **racist stereotypes**.

<sup>49</sup> Cromwell, A.M. (1992). *An African Victorian Feminist: The Life and Times of Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford 1868-1960*.

<sup>50</sup> Zubeida Jaffer (2016). *Beauty of the Heart: The life and times of Charlotte Manny Maxeke*.

<sup>51</sup> Shaarawi, H. (1987). *The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist, 1879-1947*.

<sup>52</sup> Mama and Abbas (2015) page 4.

Regarding social movements, it is worth remembering the **African Feminist Forum**<sup>53</sup>, promoting solidarity and shared Agendas among different movements; the **FEMNET**<sup>54</sup>, the feminist and pan-African organization with over 500 individual and institutional members in 43 African countries; **ABANTU for Development**, a network active in promoting gender equality, training, advocacy, documentation and other activities. More recently, new research centers regarding gender equality has been set up, such as the **African Gender Institute** at the Cape Town University, which publishes the *Feminist Africa Journal*<sup>55</sup> on gender issues each year.

Regarding the content of feminist critiques, a broad discussion revolves around gender empowerment policies importer through international development cooperation programs since the 1980s. The basic idea that women's empowerment passes only through **institutional changes** or that it can be measured as an economic asset **is criticized**.

The academies argue that the path to the conquest of the full Self is much more complex and nuanced, that there is no single recipe for every context, that the environment in which the woman moves is analyzed, with the stereotypes and cultures background that characterize it<sup>56</sup>. It is not enough to give women micro-credits and allow them to start a business in order to make them self-aware. Women need social organizations, a community able to distribute power to all. They need emotional empowerment that begins with the **awareness of being able to imagine a different future for themselves**.

The path to empowerment necessarily varies from context to context, there can not be a single solution for all: what can mean greater autonomy for a women can bring another even more to oppression. Only by **taking evaluating the complexity** of different social and relational fabrics, women will be able **imagine different perspectives for themselves** that would otherwise be unimaginable.

Deeply understanding these analyses, and therefore the impossibility of reducing the empowerment to "economic assets" or "institutional structures" is an important key to reading projects for women's emancipation. And there is a parallelism with the cooperative movement, which, in its own way, criticizes the one size fits all solutions, which deals with increasing economic assets through the creation of decent work, but also offers ample space for dialogue and identity building. It is only the creation of a favourable environment, able to change one's awareness by making others perceive their abilities, to build self-confidence and the power to act and to expand their horizons of possibilities<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> For further information <http://www.africanfeministforum.com/about/>

<sup>54</sup> For further information <http://femnet.org>

<sup>55</sup> For further information <http://agi.ac.za/journals>

<sup>56</sup> Cornwall A, and Edwards J. (2014) *Feminism, Empowerment and Development. Changing Women's Lives*. London & New York: Zed Books.

<sup>57</sup> To know more in narrative-fiction tone: "Niketche, a story of polygamy" by Paulina Chiziane, is an excellent example of the different problems of women in Mozambique. Five women, married with the same husband, with their insecurities and fragilities, each of them incarnate a different women stereotypes.

## Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin America too has its own story to tell in terms of feminism and in recent years even the European media have given space to the voices of Latin scholars and activists.

Within the continent, the issue that mainly strikes public opinion, because it affects a large part of the population, is **gender violence**.

Latin America and the Caribbean are characterized by the high levels of **inequality and poverty**. A study by the World Bank indicates that one in every five Latin Americans – about 130 million people – live in chronic poverty<sup>58</sup> since 2004. The inequality, as measured by the Gini index – 0 represents the absence of inequality and 1 maximum inequality – stands at 0.463 in 2015, equal to the previous year. However, the rate of reduction of the index has been decreasing over the years<sup>59</sup>. **Female poverty is greater than that of men**. In particular, **women aged between 25 and 59 are overrepresented in the quintile of lower income**, up to 40% more than men. This is because women tend to receive lower incomes, due to the difficulty of reconciling unpaid work done at home with labor market participation. Moreover, they are typically employed in jobs associated with low salaries and are overrepresented in the management of single-parent families<sup>60</sup>.

The link between **violence and discrimination** is unsolvable. And this also happens with regard to gender. According to the Latinobarometro (2017) 59% of those interviewed consider domestic violence against women as the second most serious problem in their country, after family violence against children (60%).

According to a UN study, **El Salvador** has the highest rate of femicide in the world, 14 women out of 100,000 killed for gender-based reasons. Honduras comes next, with 11 women per 100,000 killed<sup>61</sup>. **In Argentina, every 30 hours a woman** only for the fact of being a **woman** (Ni Una Menos, 2017) and in Mexico everyday six women die due to a femicide (INmujeres, 2017).

Given the numbers, it is no coincidence that the Latin American demonstrations against femicides have come to make the news on our media. The transnational network “**Ni una menos**” (Not one [woman] less), born in 2015 in Argentina to say “**stop femicide**” is active within the whole continent and has spread to the West.

<sup>58</sup> Vakis, Renos, Rigolini, Jamele and Leonardo Luchetti. 2015. Overview: Left Behind: Chronic Poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean. Washington, DC: World Bank

<sup>59</sup> Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL), *Panorama Social de América Latina*, 2016 (LC/PUB.2017/12-P), Santiago, 2017

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>61</sup> UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNWOMEN), *Preventing Conflict Transforming Justice Securing the Peace – A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*, 12 October 2015, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/561e036b40c.html> [accessed 25 October 2017]

Gender violence is based on the **prejudice of women's inferiority**, which fosters the **culture of inequality** and discrimination. Generally, victims of violence experience little self-confidence and are blamed when they try to denounce it, and the aggressors are not punished, also due to the high level of tolerance in this regard. Therefore, the work of **empowerment** of women needs to start with an **inner and psychological work** with them in order to rediscover firstly the ability to consider themselves in relation to the world as a sphere of possibilities.

It is therefore evident that in any type of project in Latin America and the Caribbean it is essential to consider gender issues under the lens of domestic violence: even when a project deals with different topics (economic development, sectoral technical assistance) it would be incautious to close the eyes on a problem so deeply rooted in the social fabric.



## BOX 2.4 - Indigenous women: the communitarian feminism

The final declaration of the XIII Conference on women in Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>62</sup>, came to light thanks to the ideas emerged from the reflexions of 1500 feminists, highlighting the dynamic and buzzing Latin America reality where feminism defines itself as an open movement that incorporates different types of feminisms. The three main themes concerned **critical inter-culturality, the sustainability of life and the theme of the body as a territory**. This last issue has become the focus of a new trend of feminism, which sees indigenous women involved in the forefront since 2000.

**Indigenous peoples** in Latin America account for about 8% of the population but, at the same time, represent 14% of the poor and over 17% of those living on less than \$ 2.50 a day<sup>63</sup>. **Indigenous women** suffer from a **double marginalisation**, as women and as indigenous, thus becoming among the most exposed to inequalities on the continent. There are important gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous girls, levels of schooling, as well as participation in political and economic activities within their communities.

**Until the 2000s**, indigenous women who raised their voices to ask for more rights did so in the name of the **ancestral rights of their lands**, reproductive rights or the use of their therapeutic techniques, without making it a question of gender.

The new **indigenous feminism – community feminism** – links the struggle for the territory and the women's body understood as territory; it claims feminism and indigenous ancestral visions; **individual rights as women** and the collective rights of the indigenous peoples by denouncing patriarchy and colonialism, even with its current modes of ideological exploitation and contamination.

Also in this case, as in Africa, the elaboration of **theoretical proposals of a feminist** built on the basis of knowledge consistent with the own **cosmo-visions different from the Western ones** becomes central, the urgency of not replicating foreign voices but to create an identity based on the local reality is strong<sup>64</sup>.

In an even more radical way, Julieta Paredes, a Bolivian activist among the founders of community feminism, maintains that “gender identity and equality are public policies, ideas and conceptions stemming from the neo-liberalism”. Her speech is amplified to analyze a gender violence deeply rooted, which goes beyond the male against the feminine and masculine (as many campaigns against femicide suggest) “it is necessary to fight against a system of patriarchal supremacy which is capitalist, colonial neo-liberal and conservative”<sup>65</sup>.

As stated before, it is necessary to be open to **listen and understand different ways of thinking**, ancestral cosmo-visions, **that stem from complex and ancient histories** in order to interact with other realities, so different from ours: only through a productive dialogue, together, women may find common solutions to their individual problems.

<sup>62</sup> For further information [http://www.13eflac.org/boletinas/Boletina\\_especial.pdf](http://www.13eflac.org/boletinas/Boletina_especial.pdf)

<sup>63</sup> The World Bank. (2015). *Indigenous Latin America in the Twenty-First Century*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

<sup>64</sup> ACSUR - Las Segovias (2016). *Feminismos diversos: el feminismo comunitario*. *Feminista Siempre* Preso da: <https://porunavidavivible.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/feminismos-comunitario-lorena-cabnal.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> To read the entire article <http://www.resumenlatinoamericano.org/2016/11/15/julieta-paredes-feminista-comunitaria-de-bolivia-el-machismo-es-la-matriz-patriarcal-que-sostiene-a-un-sistema-colonialista-racista-capitalista/>

### 3. WOMENPOWERMENT IN COOPS



Confocooperative has always been involved in **international development cooperation**, showing particular attention to finding new markets and **investments opportunities for its member cooperatives** as well as focusing on **the creation of an enabling environment for the development of cooperative enterprises** and inclusive economic growth in **impoverished countries**. Confocooperative is also interested in **safeguarding the environment, promoting international solidarity, fighting against inequalities and poverty as well as supporting women empowerment**. The 2030 Agenda of the United Nations confirms the importance of these actions.

In this regard, **Coopermondo** and the **Commission of Women Cooperative Managers** have taken into account the gender issue focusing on the role of cooperative enterprises in responding to the Goal #5 of the 2030 Agenda. That is how the project **“WomeNpowerment in Coopss – Women cooperators and Aid Workers in the world”** was created.

This encounter among women cooperators confirms how important it is to promote a **network** among **women** for supporting processes of change, for acknowledging needs and opportunities. At the same time, in a wider view, it highlights the importance of **matching with other countries** to develop and promote monitoring and research systems on gender equality and development policies.

The engine of this action has been a **group of women engaged either in international cooperative development or cooperative management**, who have shared experiences and competencies in order to create tools, technical skills and knowledge for the **support of women empowerment** and the growth of **women cooperative business community** in developing countries.

Meetings, researches, studies, documents and information exchange have given life to a lively dialogue and to a mutual solicitation for the common aim of providing new inputs to improve daily actions in cooperative enterprises.

### 3.1 COOPERMONDO

Coopermondo is the **NGO** of Confcooperative<sup>66</sup>, the Italian Confederation of Cooperatives; its mission is to respond positively to **socio-economic problems in Developing Countries** through **training and technical assistance** aiming to create **inclusive and sustainable cooperative economies**.

Cooperative enterprises, an example of economic democracy, are a key instrument in reducing inequalities in the world and ensuring decent work for all, but mostly for women and youth.

Coopermondo's identity is based on the **cooperative principles and values** set in "Declaration on cooperative identity" for the first time in 1937 and periodically updated by ICA – International Co-operative Alliance<sup>67</sup>.

Its philosophy is based on the **Catholic social doctrine**. It welcomes Pope Francis's **reflections on poverty** and on **environmental care** in the name of a universal solidarity gathering the whole human family together for a sustainable development.

The values on which Coopermondo's action is based are Democracy, Equality, Equity, Solidarity, Self-sufficiency and Self-responsibility.

Coopermondo operates as a "**system agency**" specialised in international development cooperation for Confcooperative. It aims to create mutual benefits for:

- Beneficiaries **populations** and **partner countries**, through its projects;
- **Its members** and all **Confcooperative's bodies** dealing with international cooperation, through service activities.

Along with Sectoral Federations and regional Unions of Confcooperative, Coopermondo develops partnerships to design international cooperative development projects and to find commercial opportunities for cooperative enterprises with the aim to reach a **greater involvement of the cooperative private sector in development**. It **works together with experts from the Confcooperative system**, **cooperators** who become **important consultants in the projects**.

Thanks to an intense **work of advocacy**, Coopermondo represents the cooperative model within the Italian **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the International Cooperation**. Within the civil society, it embodies the cooperative values and principles, which has been recognised as valuable for sustainable development according to the law for the international cooperation 125/2014<sup>68</sup>.

<sup>66</sup> It was established in 2007 by Confcooperative, Federcasse (Italian National association of Credit Union) – BCC (Italian credit union) and Federcoopesca (association safeguarding fishing cooperatives)

<sup>67</sup> See BOX 1.3 at page 13

<sup>68</sup> Law 11, August 2014 – Italian general discipline on International Development Cooperation

Coopermondo is a founding member of the **Cooperatives Europe Development Platform CEDP**, the working group of Cooperatives Europe focused on International cooperative development<sup>69</sup>, gathering more than **10 European Partners**, more than **350 projects** in more than **70 countries in the world**. Since 2016, it has taken part in the global project of the **International Cooperative Alliance** to promote international cooperation and inter-cooperation within all the regions of the Alliance.

### Methodology - project implementation

Coopermondo works in different **African and Latin American countries**<sup>70</sup>. Its methodology consists in strengthening the cooperative movement through **bottom-up actions with citizens** (trust-building, training, technical assistance, empowerment) and through top-down actions of advocacy for the improvement of local legal frameworks.

Coopermondo implements **international cooperative development projects**, believing that the cooperative model brings an added value to its actions. In order to achieve the SDGs, it becomes crucial to promote new **economic models that involve social and environmental aspects, alternative models to the mainstream unlimited growth** focused only on profits.

Coopermondo's actions always start with **the creation and the strengthening of confidence** within beneficiaries. Trust building is key, especially when working with groups of producers. It is the first step to ensure a successful cooperative in the future. Improving the value chain in a cooperative way is, in many cases, the only way to provide **access to local markets**. For instance, in Togo, rural farmers find many obstacles in individually accessing markets due to the high cost of transports and lack of management skills. The creation of a **cooperative** ensures a **better access to markets to local farmers** through the gathering of products in a collective way, better and standardized technical assistance, improvement in the input supply chain, better access to credit; at the same time a cooperative leads to the development of the community through the **redistribution of wealth** and the raise in **education and training standards**.

Coopermondo develops **training on cooperative management** and provides specialised technical assistance in different areas of interest. Regarding technical assistance, Coopermondo draws on the **"experts of the system"** from Confcooperative's world.

<sup>69</sup> Cooperatives Europe is The European region of the International Co-operative Alliance with 84 partners in Europe, among which Confcooperative (as so Coopermondo). For further information <https://coopseurope.coop/development/>

<sup>70</sup> To know Coopermondo's projects [www.coopermondo.it/i-progetti-di-coopermondo](http://www.coopermondo.it/i-progetti-di-coopermondo)

There are three kinds of experts Coopermondo works with:

- **The cooperator:** they are members or employees in a cooperative, who leave their enterprise for a fixed number of days in order to exchange experiences and train local beneficiaries in partner countries.
- **The cooperative officer:** they are employed in a sectorial federation or a regional Union of Confcooperative, they are usually experts in one areas and highly trained on cooperative management and representation.
- **The researcher:** Confcooperative represents also research cooperative active in many areas (agriculture, fishing, aquaculture, health, social enterprises and cooperatives, etc...), the researcher make its knowledge available to local partners and contribute to the development and implementation of projects on the field.

### Gender

Gender equality issue is a priority in Coopermondo's activities as it takes into consideration that **poverty affects women more than men** and that women represent the majority of the workers in the world who do not have the essential resources to enhance their living conditions.

Implementing **gender equality** means **to accept, to consider and to enhance** in an equitable way the **differences between women and men**, and their roles in the society.

The achievement of gender equality is a **continuous process**, which must be always debated. On the one hand, it hinders any discrimination and on the other hand, it tries to enhance the personalities, within the projects and the organisation, as human beings.

In order to implement the **gender mainstreaming** in its organisation and projects, Coopermondo:

- Promotes **economic independence** for everyone, ensuring equal condition to men and women. The role of men and women in the economy is crucial for the balance between them. Combating women poverty is important and it is linked to an economic independence enabling to conciliate work times and familiar life both for men and women.
- Invests in a **gender analysis** in all its projects and it uses an integrated approach of gender mainstreaming and gender empowerment according to the needs emerging in every context.
- Promotes **education** (5<sup>th</sup> cooperative principle), key asset for achieving gender equality, the empowerment of girls and boys as well as for overcoming gender hierarchies and stereotypes.
- Develops a **system of indicators** to assess the gender impact in every project.
- Ensures and measures the gender salary gap

As of today, Coopermondo has adopted two ways of integration of gender policies in its projects:

- **Gender Neutral:** gender differences are recognised but no specific action is taken to change the current situation, only attention is given in order not to create further imbalances.
- **Gender Transformative:** working with both men and women in order to transform existing relationships and to create new and more balanced relationships.

### BOX 3.1 - Gender approaches in policies and projects (Adapted from the proposal do Kabeer N., 2001)

APPROACH	EXPLANATION
<b>Gender Blind</b>	It does not recognise and does not take into consideration gender issue as an essential element to set goals and strategies to design policies.
<b>Gender-sensitive (integrationist strategy)</b> It recognises that men and women have different needs and resources.	<p><b>Gender Neutral</b> It takes into account gender issue, but it does not act to change it. These are policies that leave the distribution of resources and responsibilities unchanged.</p> <p><b>Gender specific</b> These are policies aiming to meet specific needs of women and men according to the existing gender division of resources and responsibilities.</p>
<b>Gender- redistributive (transformative strategy)</b> They try to transform the distribution of existing resources and to create gender-balanced relationships.	<b>Gender-transformative</b> It not only studies and knows gender problems but also acts with the aim to change the existing situation, by trying to reduce gender inequalities and to address the root causes of this inequality. The activities provided by this kind of projects involve both men and women.

Within a **cooperative, women and men have the same rights**: one person, **one vote**. They have **the possibility to gather**, discuss and reciprocally support themselves in the most difficult situations. The cooperative provides moments of **training and empowerment** because the principle of education is the basis of its values. Therefore, women have the chance to improve **mutual trust and** create solidarity-based networks.

The cooperative model provides a **holistic strategy** for the community development respectful of local traditions. For this reason, it is necessary to **analyse the local culture in order** to better approach gender issues, to comprehend in which contexts women feel oppressed and cannot express their own ambitions, to assess their level of awareness and to draw along with them their empowerment process. It is only after the consideration of these issues that an **exchange of experiences** with Italian cooperatives may be beneficial without imposing a system, but by adapting Italian situation to each partner country peculiarity.

## 3.2 THE COMMISSION OF WOMEN COOPERATIVE MANAGERS



**The Commission of Women Cooperative Managers** was established in 2005, with the **strong aim to enhance the participation of women** in the cooperative world of **Confcooperative**.

It has worked for more than 10 years, supported by personal and professional experiences of women cooperators and inspired by the cooperative principles, such as participation, democracy and mutuality. Moreover it highlights the respect for differences and the benefits of the Confederal representation.

The **Commission of Women Cooperative Managers** aims to **make cooperative women protagonists** in relational processes, contaminating the change and asserting of the important economic contribution that women gives to the **cooperative life by being active managers, members or employees**.

The Commission itself wants to be protagonist in developing dynamic actions for the emergence of equal opportunities and gender policies, through women manager cooperators nominated by Regional Officers and National Sectoral Federations.

From December 2005 to December 2016 (date of the last survey implemented by Study and Research Office of Fondosviluppo and Confcooperative) there was a significant increase in women participation within member cooperatives and, in many cases, they participate in the top management.

The percentage of **cooperatives** where women members are more in number than men, amounted to 31.7% of all active member cooperatives in 2016. The percentage of **women members** in cooperatives increased from **37.2% in 2005 to 40% in 2016**. The percentage of **employed women** increased from 57.3% in 2005 to 60.1% in 2016.

Some sectors see women more active and participating than others. Indeed, there is a higher participation of women in the **social sector**, with a percentage amounting to **58.3%**, in all macro areas. However, women participation is increasing also in other sectors, which generally account for



a lower employment impact, such as the agricultural, consumption and service sectors, emphasising also a potential increase of women participation in the fisheries sector.

This data shows the positive and steady trend in the number of women members and for employees pointing out how the cooperative model offers instruments that encourage women to do business.

Flexibility and cross-sectoral nature in **organisational structure**, using **creativity in the development of new ideas, accessing to territorial and regional resources, strengthening relationships** also for developing professional networks, responding to **social and personal needs**, coherently **match the characteristics of women**.

If these elements are integrated into an organization of equal professional and social opportunities, their implicit qualities will be reinforced, becoming the greater engine for the business growth.

It is necessary to pay a stable attention to the spread of **information through media** and **new policies** aiming at supporting actions for an equal and effective participation of women and men in the labour market, as well as the political and trade union representation of both genders.

Data show an improvement also regarding senior and top management positions. The rate of Confcooperative's member cooperatives that have a women in a leadership position increased from **17.9% in 2005 to 26.1% in 2016**. The average age of women leading their cooperatives is **48 years**, compared with the average age of men of 54 years.

It can also be noticed that cooperatives with women in top positions are **young: around 33% of Confcooperative's cooperatives with women in leadership positions has no more than 10 years**. While cooperatives with women in leadership positions have an average age of 18 years, the average age within the total cooperatives is of 24 years (about 19,000). It may be stated that women cooperatives are a young and modern reality.

These data also shows that the cooperative model allows **different generations** to compare their professional skills, **exchange experiences**, both at personal level and regarding competences in the working environment, and offer **opportunities to increase their knowledge** in social, familial and working groups.

This confirms that cooperatives are shaped for receiving and welcoming different cultures and customs as a stimulus for understanding the most difficult social events and find solutions to contrast **inequalities**, warning about **abuse of power and gender violence** as well as eliminating **stere-**

### otypes.

In being protagonists, as **workers, members and managers, women** find new methods and relationships for improving organisational working model, that may be innovative and at the same time meet common needs (**work-life balance, employee welfare, support of women in leadership**). The value of women contribution, beyond representing equity, improves **economic-financial performances** of enterprises and the leadership of women contributes to the creation of **sustainable consumption models** and to **the growth of the green economy**.

The Commission follows a specific policy that stresses the effort to increase the awareness on the equal **sharing between men and women**. Sharing of roles, tasks and competencies is a complete formula for innovation and a better productivity.

Women enrich the **language** because they bear new requests, including thoughts and actions from different professional and social environments, starting the development of political and union representation of all.

Integrating gender equality in the governance and management strategies as well as in policies means to promote development, innovation and change as a **social and evolutionary transformation**.

### Method and instruments

The members of the Commission, working in an interdependent way with the Confederation's offices and bodies, collaborate according to a common Regulation approved by the National Council, on these instruments and actions:

- Sharing and promoting **collective action**
- **Training**
- Promoting an **inclusive language**
- **Spreading** positive tested practices, experiences and competences
- **Supporting the network** between men and women members, managers and between cooperatives and different sectors and areas
- **Meetings** with the national group, the Network of regional Commissions and the working group on specific issues
- **The access to financial instruments** for women cooperative enterprises and to issues linked to access to credit
- **The relationship with local and national institutions** in order to start political dialogue and to develop policies for gender equality
- Providing **impact indicators** that allow to verify how and to what extent innovative working methods lead to an effective benefit and change.
- **Developing active paths and measures for work-life balance** both for women and men and for the wide participation in job market.

Among the active measures Confcooperative has taken in this regard, it is worth to mention the **promotion of gender quotas**. After the request of the **Commission of Women Cooperative Managers**, the Confederation has included in the National and Regional Assemblies regulation the recommendation of respecting gender quotas. The Article 7(4) states that the election of the National Council is based on a majoritarian system with limited voting where they can choose between different lists composed of at least 60 names, of which at least 30% of the least represented gender <sup>71</sup>.

## A European view

The Commission observes and follows the debates on gender issues in the European context, as a way of deepening its knowledge on **political, social and business models** of different member states. One of the Commission's objectives is to generate a cultural change fostering economic and entrepreneurial biodiversity which are essential elements for social inclusion and cohesion policies. This effort also involves **new generations of women cooperators** in order to give them the possibility to grow and to strengthen in a European view.

The Commission operates through:

- The implementation of a **political framework supporting** the EU for **co-operatives**;
- The awareness raising on cooperative opportunities among youth promotion of **youth employment** in innovative jobs;
- A roadmap supporting the **start-up** and the scale-up of cooperative enterprises;
- The involvement of women cooperative representation in the in European bodies, also at consultative level.

This work is implemented in collaboration with **Cooperatives Europe**<sup>72</sup>, the organisation representing the European cooperative movement along with the office of **Confcooperative in Brussels**. It consists in exchanging recommendation on gender issues and on what stems from it, at European level and in our Confederation, in order to maintain the dialogue with European Institutions, to political-legislative lobbying and to support women-oriented business project.

<sup>71</sup> Translated from Italian: "Quando si tratta dell'elezione del Consiglio nazionale, [...] si vota con il sistema maggioritario e voto limitato a due terzi su liste composte da almeno 60 nominativi, di cui almeno il 30% di genere scelti tra i delegati accertati dalla Commissione dell'Assemblea"

<sup>72</sup> Cooperatives Europe is The European region of the International Co-operative Alliance with 84 partners in Europe, among which Confcooperative (as so Coopermondo). It represents 141 million partners having 176,000 cooperative enterprises, and giving job to 4.7 million European citizens.

### **The whole actions as active policy**

The processes implemented by the Commission are many, but they are all oriented to a safe and exponential women participation to policies and businesses and to support the increase of women employment through cooperatives towards a complete empowerment.

The concept of **gender mainstreaming**, proposed at the **Third World Conference on Women hold in 1985 in Nairobi**, and again in 1995 at the **Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing**, emphasises the importance of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for gender equality, by asserting the equal opportunity principle and that of non-discrimination of women in all life sectors as universal values.

*...It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated...*

Required way, herald of the biggest steps.

### **BOX 3.2 - FIL - Famiglia Impresa Lavoro (Family, Enterprise, Work). An innovative project for a cooperative policy.**

FIL – Famiglia Impresa Lavoro, promoted by the **Commission of Women Cooperative Managers** and supported by Confcooperative and Fondosviluppo, springs from a project of RicercaAzione. It focuses on **enhancing actions to balance work and family life both for men and women**, and on creating organisational and cooperative model of Employee Welfare, setting stages through a cultural and economic strategy of cooperative business processes.

The FIL, through its different stages, has experienced positive and virtuous processes for corporate welfare also through a new focus on the needs of women, members and their family.

This project is based on cooperative enterprise of different dimensions, different areas and relationships, different roles and competencies.

The work is developed through a **participating method**, actions and field pilots. It has created:

- A **Glossary**, identifying words of work-life balance, words that create reflections and change.
- A **basket** of work-life balance, identifying legislations, business organisational systems, services, positive actions and needs.
- The introduction of **case history** on actions becoming **policies of the reconciliation** of cooperative enterprises; also through an analysis of costs and resources.
- The **establishment of an integrated business framework** for the work life balance, to develop a virtuous system, enabling to provide responses to cooperative men and women, through active solutions in evolution, fostering the family friendly culture, the mutuality and the welfare.

**FIL** is a **brand**, an **active policy**, a **method**, a process that continuously creates paths. It is a **publication**, 4 essays on Reconciliation as an **instrument of communication, research and implementation of innovative strategies**.

### 3.3 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

**Project:** AGRICOOP Mujer

**Country:** Colombia

**Organisation:** Coopermondo

**Objective:** raising awareness among women from five different ethnic groups, in a social context torn by guerrilla warfare and drug trafficking, with the aim of encouraging them to undertake an entrepreneurial activity to ensure their economic independence together with a real gender equality.

**Benefit from cooperatives:** AGRICOOP Mujer is an empowerment process involving more **than 100 women**, who have created a trust network in spite of the ethnic differences and historical hostility among them. Women have begun to get to know each other with **recurring meetings**, telling their problems and considering together solutions to solve them.

Coopermondo has trained women starting from their **weaknesses**, which have been selected as a priority by them: Leadership, Organisational processes, cooperative principles, Marketing and Communication, Food Safety.

They are now imagining different ways to implement the **trainings** provided. The cooperative model gives them new ideas and opportunities.

Some of them, weavers, join in a **cooperative** to sell products, such as bags, cloaks and other various objects. Others want to take part in this production chain and become sheep breeders to ensure the supply of wool for the creation of products.

Some farmers are imagining a common shop where **selling their products together**. Others want to create a sustainable tourism network. Women living in the cities are imagining methods for the reception of women suffering violence.

It is fundamental to the community development to have created a **space for sharing problems that welcomes women** in need of a supporting network able to help them to take a step forward and find their independence.

Two pieces of evidences of two women (one, indigenous and lives in the mountain and the other lives in the city) describe the spirit of the project<sup>73</sup>.

<sup>73</sup> The interviews have been transcribed from the video "Agricoop Mujer" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4idKQ-0WBAA>

"I believe that trainings have been one of the pillars of AGRICOOP Mujer: they have been reinforced us as persons and group. My **dream** is to create processes to reach together **the welfare of the community**. The fact of gathering is already a big result. We are not the same women of the past: new people are joining the processes and this is a proof of the results of last year. A dream of ours is to create a **network of women** at the level of **municipality and Department** and why not, also at **national level**. AGRICOOP Mujer and Coopermondo have been one of the main supporters that we have ever met regarding **gender issue**".

Misak Woman, Municipality of Silvia, Cauca

"I am mother of two sons and I have been taking part in AGRICOOP Mujer for 10 years. I have begun because my sister-in-law Beatriz told me what happened here, she told me about trainings and mostly about the chats with other women, which she considered great enrichment. For me **AGRICOOOP is as a tree that with its branches protects people** from the rain and from the sun, but it also brings water, wind, health and energy. All the people taking part in AGRICOOP **are women leader, women of different culture and ethnic groups**, but with the same concerns and they have lived the same things. Many have lived very **heavy experiences** but thanks to be together and the empowerment given by these trainings they managed to **create a big cohesive cooperative** to work for the welfare of the woman. This in the principal goal: we want that the woman from Silvia, regardless her race or ethnic group, could reach this autonomy, this economic and cultural independence in every field. **We can be the person we have always dreamt to be since we were kids**: not only staying home and thinking about what to prepare for lunch or what our children need. Starting to consider ourselves as women. And **thinking of all other women needing help**: because as we have received help today, we have to help other women tomorrow".

Urban Woman, Municipality of Silvia, Cauca

**Project: Microfinanza Campesina in Ecuador – The protagonism of women****Country:** Ecuador**Organization:** Credit Cooperative Banks (BCC) - Federcasse

**Objective:** As part of the wider Microfinanza Campesina project in Ecuador, which sees the BCC engaged since 2002 alongside two Ecuadorian entities (banCODESARROLLO and FEPP) for the development and strengthening of popular finance, particular attention is dedicated to women. In particular, since 2003 nearly 2 million dollars of subsidized credit have been disbursed to support and strengthen female entrepreneurship.

**Benefits from cooperatives:** The subsidized loans of the Italian Cooperative Credit have allowed banCODESARROLLO, over time, to field more than 45 million dollars to provide loans to about 12,000 Ecuadorian women, in many cases grouped into cooperatives.

When this money is returned they have done an important task: for these women and their families, they have become land, home, animals, seeds, tools. They have become dignity, freedom, well-being, fairness. As some of the beneficiaries told us some time ago.

We report briefly their stories.

**Maria Dolores Morales Chasipanta** is 46 years old, she lives in the small village of Yaruquí - in the suburbs northeast of Quito - and produces bricks.

Maria plans work, manages family and corporate finance, directs activities, is present in all phases of the production cycle. It's a job that she knows perfectly, that she has done since she was more than a little girl and that made her grow strong in body and spirit. Only in 2005, however, with the first loan received from banCODESARROLLO (which was back then the cooperative Codesarrollo) was able to put on her own business. With the first loan of \$500 she bought the clay, the wood chips for the dough, the wood for the fire. The first productions and deliveries began. She soon realized that she needed to build a larger oven. She "dared" to ask other 2 thousand dollars. And it was really a "dare", because the rural women, proud and strict, is taught not to asking for help. And do not expect it. But the relationship she had established with Codesarrollo gave her courage.

Today she owns four ovens and the requests continue to increase from year to year. Maria has bought a land of 2,500 square meters where she installed the other ovens and over time, with a new loan of 10 thousand dollars, she also bought a truck, greatly improving delivery services.



**Maria Hortencia Tambi Molina** is a founding member of the Cooperativa de Ahorro y Credito La Magdalena. Hortencia has dressed in the typical clothes of her community: a beautiful bright blue wide pleated skirt, the shirt embroidered by hand, the canvas sandals with rubber sole. And the inevitable shawl that she has finished sewing that day. This is her business. A few years ago, thanks to the cooperative's first loans, she bought yarns and fabrics. *"I bought fabrics for home furnishings first. Then, with a new loan, I also bought two electric embroidering machines"*, she says with the pride of those who understood the true meaning of the term "investment".

One for herself and the other one for her daughter. *"It helps me to prepare the drawings to make ours bordado, which I finish by hand"*. Hortencia confesses that she is certainly proud of her business, but she is especially happy to have given her daughter a working opportunity.

**Carmen Uvidia**, is the director of the Cooperativa de Ahorro y Credito Nueva Esperanza in Riobamba, a small company, but with all the burdens of big banks regarding regulations, software, internal regulations, budgets, etc.

Members counts for almost 2.000 and most of them are poor people: artisans, including many seamstresses, street vendors, farmers, small farmers of poultry animals. The loans granted are on average \$600, but sometimes they give loans of only \$50. They rarely reach higher figures, around 8 thousand dollars.

Carmen says that there are two things that make her particularly proud: that about 70% of those who turn to the cooperative for a credit had never obtained it before and that there is a very strong female presence. Around 51% of members are women, as are six of the nine members of the board of directors. They even reach 100% on the supervisory board, which guarantees the transparency and self-control of the cooperative: four members, all women. Women, mainly artisans, who are also the main customers.

The educational value linked to the theme of saving and wealth is strongly felt, as Carmen explains: *"The poor are first of all poor in their own heads, because they are convinced that they are poor. It is a question of self-esteem, which is very low. So, when we go to them, we draw together a list of things they own (cars, television, consumer goods, etc.) and then transform it, monetizing it into dollars. Then they finally realize that they have in their hands a patrimony, albeit a very small one, that they can commit to making profitable. It is necessary to have a positive attitude and someone who believes in your possibilities. It is the goal of our cooperative"*.

**Project:** “Juntos contra a exclusão social”

**Country:** Brazil

**Organizzazione:** Confcooperative Piemonte Nord

**Objective:** Fostering the social and economic inclusion of women and youth in a vulnerable situation. It competes to reach the MDGs, more specifically MDG #1 and MDG #2. The specific goal is that of enhancing life conditions and social and economic integration of 110 families in the city of Fortaleza and Recife through the improvement of qualifications and capabilities of generating income of women and youth.

**Benefit from cooperatives:** The project is an act of **empowerment and vocational training for 120 people**, among which **women and youth**. It aims to create a **path of self-entrepreneurship** in a cooperative way (48 work-study initiatives for women and youth) and provides inputs for the research of jobs in the areas of Fortaleza and Recife.

In the area of Fortaleza, women involved in the project have a **low level of education** (41.5) and they are part of **discriminated ethnic groups** (afro-descendants and mixed-race people).

The majority (90%) has **from one to four children** and 38% is **divorced** and the two-thirds of the group has a job with a **very low salary**, 720 Reais (approximately 180 euros), but more than half of them (60%) has attended professional courses. The area of Recife lives a similar situation with the highest rate of women unemployment in the region.

Among all women participating in the project, half of them has no income and almost 40% has a minimum salary of 880 reais (220 euros). Level of education is very low since more than the half part stopped at secondary school.

The racial issue is very clear, both in Brazil and within the project. Seventeen percent of people involved is afro-descendant or mixed-race people, and 42% among them has no income. Due to this situation and to the fact that in Brazil 49 years of contributions are required to get a pension, many will not benefit from it.

Workshops focus on **raising awareness on work and collaboration**, leading to the opening of three different ways: food service, needlework and patchwork.

The path has highlighted some problems that resemble those experienced in Italy. Since the greater part of the women are also mothers, and very often they are singles, the main problems is children care during the job time. There are also problems of transportation costs.

In this area **nine cooperatives** have developed, operating in **recovery sector**. Thanks to all this, some women, after the **patchwork workshop**, have opened their own business, and in the future, they can join in a cooperative. Even the **needlework course** has been successful, despite the suitable technical tools were not always available, problem solved by the delivering of the kit provided by the project. All this leads to the raising of the awareness of the cooperation as business and opportunity system.

The project has led to the raise of **awareness on the socio-political situation of women involved and of their rights**, also bringing about a **recognition of their abilities** and the **increase of self-esteem**. The new view of the world and of women as part of this has resulted in the creation of an alternative search of job and opportunities to the development of their autonomy, in order to increase their self-entrepreneurship with an **integration in work and active civil exercise as consequence**.

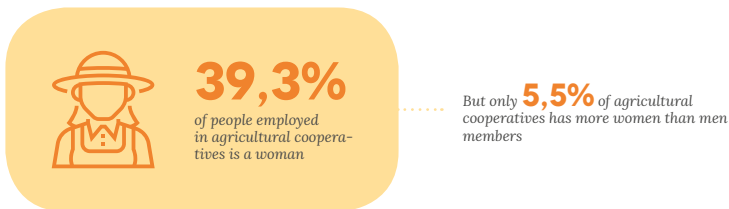
### 3.4 ITALIAN WOMEN COOPERATIVES EXPERIENCES

By taking into account some productive sectors within the experiences of Confcooperative's members, there are some that perfectly describe the dynamism of women cooperatives. However no-exhaustive, it is an interesting point of view of a movement in constant expansion.

#### Agriculture and women creativity

**Within the agricultural sector, a woman plays many roles:** she can be the manager or president of the cooperative, an employee or a member, with the need of **balancing complex rhythms of work with being mother, wife and daughter**.

A characteristic of women working in the agricultural sector is **multitasking**. Women manage to combine personal and social needs with very influential productive activities.

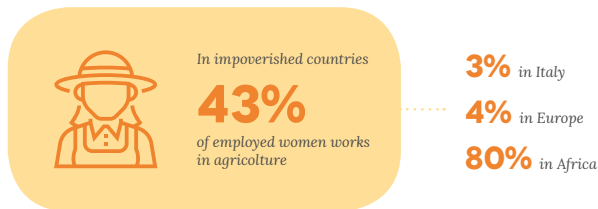


According to Fedgari, the representative sector of Confcooperative dedicated of agricultural cooperatives, within the total employment in **agricultural cooperation, the percentage of women employed** amounted to **39.3%**, reaching 55.5% in the fruit and vegetable sector, at the end of 2016.

The rate of cooperatives with the majority of women among members in the total of agricultural cooperatives does not exceed 5.5%. The rate of the cooperatives with woman Presidents in the BOD amounts to 4.6%.

Agricultural cooperatives offer different **services for improving the work-life balance** with an evident impact on family tasks, on the organisation of work as well as on the community and public sector. There are many **agritourism examples, agri-kindergartens and educational farms** in many regions. Another example are community **cooperatives** which, through agricultural production, contribute to the **revitalization of areas at risk of disuse** and to the promotion of social cohesion.

Moreover, many women are involved in **social farming**<sup>74</sup>, where they find new opportunities, new jobs, revaluation and conservation of lands, training and recreation for children and youths, good practice of work-life balance, but also care services for elderly and for who is at risk of poverty and social exclusion. These are experiences and instruments, which make the work sphere compatible with the familiar one, allowing women to **best enjoy their many roles within the society**<sup>75</sup>.



The engagement of women in agriculture is a central issue for international development cooperation. **In impoverished countries, about 43% of employed women work in agriculture**<sup>76</sup>, compared with 3% in Italy and 4% in Europe. In some areas, such as South-East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, this percentage reaches 50%. This huge difference among countries depends on the development of services, which in richest countries has seen the shift of employment towards the tertiary sector. What makes the work of women in agriculture more difficult in these countries depends on many factors. The first one is the **lack of mechanisation**, which makes agricultural work physically hard. Secondly, there is the problem of **land ownership**: in the world, women possess less than 20% of agricultural lands.

<sup>74</sup> Social farming (also called care farming) is a farming practice that uses agricultural resources to provide social or educational care services for vulnerable groups of people.

<sup>75</sup> Del Prete, A. La complessità della dimensione femminile in agricoltura (The complexity of women dimension in agriculture)

<sup>76</sup> SOFA Team and Doss, C. (2001). The role of women in agriculture. ESA Working Paper No. 11-02. Agricultural Development Economics Division. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. March 2011 Retrieved <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/am307e/am307e00.pdf>



In Africa women own less than **1%** of lands

In Asia women own less than **10%** of lands

In Latin America lands owned by women range from a minimum of **7%**  
% in Guatemala to a maximum of **24%** in Chile

In Italy women own **21%** of lands

In Italy, women own 21% of agricultural land and the size of their enterprises is smaller than the total average (78% is smaller than 5 hectares compared with 9.1 of men, and only 20% exceeds 100 hectares)<sup>77</sup>.

However, what mainly makes women's work in agriculture hard **is the workload**: it is estimated that, in many countries, women take up from 85% to 90% of their time for housework, such as the preparation of food and children care<sup>78</sup>.

**Women's empowerment** and **local sustainable development** must pass through the economic growth and the increasing of good practices that could also be learnt through experiences of Italian agricultural cooperatives.

### Gender and Wine: a female journey in the Piedmont wine sector

The winery "**Cantina Clavesana**" was established on 27<sup>th</sup> April 1959 by 32 winemakers, with the aim of enhancing grapes owned by 300 members with a total production of 30,000 hectolitres of wine and with an area for grapes of 450 hectares, all certified with Denominazione di Origine Controllata DOC (controlled designation of origin) and with Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita DOCG (controlled and guaranteed designation of origin).

The winery, managed mainly by women until June 2017, started a project to **monitor the vineyards** by using a **satellite to reduce costs and environmental impacts**; this shows that technological innovation does not necessarily imply the loss of relationships or the attention to members' needs. There are many positive results that emerge from the continuous dialogue between members and management, who listen to their requests and needs. The winery has:

- Helped a widowed woman with three sons, one of who is seriously disabled, in providing all documents and paperwork

<sup>77</sup> Del Prete, A. e Zumpano, C. (2015) ANNUARIO DELL'AGRICOLTURA ITALIANA. (YEARBOOK OF ITALIAN AGRICULTURE) <http://www.crea.gov.it/publicazioni-scienti-che/>

<sup>78</sup> Fontana and Natalia, 2008; Jain, 1996; Acharya and Bennett, 1982; Wrangham, 2009

- Included in the membership of a divorced woman in need, although she had not skills or competencies nor an adequate vineyard. She was helped by the winery in the certification process of the vineyard.
- Included in the membership a woman, who moved from Switzerland to become a winemaker although she did not own any vineyards nor lands: today this woman is member of the winery and thanks to the winery she has achieved her dream.

The procedure implemented by the Management and the Administration is to listen and to find the best solution for everyone in the enterprise. **Flexibility** is profitable for the enterprise: a good example is planning holidays according to the workers' needs, encouraging **internal mutuality**, responsibility of people, autonomous organisation with the supervision of the management. Requests are written, recorded and approved.

**Sixty percent of women workers requires flexibility** in a more planned way, mostly to respond to needs such as child sickness and medical visits. If workers are needed to work during the weekend a rotating shift with hours and days compensation is implemented.

The winery therefore becomes a **place for opportunities** where to find solutions of reconciliation through creative and participating methods; it becomes a place/centre for **cultural, leisure**, literary and artistic **events** opened to members and the general public. Some examples are the *Progetto Sorrisi, soccorso clown* (Project smiles – clown help) and touristic paths. **Cascine in Clavesana project** aimed at classifying all the farmhouses and at dividing them into groups, areas and types (i.e. panoramic location, the existence of stables...). The route among farmhouses, through the involvement of members and their relatives, provides new **hospitality services and products for local and international tourists**.

Moreover, **the Cascina bought an Elementary School in disuse**, located on a hill in Clavesana, surrounded by vineyards, in order to make it the **co-operative thinking house**. This is the place where members discuss projects to especially those concerning innovation and the support of youth who want to become farmers. The cooperative also has an **experimental vineyard**, planted along with different clones and new vine varieties **processed with organic method**, in order to test new ways of cultivating. Finally it aims at innovating members' enterprises, to promote social economy, to raise awareness on the history of authenticity and beauty of the landscape to journalist and opinion leaders and to increase the value of a product processed by people.

### Women involvement in fisheries and aquaculture sector

Fishery and aquaculture sector in European countries is characterised by a low rate of feminisation due to many factors:

- Social and cultural inheritance: jobs linked to this sector are traditionally considered for men;
- Actual difficulties linked to environment and to working hours, to technical and mechanical competencies and required efforts;
- A high rate of occupational diseases (hyperacusis, osteoarticular-diseases), which caused an unaware dismissal of women, engaged in the care of their children and of the house.

Although since 2008 a system for the collection of data in the EU has been organized (EUROSTAT and Data Collection Framework), statistics on the involvement of women in this sector are still incomplete, and not balanced among the member states: in 2012 18,300 women worked in the fisheries and aquaculture sector compared with 127,000 men, with a percentage of 12.6%. In Italy, the percentage decreases, amounting to 9.9% (according to STECF data of the report “*The Economic Performance of the EU Aquaculture Sector*” and “*The Economic Performance of the EU Fish Processing Industry Sector*”).

In 2009, in Italy the percentage of **women employed in aquaculture** amounted to 6.5%; the percentage of those employed in fisheries was extremely little and not completely quantifiable, amounting to 3% (according to incomplete data of Eurostat and STECF), referring to the capture on board and to land-based activities such as the fixing of fishing nets and the landing of the catch.

The percentage of women employed in the processing of the catches exceeded 40% already in 2009; even the percentage of those employed in **administrative management** was high (39%), consisting in the sales of fish, in the relationships with suppliers and institutions and in the management of social security and fiscal obligations.

The work of women in fisheries is often seen as “invisible work”, due to the lack in data around these activities, which are essential for the functioning of small enterprises, such as those of artisanal fisheries, in which there was an increase of women involvement also due to economic crisis over years.

Women or daughter working in family businesses often do not receive wages, or they are lower than those paid to men for the same work. Moreover, any social pension appropriate to the risks of these activities exists. Women in this sector do not enjoy an appropriate professional status.

The **European legislation** is enlarging **political and normative instruments**, aiming to give women a preponderant role the fisheries sector, to achieve a greater legal and social recognition and recompense equal to those of men in every respect (Resolution 12 September 2012) and to promote women involvement, supporting fishermen’s group fostering vocational training (Resolution 22 November 2012).

Moreover, the Resolution 27 February 2014 on specific actions in the Common Fisheries Policy for developing the role of women provides to support women's business initiatives by facilitating a favourable microcredit system and providing adequate information regarding funding opportunities.

According to a FAO report, in developing countries, women represent a high percentage of workers in aquaculture sector, in the artisanal and industrial processing of fish, in the maintenance of fishing equipment and in the trade and retail of fresh fish.

Women represent **47%** of 120 million of people, **earning money directly from fisheries and form the processing of fish**. Within **aquaculture sector**, they account **for 75-85% of the workforce in sector such as the packaging of the catch**. There are very **few women in leadership position**.

**Enhancing gender equality in fisheries sector** is important for food safety both at the household level, because women greatly contribute their families incomes, and at the global level, because the fishing industry must face the challenge of increasing its production in a sustainable way in order to feed the growing global population.

Nevertheless, women who may be interested in joining fishing activities, in some developing countries must face the lack in **ownership rights**, which prevent them from owning a boat, necessary to capture fishery, or a land for aquaculture facilities.

**The limited access to loans** often hinders women to start or to strengthen their enterprises, giving added value to their products in order to be competitive in a more globalised and mechanised industry.

The FAO along with enterprises and association of the sector and universities are working to create a **new network for women in the fishing industry**, aiming at leading women to management positions and to attract more women professionals in the sector.

Promoting **women involvement in fisheries and aquaculture sector**, both in European countries, which are implementing political and normative measures to face adequately the challenge, and in developing countries, goes hand in hand with the **sustainable exploitation of fish stocks**, allowing for a reinforcement of incomes and employment in the territories, without undermining biological resource.

It would be important to allow women to enter a sector that has been closed to them for a long time and to foster **the employment and training of young women** in the so-called "Blue Growth".

### **Women and the social sector: Fedrsolidarietà between North and South**

By looking at the Italian panorama, it can be demonstrated that women prefer to work in care sectors concerning the care **of people, of the community and of the common goods**. Therefore, women show the capability to convert into business all those **activities historically linked to family burdens**, which due to tradition or culture have historically weighted on them.



In becoming social entrepreneurs they get the chance to achieve their personal and professional fulfilment. The participation of women in the board of directors or in top management roles, has raised awareness towards a gender management system in some cooperatives, prone to planning the work activities according to women worker needs.

Data collected by the Research centre of Fondosviluppo (data at 31 December 2016) show that **Federsolidarietà**, the organisation representing social cooperatives and enterprises of Confcooperative, has **63.9% women members** and that cooperatives with the majority of women members account for 58.3%.

Within the geographical macro-areas (the North, the Centre and the South), women represent **the absolute majority in cooperatives**, especially in the municipalities of internal areas, where the percentage reaches 59.7% of the total.

In conclusion, we can say that women cooperatives are a distinctive feature in the system.

We also know that many **women chose the cooperative enterprise for its democratic structure, mutual purposes, the strong territorial rooting and the flexibility** regarding the balance between work-time and lifetime.

We acknowledge that social cooperation uses goods and services as an instrument to achieve the well-being of its community, Gaze, attention and care on the one hand, concreteness, pragmatism and instinct on the other are the elements that characterize social cooperation. Social cooperation becomes the place where women find the home for their entrepreneurship, confirming the above data that show how women cooperation has its strong incentives.

The two experiences that follow emphasise women creativity in responding to people needs and their strength from the North to the South of the country.

### **Social cooperation in Abruzzo: a gender view**

Confcooperative Abruzzo, in recognising the importance of promoting **women involvement in entrepreneurship** and in making women cooperatives **competitive and resilient to economic crisis**, has invested in many supporting measures for women cooperatives: service centres, formal and informal networks among cooperative members, management training to enhance the collaboration between women and the cooperation among cooperatives. The Regional Union of Confcooperative (Abruzzo) promotes **concrete practices**, that developed from an initiative of Fedefsolidarietà Abruzzo and were then led by women cooperators who created a network to foster the establishment and the reinforcement of social women cooperatives.

Among these realities, there is the **Consorzio Solidarietà Con.Sol**, established 20 years ago, gathering together many women social cooperatives and led by a BoD with female majority.

The Consortium **provides services for developing business plans**, for services organisation and management, for staff training and for the creation of cooperative enterprises networks, in order to support and reinforce the development of **women social cooperatives**.

Two good practices follow below.

Firstly, the Consortium facilitated a debate among cooperatives members, with the aim of bringing out the most urgent needs in this sector.

These are the main issues that emerged:

**Motivation/self-confidence:** women are so concerned with their communities that the aim of improving life conditions become the mission of the enterprise itself. The strong sense of civil responsibility and the interaction with the local community are the engine for innovation and for finding common solutions to difficult and challenging situations.

**Training:** education and training are important for all workers, but especially for those who have professional experiences in care services but not a specific diploma. The implementation of specific training interventions for “retraining and upgrading of the personnel” with the aim to increase the quality of services and to ensure our consumers.

**Access to credit:** the detection of funding programmes for the promotion of social economy, supported not only by banks and financial institutions, but also by foundations, local entities or even enterprises engaged in corporate social responsibility. Investments and opportunity to access to credit from which women cooperative member may benefit directly.

**Generational change:** there is a urgent need to train future leaders and to support the establishment of new social cooperatives founded by young women.

It is no coincidence that these issues **are also at the core of women empowerment programmes in developing countries:** these are indeed problems concerning all women who aspire to become entrepreneurs.

The second good practice concerns the need for training. The Consortium periodically organises **managerial training for** women cooperators in order to strengthen the cooperatives themselves. Moreover, in 2018 it launched a programme to **support young women in starting social cooperatives** by providing technical assistance on the creation of the cooperative, the elaboration of the business plan, members’ training and access to credit. Every cooperative will be accompanied by a senior social co-operator, who will offer her expertise. The aim is to support the creation of social cooperatives in inland areas at risk of depopulation, where it is necessary to meet the request for services arising from the community.

### A Lombard experience: an empowerment process

**Milano 6 l'Altro** is a project that involves many partners, among which the social cooperative *Spazio Aperto Servizi* (associated to the Consortium SIS Sistema Imprese Sociali) and the Municipality of Milan, within the programme “Welfare di Comunità e Innovazione Sociale” (Community Welfare and Social Innovation), launched by Fondazione Cariplo.

The goal of the programme is double: on the one hand, it aims at **supporting grass roots experimentations** through “**living workshops**” able to put into practice innovative approaches in governance, processes and services; on the other hand, it aims at **disseminating knowledge**, through the monitoring and the communication of the impacts of financed activities and the setting of a community debate to exchange skills and experiences but also the results of specific local interventions.

One of the “**living workshops**” is **Milano6 l'Altro**. It is an **empowerment journey for helping women back into the labour market, through the creation of new services for the community**. The project aims at activating women: through an introspective work on themselves and starting from the challenges of work-live balance, women can redraw their future and develop services and products that can be a solution not only to their individual problems but to the entire community. The starting point is to match **maternity and work**, in facti one woman out of four exits the labour market after her first child!

The women who accept this challenge, join a collective movement engaged in studying innovative qualitative solutions for helping families with care-loads, for promoting cheaper and shared quality solutions, such as **carer, the baby sitter of the condominium** and much more.

The methodology used in this process is the **design thinking, that mainly consists** in the elaboration of the constellation of talents a way to discover personal **strengths, inclinations** and interests. By recognising the **key characteristic of each participant** it is possible to cooperatively develop new ideas that can serve as an opportunity for women and as a response for urban families needs of reconciliation of work and family life.

**Women involved** in this empowerment process are **very different one from the other** in terms of nationality, age and life experiences; there are **Italian and foreign migrant women** who see Italy as the country where to start a new life as well as women that have been forced to abandon their studies or to leave their jobs.

They all share **the wish to start anew and be protagonist of their lives**.

### Gender-based communication: an innovative, democratic and inclusive path in Trentino

The association **DONNEINCOOPERAZIONE** (women in cooperation), established in **2015 in Trentino**, deals with issues linked to the **work-life balance and women employment**. It supports an equal governance within cooperatives and representative bodies, it promotes **training, innovation and corporate welfare** and it creates **networks among cooperative members**. The association addresses women members, administrators or employees in the cooperative, who want to enhance the efforts and the contribution of women in the Trentino cooperative movement. Moreover, by the actions of networking with Institutions and Associations it promotes an inclusive culture, enhancing the differences both at national and local level.

The association, based on **the importance of the role played by communication in cultural change processes**, has created the project “**GENERI DI COMUNICAZIONE**” (Types of communication) in order to encourage the adoption of a communication able to embrace and enhance gender differences. Role models for both women and men constantly and vigorously spring from the media, building a dominating social imaginary on gender stereotypes. According to many researches, **the depiction of women in Italian media** is neither realistic nor plural, but **disrespectful to the women dignity**, with the risk of reinforcing the existing prejudices and discriminations.

TV programs often show vulgar images in which women's body are considered objects of sexual desire, consumption and seduction. There is no space for the woman who work, study and is committed in social and cultural activities: there is never an all-round representation of the woman universe.

Therefore, the association has created a **path of study, analysis and implementation of actions** in this field, which is considered strategic to foster the representation of gender differences and promote a change towards an equal and inclusive culture. The association, through the project “Types of Communication” aims to look in more depth at **gender-based communication**, considering the media as a lever for change in the **management of relationships within and outside the organisations**. It considers urgent the need to create a space for reflection and for raising awareness on the importance of a change regarding the **use of language and images in all media**, through the respect and the **enhancement of gender differences** as well as the overcoming of gender stereotypes.

Moreover, the association elaborated some “**guidelines for a communication respecting gender differences**” that has been adopted by the Trentino regional system. The project has been developed within a partner network that involved the Association, the Cooperatives and the Società Italiana Letterate SIL (Italian Society of women writers), disseminating good practices.

### Goals of the project

- 1) Promoting the use of gender-based language and communication
- 2) Raising awareness on the effective women participation in the labour market and on their professional contributions in the Trentino cooperative movement.
- 3) Promoting, through media and comms, a diversified and more realistic image of the possibilities and the inclinations of women and men within the professional context and within society.
- 4) Promoting a gender friendly culture, able to enhance gender differences and to take into account the plurality of women identities and values.
- 5) Overcoming the hegemonic gender stereotypes and finding new non-discriminating, flexible and plural models to spread
- 6) Providing competencies and instruments for a critical approach to women examples offered by the media, by using “gender lenses” for understanding contents.
- 7) Fostering the creation of a professional identity free from gender stereotypes

### Actions carried out

In the first stage, two training sessions on gender-based communication have been held with the aim to **provide instruments of critical understanding of the examples of men and women within media** and to raise awareness on the fundamental role of language and on all media to achieve gender equality. The first session focused on the relationship between the image of women and the media. The second one focused on the **language issue**: Italian language is often bearer of a chauvinist and asymmetric view of the world.

The second stage was centred on the **creation of a working group for the planning of a joint workshop**. The working group has collected and organised working material (mails, newsletters, articles, images, videos, slides...) to be used in the workshop stage. The joint workshop developed into the elaboration of a concrete output: the **“guidelines for a communication respectful of gender differences”**.

The outlook of this second stage has been to create a platform to spread the results of the project and to disseminate **good practices**. The guidelines have been launched in a **Press Conference** distributed to all member cooperatives and broadcasted through the magazine Cooperazione Trentina, Cooperazione tra Consumatori and the website.

### Good practices developed within the Trentino Cooperation

The issue of language and gender-based communication became part of the political reflections within the context of Trentino Cooperation few years ago and for this reason, we can identify some good practices that the system has already consolidated.

**Newsletters and institutional communications of the Federezione Trentina della Cooperazione** (Trentino Federation of Cooperation) became attentive to gender roles and differences.

Some Statutes have been rewritten by taking into account the use of a language aware of gender differences. The association has provide advice through its office at the Federation.

The **Cooperazione Trentina website** and the **magazines published by it** focus on the issue of communication aware of gender differences beyond having helped the spread of the guidelines for a communication respecting gender differences<sup>79</sup>.

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<sup>79</sup> For further information: [www.donneincooperazione.it](http://www.donneincooperazione.it)

### BOX 3.3 - What “gender” of language do Italians speak?

Taking into account gender differences when speaking or writing help to promote an equal, inclusive and no-discriminating culture.

Italian is a language that distinguishes feminine and masculine nouns and inflects words by gender<sup>80</sup>. The problem of gender arises especially when talking about professional roles and positions of power.

The issue has been discussed in both official and unofficial documents and in manuals of style, which exhort not to use a sexist language. The use of an gender friendly lexicon consider an equal opportunity, for both men and women, to be named considering their genders and to use the language for avoiding the belittlement of one of the two genders with words.

In 1987, Alma Sabatini<sup>81</sup> wrote, for the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers - Equal Opportunities Department, a text called “Recommendations for a non-sexist use of the Italian language”. She exhorted to use feminine words such as *Ministra*, *chirurga*, *rettrice* or *avvocata*, which are the feminine nouns for respectively Minister, surgeon, dean and lawyer. Some people consider this specification to be unnecessary. However the medium is the message and the style used does not only regard the aesthetic but also the ethics. The use of some words influences interpretation and thought; many experimental psycholinguistic studies show it: “the use of masculine generics can create male bias in people imagery therefore it is neither generic nor neutral” (Orsola Fornara). I.e. if masculine generics is used for indicating architects, it does not call to mind women and men, but only men. To **change the words means also to slowly change thoughts linked to them**. German Chancellor Angela Merkel knows it: when she was appointed Chancellor (Kanzler is the masculine noun for it in German), during her first press conference, she specified to journalists that she wanted to be called with the feminine word of Chancellor (Kanzlerin).

Some words gradually vanished from the common use of the Italian language, because considered offensive and they have been replaced with more politically correct ones. For this reason, although the feminine generics forms may now sound strange, as time passes, their “aesthetic discomfort” will disappear while their ethics will remain. Words may be bridges or walls, may create distances or clarify problems. Being aware of the meaning and the weight of each word is key for a clear communication. It is not easy, but it is necessary!

<sup>80</sup> Example in Italian: *Una donna è stanca, un uomo è stanco.* (A woman is tired, a man is tired) the last letter of the adjective changes according to the gender of the noun.

<sup>81</sup> She was an Italian essayist, linguist, teacher and feminist activist.

## 4. INSTRUMENTS





The **WomeNpowerment group** is composed of **20 women** cooperators, working in Confcooperative's offices, either in the **Commission of Women Cooperative Managers** or **Coopermondo**. **The group** gathers periodically in order to discuss issues linked to women empowerment and to jointly develop useful instruments for enhancing gender equality.

During these meetings, the group has developed innovative methods and instruments for analyzing **contexts, groups, social and individual relationships as well as habits**, with the aim to foster a change or make women ready for it. Instruments provide **means to monitor** Italian cooperatives and to discover different ways of promoting gender equality.

This chapter offers an introduction to these instruments. They are continuously upgraded and improved, therefore the complete access to these resources is possible by contacting members of the group, the **Commission of Women Cooperative Managers** or **Coopermondo**, in order to guaranty continuity and a shared working method.

### Box 4.1 - Key words as creative instrument

The first instrument that has been used to shape the project and the handbook has been a key words **brainstorming** that developed into a matrix of fundamental concepts to understand.

This is a **working methodology commonly used by** the Commission that aimed at creating an **archive of ideas and issues** to discuss within the project and in future activities.

One question was at the beginning of the reflection: “What is the important element to gather from our personal and professional experiences as women cooperators in order to raise a full awareness on gender equality?”. The result is a list of definitions and ideas representing the keywords of this handbook.

Many actions need to be implemented in order to achieve a full awareness on gender issues. The first one is definitely **research and training** to learn **good practices** already experienced by other women. Then, it is necessary to find a **local network** to develop **relationships** and to build the **trust** among the group, the basis to start any activity together. The creation of a **cooperative enterprise** becomes the conclusive result of a long journey paving the way for a new **economic empowerment**, which is fundamental for ensuring a full **aware independence**.

According to the WomeNpowerment group, two key concepts need to evolve during the path toward the full self-awareness: the **empowerment** and the **leadership**.

## THE EMPORWEMENT



## THE LEADERSHIP

## 4.1 GENDER APPROACHES IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

The group elaborated a matrix, adapted from the C.O Moser proposal (1993), that summarised **the evolution of gender approaches in international development cooperation**.

It is a concise instrument, which helps to establish an overview of the issues analysed in chapter 2 and that may be used in a **faster and easier way** by all.

The matrix analyses **the different gender approaches**: the welfare approach, Women in Development – WID (equity, anti-poverty and efficiency approaches), the Women and Development, Gender and Development – GAD (Empowerment and Mainstreaming).

These approaches are summarised according to their theoretical references, the **historical period**, the purpose established, **an analysis of women needs** and the **gender involvement** in each of them.

## 4.2 ITALIAN LAW ON WOMEN RIGHTS

Among the instruments developed and made available, there is an exhaustive **scheme of laws** that have been regulating, **from 1900 up to today**, the social, economic and working life of **Italian women**.

The reference to the institutional situation is very useful because the set of rules governing human interactions influences and can facilitate evolutionary structures toward gender equality; on the contrary, it can make inequalities more marked. In both cases, it has a direct or indirect impact on the life of all, creating a different culture and system of relationships, more or less productive.

The **laws of a country are the mirror of the social values** of their society, fostering or not inclusive rights and common responsibility. These are the starting point to know who we are and to make it understood by others. A technical approach to find differences and similarities, from which is understood the “state of health” of a country.

The group considered strategic to have the possibility to access these basic concepts.

### 4.3 GENDER ANALYSIS

Gender analysis is a research instrument able to capture **the socio-economic situation** as well as **power relationships concerning women** within a certain community.

Through a gender analysis, the **imbalances and the dynamics of conflict or submission within a society** can be discovered. Understanding how project activities could influence gender balances is crucial in order to **provide strategies for gender empowerment** and for **minimising the (social) costs of change**.

Furthermore, gender analysis **is fundamental to identify the goals (and limits)** to be established within a project and to better establish **gender mainstreaming policies** to make the experiences of women and men an integral part of the project.

Since this is **sensitive information**, concerning power relationships within families and the society, the ethnographic methodology is an excellent one for reaching an exhaustive overview. The **participant observation** is a research strategy not only based on the observation of events, but also providing involvement and interaction by the researcher with the subjects studied. Therefore, it is very important to seek a direct dialogue with the people also in private moments.

This is evidently not possible in every context therefore it might be necessary to resort to **focus groups and interviews**, where it is fundamental to be sure that the women feel free to talk. Moreover, it may be considered to carry out a gender analysis during the **enlarged meetings of the group**: however, there is the risk of receiving incomplete answers due to the participation of people who may condition the answers.

The instruments used during the gender analysis are many. The already mentioned, **Caroline Moser**<sup>82</sup>, for instance, has developed a scheme to understand the division of labour within the household. By asking, "Who does what?", the researcher introduces the idea of a triple role of women, who daily carry out **productive work** (for example the agricultural), **re-productive work** (housework, children and elderly care) and **community managing work** (participation in groups or organisations of events of the community). While women carry out all these work during the day, men are less involved in housework. The **lack of an economic and social recognition of the reproductive work**, which is always taken for granted, is often the **root of many gender discriminations**.

The group WomeNpowerment, on the basis of several methods and instruments, has developed guidelines for gender analysis implemented in projects in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Colombia and Mozambique by some participants of the group.

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<sup>82</sup> Moser C. O. (1993), *Gender Planning in the Third World. Theory, practice and training*. Routledge: London

## 4.4 STEREOTYPE ANALYSIS

**Stereotype** is a very **simplified, socially shared and spread belief**, a pre-vented idea. This is a **preconception, not based on the direct experience**, but scarcely changeable. A stereotype is a **wrong because incomplete vision** of a fact. It may be true in part but it is surely false if generalised. The negative consequence of the stereotype is that it **leads to a prejudice**, that is scarcely changeable and can lead to **discrimination**.

**Stereotypes of women** exist since ancient times. The links between **woman** and **nature**, i.e. believing that the woman is **hysterical** because unstable as nature, the mystification of the wonderful **woman that seduces and then destroys**, the obligation to a woman that has to take **care of the house and family** are all stereotypes that in different historical times became mass discrimination.

Therefore, a **stereotype analysis** can help to **identify** where the power is **hidden and to design some gender empowerment actions to be taken**.

These are some areas of interest that should be taken into account to disclose gender stereotypes:

1. **Education within family:** to reflect with parents on the consequences that some discriminating behaviour may have on the growth of their sons and daughters.
2. **Education within school:** to find out which subjects or actions are not accessible to girls at school and the obstacles that limit girls' access to education.
3. **Sex education:** to find the most appropriate environment and instrument to talk and reflect on taboos linked to sex, sexuality and reproductive rights.
4. **Religious education:** how and how much local religion influences in the creation of stereotypes and discrimination of others.
5. **Language:** analysing terms and words, the use of masculine and feminine nouns and thinking about how important it is to create the imaginary in our mind.
6. **Fairy tales:** analysing the most popular fairy tales among girls and boys to understand how they may generate stereotypes in child imaginary.
7. **Music:** analysing the messages conveyed by commercial music on the role of women and men.
8. **Advertisement and images:** to reflect on the gender models offered everyday by advertisement through images and to provide instruments to recognize them.
9. **Television and soap opera:** to analyse the stereotypes disseminated by TV programs and by the soap opera, mainly watched by women.

After having analysed, it is important that the group establishes concrete goals in addition to consider the different moments of auditing to monitor the path and to assess the achievement of a real change.

## THE WOMENPOWERMENT GROUP

**Camilla Carabini** - Coopermondo. Economic anthropologist, she has been working in the field of international development cooperation for four years and she deals with visibility, research, cooperative training and gender issues.

**Desiree Degiovanni** - Confcooperative Nazionale, Department of policy coherence for development. Sociologist. She has been working with the **Commission of Women Cooperative Managers** for eight years, following many paths and the activities in evolution, research training representation and women business. She takes part in the continuous co-creation of relationships.

**Alessandra Brogliatto** - Confcooperative Piemonte Nord, Head of Unit of Research, Training, Equal Opportunities and development Cooperation from 2000. Master in pedagogy. She is contact persone in Confcooperative Piemonte, for the National **Commission of Women Cooperative Managers** and coordinator of the Regional (Piedmont) **Commission of Women Cooperative Managers**. Woman cooperatror from 1995 she is CEO of the Consorzio Il Nodo c.s.c.s.

**Carla Calabrese** - CONFCOOPERATIVE PUGLIA. Married to Michelangelo and a mother of 3 sons. Master in Law, she works in a social cooperative dealing with professional training and social designing, kinder-gardens, and recreational and educational centres. Vice-president of Confcooperative Puglia and contact point for Confcooperative Foggia in the female entrepreneurship Commission within the CCIAA in Foggia.

**Nicoletta Corvi** - Confcooperative Emilia Romagna. She is Director of Confcooperative Piacenza, her expertise areas are: organizational development and management of change in social cooperatives, training and supervision of social operators, mentoring in empowerment processes of women and youth. Trained in pedagogy, she is also a management consultant. She is always ready to change course and prove herself again.

**Simonetta Fedrizzi** - Federazione Trentina della Cooperazione. Jurist and expert in Gender Policies in the employment market, for eleven years she has been working as project manager at the Cooperazione Trentina and she deals with research, training and consulting for cooperatives. She is the President of the Commissione provincial Pari Opportunità.

**Annalisa Gambarrota** - Cooperativa RicercAzione. From 1997 she is member of the cooperative, she deals with project designing and training oriented to youth and social fragility. She coordinates and implements projects on job or education orientation, empowerment workshops, cooperative entrepreneurship and start-up promotion.

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**Anna Manca** - Confcooperative Liguria. Vicepresident of Genova Regional Union of Confcooperative. Women cooperator from 25 years. From 2016, she is National coordinator for the Commission of Women Cooperative Managers. She is president of a social cooperative since 11 years. For the Consorzio Sociale Agorà she dealt with project design and training. From 2006 to 2016 she was director of the Research Centre on Social Economy promoted by Confcooperative, Legacoop and AGCI in Liguria Region.

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**Rossella Sacco** - Confcooperative Lombardia, executive member in Spazio Aperto Servizi, committed to family policies and to the support of social cohesion, social housing and per le politiche della famiglia e in percorsi di sostegno alla tutela, all'abitare, alla coesione sociale. Secretary of the Third Sector Forum in Milan. Councillor in Federsolidarietà and contact person for the Federation in the **Commission of Women Cooperative Managers**. With her husband and their two daughters they carry on a welcoming project for vulnerable minors.

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Together with:

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**Greta Zubani** - Comunità Fraternità - Società Cooperativa Sociale Onlus

**Elisa Rapetti** - Centro per la Formazione alla Solidarietà Internazionale, Trento

**Elena Gallinari** - Comunità Fraternità - Società Cooperativa Sociale Onlus

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