

Co-operative Assistance Network Limited

Social Policy and Social Impact Measurement Policy

Context

CAN is seeking to develop social impact measurement from a co-operative perspective. Conventionally, the unit of measurement of social impact often relates to the individual. So, for example, a programme that delivers health benefits will measure the number of people whose health is improved by the social output of that programme and a training programme will measure the number of people successfully trained. But is “social” an appropriate word in this context? Societies may or may not be created or improved by these impacts, and even if they are, that is not what is measured. A count of the number of beneficiaries of a programme is not a measure of increased social cohesion or the resilience of communities. Thus, what is usually referred to as “social impact” is not really social impact, it is an aggregation of individual impacts.

The forces that bind people together and create societies are not so easily measured. The most important of these is the holistic principle that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. This is the fundamental principle behind co-operatives. People do not form co-operatives just to get economies of scale. They do so because they know that by working together and pooling their resources they can achieve much more than they can by working alone. This is the basis not only of co-operatives but of all civilisation.

By focusing on individual (more easily measured) impacts, co-operatives and social enterprises risk becoming wedded to an understanding more akin to the charity sector than it is to the co-operative sector. Like a charity, a social enterprise sets out to improve the lives of individuals external to that organisation. Despite its name, the social enterprise movement does not explicitly seek to create or improve social cohesion. That is not to say that it does not have that effect, just that when it does, that is not what is measured.

Sometimes, what is recorded as positive social impact by charities and social enterprises actually reduces social cohesion and resilience when, for example, communities or individuals become dependent upon the continued provision of free or subsidised food or money.

Direction of Travel

We recognise that if we are to measure our social impact we must first define what we regard as a good direction of travel for society before we try to measure the extent to which our work contributes to progress. We

intend this vision to guide what we do and how we do it.

We define this direction of travel (or change to be brought about) as towards:

- Socially cohesive, inclusive and resilient communities
- More wealth held in common ownership
- More equal distribution of wealth, income and power between individuals and between communities
- People in aggregate:
 - Enjoy ever improving health and happiness
 - With access to:
 - Work of personal and social value
 - High quality and affordable co-operative housing
 - Non-exploitative, mutually owned, financial services.

Policy Objectives

CAN's work will contribute to these outcomes (or contribute to establishing the preconditions necessary for them) through:

- Assisting in the development and sustainability of (front-line) organisations which have as their goal to contribute directly to one, some or all of these
- Assisting such organisations to maintain and improve their democratic governance, social ownership and social impact
- Assisting in the development and sustainability of wider and greater systems of support
- Improving collaborative working with organisations and individuals with similar objectives
- Developing and continuously improving the quality, accessibility and usage of analytical tools, training products, and delivery mechanisms which can be used by CAN workers, collaborating organisations and (front-line) organisations themselves.

Social Impact

The extent to which we are successful in doing this we consider to be our social impact.

We must recognise that we are but one player in a large endeavour and our impact may not be decisive in bringing about the change we are committed to. None-the-less, as a player that has proven to be most resilient over time and punched above its weight in terms of, for instance, the development of tools used in the trade, we have a responsibility both to continue to pursue our mission to the best of our ability and also to constantly measure and consider the value of this impact.

Social Impact Measurement

CAN will develop feedback systems that measure this impact over time.

We do at least measure outputs that we have designed to contribute meaningfully to the generation of this impact. CAN will develop and continuously improve a matrix of outputs, account for the number which we generate each year and report them as evidence supporting our Social Impact Report. These will include:

- Legal registrations completed
- Secondary Rule Sets developed / revised
- Governance audits / reports delivered
- Enterprises supported by direct delivery of secretariat support
- Society / Company Secretaries trained for their role
- Directors trained for their role
- Legal structures reviewed / amended
- Business plans developed / revised
- Development Needs Analysis reports delivered
- Business Planners / BP Guardians trained for their role
- Vision or mission statements developed or enhanced
- Social Accounts systems developed / revised
- Social Accounts Guardians trained for their role
- Internal Social Accounts Auditors trained for their role
- Capital raised (external)
- Enterprises supported by direct delivery of accountancy support
- Finance Management systems developed / revised
- Treasurers / Finance Directors trained for their role
- Internal Financial Accounts Auditors trained for their role
- Member / Community Share Issues assisted
- HRD system developed / revised
- Enterprises supported by direct delivery of HR support
- HR Managers trained for their role
- Environmental Accounts systems developed / enhanced
- Environmental Strategy Managers trained for their role
- Internal Environmental Accounts Auditors trained for their role
- Quality systems developed / revised
- Quality Managers trained for their role
- Information Papers published on web site
- Development tools made available on web site
- Service on Board of another co-operative or social enterprise
- Financial support of another co-operative or social enterprise
- Pro bono support of another co-operative or social enterprise
- Equalities training delivered.

Auditing

We will ensure that all measures, accounts and accounting methodologies are subject to scrutiny by our Internal Audit team before publication and will be published with their commentaries attached.

Reporting

We will ensure that our social impact reports are published on our web site and invite peer review.

Continuous Improvement

We will consider all internal and external criticisms and seek to continuously improve our methodologies and presentation.

Responsible Department: Social and Environmental Accounts

Implementation Date: 07 December 2018

Review period: [not set]

Next review due: [currently under review]

Agreed at Directors Meeting of 18 September 2018

Passed at Members Meeting of 07 December 2018