

Abstract for Paper sent for

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Building and Strengthening Communities: The Social Economy
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Thematic Streams:

The Social Economy and governance

- Ethics, social responsibility and the Social Economy

Topic: Bridging the Missing Links in Primary Cooperatives in India

Information required for the Submissions:

Title: **Bridging the Missing Links in Primary Cooperatives in India**

Keywords: Micro Level=Primary Cooperative Level
Macro Level=Federations Level
Member Development=Any initiatives in terms of education,
training, social activities towards development of members.

Stream: **The Social Economy and governance**
Ethics, social responsibility and the Social Economy

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Corporate-led globalisation has essentially posed formidable challenges for the cooperatives to have collective interventions and social innovations to fill the social void created by market forces. But before they reach out to the community in general, they should first develop the cooperative community, reinforce the lost identity so as to integrate into community cooperative. As a central component of Social economy, they need to prove their social relevance and demonstrate convincingly what they are defined for. A cooperative being the manifestation of values and principles, there is an ethical imperative of practicing the same and has prime responsibility of developing the members leading to effective cooperative governance (Taimni, 1998). Preponderance of commercial success to the total exclusion of association concept has further stagnated the cooperative culture in developing the core capital (members), which is the revenue producing asset and scarcer than any other resources (Sudha, 2004). “If co-ops neglect their associational needs, the consuming public can no longer distinguish a co-op from any other business”(Craig, 1995). Hence it is imperative for the cooperatives to revive the commitment to nurture members and cooperative ideology that are integral to strengthen social economy.

In the primary cooperatives in India that house majority of poor and marginalised members, member development is relegated to the backseat. In reality, it is this section that would gain more from cooperative action but know least about its potentialities in realising their own aspiration and socio-economic amelioration (Casselman, 1952; Taimni, 1993; Dwivedi, 1997). Member development through education and other developmental activities is being undertaken at the macro level for the past four decades. But they could cover only a fraction of the total cooperative community. Development of members should be the responsibility of primary units but they function devoid of any

activities for the same. It is now widely held that member development initiatives at the macro level are not very effective and are virtually missing at the micro level. Bridging this missing links is paramount in making cooperatives join the mainstream in a social economy.

It is in this backdrop, the present paper discusses the relevance of member development as ethical and social responsibility towards cooperative governance, and provides an outline of micro level endeavours towards the cause both in global and Indian scenario. An empirical survey conducted for the purpose elucidates the effect of primary level initiatives on members, influencing the social economy. The study is both explorative and descriptive in nature. Methods in the data collection are primary, secondary and field observation while the methods of data analysis are descriptive and statistical inferences: scaling technique, percentages, averages, chi-square, correlation and non-parametric statistics. The empirical study is confined to the primary cooperatives working in eight sectors in five different States in India.

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