



**COOPERAZIONE  
INTERNAZIONALE**



## **NOTEBOOKS OF ARMADILLA SCS**

**International cooperation and territorial partnerships.  
Making system: the role of Italian cooperatives.**

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## Introduction

Armadilla is a social cooperative committed primarily to international cooperation. ([www.armadilla.coop](http://www.armadilla.coop))

It also carries out training and information activities on the issues of the 2030 agenda proposed by the United Nations, for the defense of human rights and for the achievement of the 17 objectives for sustainable human development: <https://www.unric.org/it/agenda-2030>

In this context, these Notebooks want to contribute to disseminating information, critical analysis and possible answers to the priority problems that are faced among the students and the public opinion that Armadilla addresses.

The collection of all the Notebooks from 2015 to the present can be found at: <http://armadilla.coop/quaderni/>

**In this Booklet we present a reflection and operational proposals to inform and enhance the role of the cooperative system in international cooperation.**

**The challenge of Italy's international cooperation is to build an effective system that coordinates the different actors to achieve shared goals.**

Innovation concerns the involvement of entities that in the past had a marginal role: among these, cooperatives can be the bearers of a new proposal for participation and innovation of the productive system in the cooperating countries that Italian cooperation has indicated as priorities. Starting again from the territories and from the rich experiences that have historically worked. Propose territorial partnerships as a new way of doing cooperation. In fact, territorial cooperation wants to represent a renewed way of conceiving international solidarity and equitable and sustainable development among peoples, based on participation, on the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, on strengthening the capacities and powers of decentralized actors and in particular the most disadvantaged social groups. Starting points are the territory and the commitment of solidarity of citizens, public administration, NGOs, local associations and groups, trade unions, cooperatives, businesses, training institutions, etc. All the actors involved are given equal dignity and responsibility, aiming to achieve shared objectives: reducing the phenomena that produce marginalization and poverty, promoting the extension of human rights to groups that are excluded and responsibility in behavior and personal choices community (respect for the environment, cultural diversity, awareness of belonging to global processes). In territorial cooperation the different actors involved share a framework agreement between two defined territorial areas that correspond to levels of political-administrative decentralization of the state. In other words, it is a question of agreeing framework agreements between partner territories (inter-territorial pacts) in which all the subjects of the territories involved are called to design and carry out interventions in synergy with each other.

Cooperation between territories is an opportunity to reconstruct new individual and collective identities, thanks to a meeting with another perspective, with other realities with other struggles and other contexts. The objective of this process is to construct a complex network of exchanges for the construction of a plural world, in clear contrast with the dominant culture that instead goes in the opposite direction of totalizing homologation. To facilitate this exchange, a new way of doing international cooperation can be understood as building laboratories where different cultures and experiences are compared, solutions and alternatives are tested that can also be used to unblock situations of more difficult territories with more serious problems and situations. and compromised. The cooperation between territories can reconnect the local societies (without distinction between North and South) between them in a non-hierarchical way, but with horizontal relations able to recognize and respect the different "development styles". The innovative contribution of this practice is in fact to put at the center the capacities of the local communities to organize their own growth by reconstructing the memory of their identity (the territorial heritage), to relate to other identities, through the co-operation, that is working together for the construction of a complex network of exchanges in a plural world. In the wisdom of places it is a question of recognizing and knowing how to value the competences present in the territories in whatever latitude they are. The challenge therefore becomes to assign equal dignity to all competences and this also entails respect and openness for the differences and abandonment of prejudices. **We need a private sector that invests and contributes to building a sustainable economy even in the poorest countries. We need a private sector that knows how to dialogue, collaborate and, with its technical-sectorial knowledge, make itself complementary to the experience and action of NGOs and civil society organizations that already know the context of local societies. Many organizations for international cooperation look at the business model developed by the cooperative movement, as it combines solidarity principles and entrepreneurial efficiency. The value of mutuality, of doing business while respecting participatory and solidarity methods combined with efficiency are the capital of the history of Italian cooperatives that are increasingly involved in the international sector.** What motivates the cooperatives also in this scenario is the search for new solidarity business spaces, ie the structuring of relations aimed at spreading the culture and the development model centered on the cooperative enterprise, contributing to the strengthening of the private sector (especially the movements cooperatives of partner countries) and local development in the poorest areas of the world.

## 1. Making system to be effective

The Italian law on international cooperation, the n. 125/2014 recognizes and values different actors with the aim of creating an effective system to reach the 17 sustainable development goals of the 2030 agenda at a global level. In this context, the challenge of

coordinating the third sector system with the business world (cooperative and private) is one of the aspects to consider. Article 2 of the law states that: "Italy's action in the sphere of development cooperation is aimed at populations, civil organizations and associations, the private sector, national institutions and local administrations of partner countries, identified consistently with the principles shared within the European Union and international organizations of which Italy is a part." And in Article 17, paragraph 4: The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (...) "Promotes partnerships with private parties for the implementation of specific initiatives; can carry out initiatives financed by private subjects". The Organizations that make up the Alliance of Italian Cooperatives - AGCI, Confcooperative and Legacoop - in setting their commitment to a model of inclusive, participatory and democratic economic development, have always paid attention to the international scene, firmly adhering since from their respective foundations, to the International Cooperative Alliance - ICA, a global institution of the cooperative movement.

**Cooperative companies, rooted in the territory, centered on the person rather than on profit, aimed at satisfying the needs of members and users, favor sustainable human development, socio-economic cohesion and inclusive growth all over the world. Cooperative companies make a decisive contribution to the achievement of dignified employment and food security even in areas that are particularly poor and afflicted with endemic diseases; moreover, being based on the active participation of the members, they are an essential tool for the empowerment of people, especially women and young people. Cooperative organizations have always paid particular attention to the training of their members and, in many communities, they are an essential resource for adult education and for the maintenance of community schools. In many parts of the world, especially in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, the cooperative model has been a tool for post-conflict reconciliation. Italian cooperatives, either independently or through their representative organizations, are actively involved in international development cooperation and characterize their contribution to projects by combining their specific technical and sectorial expertise with the experiences of NGOs and other public and private institutions in this sector.**

Recently, to give an idea of the initiatives that the associated cooperatives have always carried out in the field of international development cooperation alongside the many Italian and European NGOs, the organizations of the Alliance have drawn up, with the help of ten other European cooperative organizations, a Compendium that collects a first mapping of the projects in this sector and presents the contribution of cooperatives to the fight against poverty for sustainable economic and social development.

**The data showed that from 2008 to today, during and despite the crisis, a representative number of Alliance cooperatives has implemented over 130 international development cooperation projects, with some good practices in the areas of food security (agriculture and fisheries sectors - Mediterranean, Africa and Latin America), cooperative credit (Latin America, West Africa), health and welfare services (Eastern Europe and the Balkans), humanitarian emergency (Haiti and Sri Lanka), responsible tourism and trade fair and equitable: the financial dimension of these projects represents an important signal to the**

**fight against poverty, to which, in the reference period, it contributed with over 59 million Euro.**

The characterization of international development cooperation projects carried out by the associates in the Alliance of Italian Cooperatives are based on cooperative values and principles: solidarity, democracy, equality, equity. Resilience and the ability to build partnerships for territorial development. The projects are for the most part self-financed or financed on the network of relations that the cooperatives establish in the territory in which they are established, playing an important economic and social role based on the principle of subsidiarity. *The International Cooperative Alliance -ICA -, a global institution founded in 1895, represents 267 organizations from 96 countries worldwide, representing over 1 billion members and a source of employment and social inclusion for 100 million people.*

*The cooperatives promote and manage actions that achieve the synthesis between solidarity principles and technical know-how with the ultimate goals of job creation, local economic development from business activities and empowerment of the people involved. The activities are organized in terms of technical assistance, training, capacity and institutional building with public and private foreign organizations interested in the Italian cooperative model, which is increasingly asked to provide a consolidated multi-sector experience to foster possible exchanges of experiences and applications on local development processes. The issue of direct management of savings and credit flows by local communities is a lever that can be very powerful to give real prospects for growth and sustainable progress to countries, referred to as developing countries (PVS), rich in natural resources but often they end up in the hands of the countries of the North of the planet, multinational corporations, large investment banks.*

**The cooperative movement believes that it is fundamental to succeed in reversing the flows of wealth, maintaining on the territory the wealth (and savings) that that same territory is able to produce.** The tool is represented by the community credit institutions, the cooperative banks, the popular finance: local banks in favor of the promotion and support of entrepreneurship in a logic of self-help and self-centered development. A consolidated model of success in Europe, which can be proposed at any latitude. **Over the last few years we have been witnessing a renewed interest in the Italian cooperative experience of international organizations for sustainable development.** In particular, the interest is aimed at the Italian cooperative model as an entrepreneurial and associative experience that can contribute to identifying concrete answers to the great problems that they are facing in the poor countries of the planet - work, inclusion and social cohesion, access to goods and services, development sustainable socio-economic. The relationships between Italian Cooperatives and cooperation in the world are based on institutional relations with cooperative organizations from various countries, in a multilateral framework - within the framework provided by the International Cooperative Alliance, a global network of cooperative representation - 222 member organizations representing 86 countries through the transfer of associative and organizational know-how, exchanges, development cooperation and entrepreneurial projects, which see the direct commitment of some important cooperative structures and companies. The activities that have been carried out over the years or that are currently under construction, are part of our international activity

that seeks to combine the strengthening of cooperativism in various countries with the promotion of opportunities for collaboration between companies and systems cooperative. We are network builders and part of a large network, that of international cooperativism and we believe that business opportunities abroad should be combined with positive effects on communities and local areas.

The challenges that the modern cooperative movement is facing are multiple, and concern both the major issues linked to the development of the respective countries and those more strictly connected to the strengthening of cooperative enterprises: cooperative legislation, the strengthening of the competitiveness of cooperatives also through the 'regional, vertical and horizontal integration; innovation, capitalization, the role of cooperative principles and values as distinctive elements of competitiveness, governance, transparency and social and environmental responsibility, training, young people, equal opportunities policies.

## 2. Projects in the world

There are hundreds of projects in which there is a direct participation of the Italian cooperative system. The World Cooperative Monitor, curated by Euricse and the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), shows that the 300 largest cooperatives contribute to global growth for a total turnover of over 2 trillion dollars a year. According to CENSIS data, in Italy, the contribution generated by cooperatives to national GDP is 8%. International cooperation and the cooperative world represent a binomial with enormous potential for development. The cooperatives offer a solution to the urgency of combining economic development, environmental protection and social equity thanks to their characteristics: attention to the community and the territory, the principle of mutuality and democracy.

**Particular is the role assumed by Coopermondo, Confcooperative NGO, which aims to create opportunities for active involvement for members and the structures of the cooperative system in sustainable development in the world.** It brings together 113 projects carried out by cooperatives adhering to Confcooperative and, through the European network of Cooperatives Europe Development Platform (CEDP), is linked to over 400 projects with over 500 partners worldwide.

**Here are some of the interventions made by Italian cooperatives in the international system:**

In Togo a project is underway, coordinated by Coopermondo, which aims to train at least 30 human resources, including 20 young officials from the FAIEJ, the Ministry Fund at the Togo Base and 10 APES members, destined to guarantee and promote the development of the local cooperative movement. Key will be the transfer of know-how in terms of strategic-cooperative analysis of business risk and design of sustainable financial structures.

Rural development in Sierra Leone. The project aims to promote the application of cooperative principles for rural development through: the training of farmers and

development agents; the introduction of modern, more productive and sustainable agricultural techniques; the increase in land available for existing crops and new productions; the improvement of the quality and quantity of the productions for a better placement to the nearby markets.

Campesina Microfinance in Ecuador: The project, active for 10 years, is based on the direct collaboration between Federcasse, Federation of Italian Cooperative Credit, and Codesarrollo-Cooperative Desarrollo de los Pueblos (the body, part of the Fepp-Ecuadorian Populorum Progressio Fund, which associates the more than 800 small village banks scattered over the Andes) sanctioned by a cultural and financial cooperation agreement signed in 2002 and renewed in October 2012, during the ninth edition of the "Cooperative Credit Mission in Ecuador".

In Tanzania, partnership with Granarolo, born after the inauguration of a milk plant built by the NGO CEFA in the town of Njombe, which took place in February 2007, after a preparation and construction work that lasted about 5 years. It was in fact a matter of preparing the supply base, through a work of prophylaxis selection of the existing dairy cows and the establishment of a specific cattle register of the contributors, in order to avoid any infectious germ in milk, as unfortunately it was in practice. The Njombe Milk Factory, a real company that buys milk and turns it into cheeses, yoghurts and pasteurized milk, has been established for management. Milk collection has increased from 700 liters a day to 4000 today.

The Legacoop project for Haiti, born in the aftermath of the earthquake that destroyed the island on 12 January 2010, was achieved thanks to the contributions of cooperatives, members and employees. The partners for the realization of the project were several Italian non-governmental organizations that were already operating in Haiti before the earthquake. Small rural producers have been supported by strengthening the agricultural cooperative experience (80,000 indirect beneficiaries). The project then contributed to the construction by Doctors Without Borders of a mobile hospital in the east of the capital Port-au-Prince with 108 beds.

Armadilla, a social cooperative, in the last ten years has favored the realization of a process of territorial partnerships in Lebanon, Syria and Central America which involved various Italian cooperative entities. The OPEN Group social cooperative of Bologna ([www.opengroup.eu](http://www.opengroup.eu)), the ASPHI Foundation (<http://www.asphi.it/>), the association Annulliamo the distance, the INAIL prosthesis center participated and actively participate in this process. of Vigorso di Budrio and the universities of Bologna and Modena and Reggio Emilia (UNIMORE).

The areas of intervention of Armadilla, in Syria, using the categories proposed by the United Nations are: *Food security, Health, Protection and Education*, with particular attention to the sector of people with disabilities. In Lebanon and Central America in collaboration with Legacoop, (El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica) the integrated local development sector with particular attention to social, educational, agricultural production and environmental protection issues.

In conclusion, in the face of the great world transformations referred to, to the contradictions of globalization, to the redefinition of the economic balance between continents and systems of market, to the reallocation of world power, to the changing distribution of wealth and poverty and the institutional political phenomena that all these processes have started, **must consolidate the representation of cooperative citizens in the international cooperative movement and confirm the founding principles of a renewed compass role to achieve new economic and social progress, expanding solidarity actions and contributing to the achievement of the 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda over the next ten years.**