“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”

Eleanor Roosevelt, United Nations, New York, 27 March 1958
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On the eve of our fiftieth anniversary – 30 December 2014 – we find ourselves in a fast changing world in which traditional development cooperation finds itself at a crossroads. Time, we felt, to reflect on our strategy and re-assess our policy, roles and bottom-line impact.

There is no doubt that realizing a just world without poverty and injustice is an enormous challenge and requires new strategies. Although the number has decreased over the past decade, more than 1 billion people still live in extreme poverty and hunger according to the United Nations. Many of these people are excluded from economic opportunities, access to natural resources and are denied their basic human rights. The recent surge in economic growth in middle-income countries has benefited only a few, causing an increasing divide between rich and poor.

ICCO Cooperation has long understood that many must play their part in redressing grave injustice and inequality. Our emphasis has therefore always been on partnership and cooperation. We have helped to make a difference and at the same time we are only too aware how much more needs to be done.

This strategic plan is built on our 50 years of experience and will guide all of us within ICCO Cooperation in fulfilling our ideal towards 2020. It is the result of extensive consultations throughout ICCO Cooperation and external research. All actors - from workers in the field, through to Regional Offices, Regional Councils and cooperative members - were invited to contribute their views on what our strategy should be and what change should look like.

We look forward to fulfilling our strategy jointly with others.

Utrecht, November 2013
The time is right for us to change for a changing world. The global landscape is evolving rapidly and geo-political power is shifting, not only between countries and continents, but also within sections of society. Poverty is a worldwide phenomenon, which is no longer geographically located in certain countries or regions of the world.

The global picture
Developing countries are rapidly gaining strengths and wealth is increasing. Unfortunately, gains are usually not shared by society as a whole, but only enjoyed by a few. There are now more poor in such middle-income countries than ever before. What's more, marginalization, inequality and the denial of basic human rights aggravate the position of the poor even further.

Today’s global landscape differs strongly from the world in which ICCO was founded in 1964. Since that time, shifts in the North-South divide and economic crises have affected the resilience of human societies. New, emerging powers increasingly claim space within the global landscape. On the other hand, overconsumption threatens our natural resources. Fragility characterizes our world. The pressure on our shared resources and the challenge of feeding the world population remain paramount. Ensuring the viability of small-farm economies as weapon against fighting poverty and undernourishment is one of the biggest challenges of our time.

Worldwide interdependence of societies and economies can easily lead to distortions. The interconnectedness via the worldwide Internet strongly accelerates these shifts and may easily worsen unbalances. At the same time, the growing interconnectedness creates new opportunities. Access to knowledge is possible in the most remote areas. New networks are rapidly creating new ways of human empowerment, mobilization and participation. They create the opportunity to address worldwide and local problems beyond national boundaries.

The unprecedented problems, as well as unprecedented opportunities, posed by these changes are challenging us to look for new structures. Not in the least, because we expect that development cooperation, as we know it, will cease to exist. Civil society, private sector and governments will have to share power and overcome their differences as they jointly address global challenges. We will need to deploy our joint innovative capacities to not only include the poor in economic development and also to develop alternative sources of energy, cradle-to-cradle solutions, new technologies designed to address global warming and the depletion of resources.

“New networks are rapidly creating new approaches to empowerment, mobilization and participation”.

New structures
In 2006, we opened up for influence for ‘southern’ stakeholders by decentralizing our organization, organizing co-responsibility and adopting a programmatic approach. Seven Regional Offices were opened in Asia, Latin America and Africa. These offices have become important assets through which we have direct access to local know-how, networks and infrastructure. Nowadays, decision-making processes and resources are shared with the hands of our Regional Offices. Co-responsibility has been maximized through a change in our governance structure: the Regional Councils participate in all strategic decisions and they advise our Regional Offices.
The establishment in November 2012 of ICCO Cooperation as a cooperative – unique among Dutch NGOs - was our next answer to the changing landscape. The founding members of the cooperative are Edukans, coPrisma and Kerk in Actie. The co-operative model reflects the both ambitions of our members and constituencies in the Netherlands and our international organization. It also underlines our vision on change: change processes are driven by local ownership and responsibility of people and groups. The added value of our cooperative is found in increasing efficiency through sharing services and expertise, as well as greater program effectiveness through knowledge exchange and intervention coordination. We welcome warmly new members from 'the North' and 'the South'.

With our new cooperative structure in place, we now wish to bring more clarity, unity of purpose and more focus to our work. A result-oriented and sustainable strategy is called for. Now, active ‘co-operative’ participation requires us to, next to our traditional grant-based activities, focus on investment-based solutions. This strategic plan will guide the way in helping us achieve our goals.

Of course, it is difficult, if not impossible, to be sure what our world will look like in 2020. But, whatever the challenges to be faced, we believe that long-term successes can only be achieved through sustainable and value-based programs, carried out by enterprising people and organizations. Our cooperative structure is ideally suited for working collaboratively and for achieving change at different levels.

ICCO Cooperation worldwide:

Playing a pivotal role
The inter-connectedness of global challenges asks for new, innovative perspectives. Civil societies worldwide will have to respond to shifts in power relationships between actors and
create new global and local alliances. Such alliances will play a pivotal role in creating a world where exclusion and poverty no longer exist.

We believe change towards fair and sustainable societies is possible. Such change will be the work of active citizens and civil society organizations who create new inroads. In many countries, however, a combination of political and economic forces aims to constrain and minimize the power of civil society. Because we consider people as the actors who hold their own future in their hands, we will take on the role that is needed to support economic empowerment and justice and dignity for all.

This strategic plan outlines how we will take on a more active role in empowering for change. It calls for us to take an enterprising, result-driven and outward-looking attitude. ‘Co-implementing’, ‘brokering’ and ‘lobbying’ will become key, next to strategic program financing. It underlines our belief in the power of joint action and solidarity between groups. Our existing extensive worldwide networks in the field and our reputation as critical, supportive and innovative partner are the sound foundation on which we will continue to build long-term relationships with enterprising people and organizations.
CASE STUDY I

Taking cooperation one step further in Madagascar

Coffee and cloves galore, yet many farmers in Madagascar still live on the verge of poverty. We have been working hard with partners in the southeast of the country to help these farmers create sustainable livelihoods. Here is how.

Geographical focus - Madagascar is a large country with a poor infrastructure. Our first major decision has been to concentrate our programs in the southeast region of the country. Focusing within a single geographical area, on themes specifically relevant to that area, has allowed us to maximize our efficiency, effectiveness and impact.

Connecting the issues - Using ICCO Cooperation’s two strategic themes - securing sustainable livelihoods and justice and dignity for all - we have developed a program revolving round the diversification of food production and the quality of nutrition. But, Madagascar is cyclone prone. We know that helping farmers create livelihoods without doing anything about disaster risk- and natural resource management will not deliver sustainable solutions.

Multi-level and multi-issue - We have organized our local partners in such a way that, although each partner works within his own thematic area, interventions are coordinated and complementary to each other. By converging partners’ activities we have created maximum multi-level and multi-issue impact.

Connecting partners - We have even taken the joint cooperation with partners a step further: forming a coalition that lobbies for and develops food security initiatives. One of the coalition partners has established a land register that gives property rights to farmers. Land deeds not only give farmers the certainty of ownership, but deeds can be used as collateral for loans.

Local to global - Cooperatives have been created to not only give farmers access to international markets, but to bring together the driving forces of the region - farmers, producers and financiers – in value chains that are key to lasting economic development.

Global to local - To upscale the impact of our interventions even further, we will be stepping up partner collaborations with the private sector and investing directly in social enterprises. In this way we will be opening up the true potential of cash crops such as coffee and spices.
2 OUR VISION

Our vision is a just world without poverty. A world where people claim and assume their rights in a sustainable civil society. We believe that exclusion and scarcity, created and aggravated by unequal power balances, are the main drivers of poverty.

Our values
Compassion, justice and stewardship: these were the three values on which founding father Jo Verkuyl established ICCO in 1964. These values guide us to this day. As one of the very few in his time, Verkuyl not only believed that development and aid work should be focused on the needs and requirements of the poor, but he was convinced that all change starts at community level. Verkuyl’s approach was unconventional: challenging existing beliefs and institutions.

It is this philosophy and bottom-up approach that characterizes ICCO Cooperation’s history. By keeping our eyes and ears close to the ground we have been successful in the work we do. Time and again we have teamed up with the best partners, together creating sustainable programs: not as one-off solutions, but with the goal of empowering civil societies in the long-term. We have dared to take a stand against injustice and challenge the powers that are. And we have been successful.

The three core values compassion, justice and stewardship continue to be the essential expression of our Christian roots. We believe in the dignity and self-reliance of each and every human being, as we are all created in the image of God. We work with people and organizations irrespective of their religion, class, race, gender, sexual orientation or physical challenges. We support the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Our core values also motivate us to be inclusive in our approach. We embrace partners who uphold the same values as we do. We choose our partners - civil society organizations, market parties, governments and knowledge institutes - on the basis of their know-how, effectiveness, program coherence and their ambition to create a just and compassionate world. All partnerships are based on solidarity, reciprocity and equality. Critical dialogues within our partnerships enable us to achieve the best results.

But, in all our work, it is not only the end result that counts: the process, too, has an intrinsic value in boosting civil society. For instance, people need competencies to make their own choices and lead dignified lives. Organizations need the capacities to represent the interests of the people they work for, to exact inclusive growth and societal change. Such competencies need to be developed. We help strengthen civil society and in this way contribute to the inclusive development of countries.

“Exclusion and scarcity, created and aggravated by unequal power balances, are the main drivers of poverty”.

An expanding cooperative organization
From a single operator to an alliance, from a centralized organization to a decentralized one, from an alliance to a cooperative which seeks fruitful co-operation with a diversity of excellent partners: when change was needed, we embraced change.

The move to a cooperative reflects both the reality of the more complex and interconnected world we live and work in and our fundamental emphasis on partnering, co-creation and co-
ownership as the way forward to achieving impact. It also underlines our wish to reposition ourselves in our relations towards state and market. The growing interest of the private sector in corporate social responsibility creates new opportunities for us. As an organization that is embedded in civil society, we have the strengths to bring about change and support the establishment of pluralist societies founded on human rights, instead of pure economic value.

The current members of the cooperative have their own unique identity and specialization. Through our members, we have a powerful home constituency. Our agenda for the Netherlands and Europe is to cooperate and lobby with stakeholders and to activate global citizenship. In the future we aim to attract international and national organizations as new members to our cooperative, including trade unions and financial and knowledge institutes.

With the regional, de-centralized structure in place, we are now moving forward to create greater synergy. Unity of purpose and a joint focus are called for so that we maximize our cooperative power as think-tank and change- and fundraising platform. The first step to creating such synergy will be the implementation by all cooperative members of this strategic plan.
CASE STUDY II

Co-creating jobs in Brazil

How do you transform an environmental issue into a chance to combat poverty and even create sustainable livelihoods for the poorest of the poor? That was the challenge faced by ICCO Cooperation when social entrepreneur and waste recycler Jan Boone approached us. His wish is to show the world that there are many possibilities to use waste in a more intelligent way and create jobs at the same time.

Turning waste into an advantage
Boone believes that the global waste problem should be tackled in more intelligent ways: saving our natural resources and keeping our earth in a healthy state. To put his money where his mouth was, Boone planned to construct a waste processing plant in Belem in which he would be ‘Turning waste into an advantage’. But, he also realized that it would be essential to collaborate with local partners and to involve the local authorities in the project for it to be a success.

From seeds to jobs
And that’s where ICCO Cooperation’s added value – and that of her local partners – manifested itself. Firstly, ICCO Cooperation’s partners were involved in organizing garbage collectors into organizations that would be able to guarantee a steady supply of waste to the plant. More importantly, we were successful in transforming an environmental issue into a chance to combat poverty. The environmental issue? The seeds of the popular açai fruit, which pollute the streets and canals of Belem. Using the seeds as biomass for energy generation has had many advantages: long-term work and a steady source of income for hundreds of garbage collectors who would otherwise barely make living, clean streets, and the production of high quality, ‘clean’ biomass for the domestic and export market without imposing on food production capacity.

Co-creation: sustainable livelihoods for the poor
Unique to this project has been the ability of ICCO Cooperation’s ground roots network to provide unexpected livelihoods to a truly destitute contingent of Belem’s poor. This co-creation project has not only fulfilled Jan Boone’s wish as social entrepreneur to turn waste into an advantage, but to this day, continues to contribute to the sustainable social-economic development of the most deprived: garbage collectors’ families and communities.
3 What we are going to do

Our drive towards creating a just world without poverty is grounded in twin core principles, which we see as fundamental:

- Securing sustainable livelihoods, and
- Justice and dignity for all.

Why twin? Because a livelihood without rights is not sustainable and because dignity only comes with a livelihood in which rights are respected.

In our present world - where everything is interrelated - trade, environment, security, democracy and human rights can no longer be tackled through isolated programs. Development - or a lack of it - in one area has consequences for the other. That’s why we are moving away from programs based on single-issue themes, to ones in which our two core principles are the driving force.

Securing sustainable livelihoods
People should not be treated as victims needing aid, but as people with skills and resources. We give people the opportunity to develop in such a way as to be able to create their own sustainable livelihoods.

Whether that requires developing specific skills, acting as intermediary or investor: our efforts are focused on empowering people so that they can link up to viable and sustainable value chains, acquire income and produce sufficient and quality food for a balanced diet. Our focus is on sustainable farming and agri-business value chains. Where needed, this includes mitigating and adapting to climatological impacts.

Our strength lies in making connections on the ground. We connect organizations that strengthen producers’ organizations to enhance farmers’ livelihoods. We also support organizations that help farmers obtain land titles, and we also working with private sector businesses who purchase produce, set quality standards and strengthen farmers’ organizations. In this way, we enable farmers to become sustainable producers for markets within value chains.

We focus on chains that are vital to creating sustainable livelihoods, and those that support food security worldwide for feeding the growing world population. Equality throughout such chains is key to our success. In other words: we want to make markets work for the poor and the poor work with their markets.

To that end also, we encourage people to develop foundation, transferable and vocational skills (next to a formal, general education) which open up to broader opportunities for them. Technical and vocational skills training and agricultural skills help people create self-reliant livelihoods.

Creating sustainable livelihoods also calls for emergency preparedness in those areas of the world where natural disasters occur frequently. Resilience in the face of disasters and the ability to secure people’s own livelihoods are key.

“The full potential of individuals can be realized only when justice and dignity are achieved”.

12
Justice and dignity for all
We combine forces to tackle rights-based issues. We strengthen networks that work towards empowerment of marginalized or minority groups. At the same time, we support programs that work towards creating sustainable livelihoods for these groups.

Our rights-based approach and dignity for all can be traced to our faith-based roots. The full potential of individuals can be realized only when justice and dignity are achieved. Such enabled individuals can then contribute to the development of their society and create security: for themselves and for their families and their community.

Two-pronged strategy
1. **We empower the marginalized** - In countries with bad governance, socially irresponsible companies, weak infrastructures and corrupt institutions, we concentrate on mobilizing and strengthening people’s organizations and grassroots movements. We organize people and organizations around issues such as land grabbing and access to natural resources. Our aim is to make them more resilient and better equipped to challenge the dominant forces in their society.

   Foundation skills empower people to know and claim their rights, contributing to ‘just and dignified societies’. Adult literacy and numeracy training offers a second chance for those who missed out on basic education. In middle-income countries, with governments and institutions that do not respect the rights of the poor and excluded, we focus on supporting the campaigns and protests of the latter.

2. **We strengthen civil society organizations** – In countries where duty bearers do not respect the rights of marginalized people and minorities, we encourage civil society organizations to challenge such authorities. We influence structures in societies that restrict people’s full enjoyment of their rights, including the right of women to have control over their sexual and reproductive health (SRHR) and land rights.

Creating synergy through connection
We are convinced that truly sustainable solutions can only be achieved if our twin core principles - sustainable livelihoods and justice and dignity – are connected one to the other. We see that the sum of the parts is more than the whole. By protecting the rights of people, they are at the same time empowered to create their own livelihoods. We give special attention to business ethics and human rights issues within private sector enterprises.

Similarly, we will work towards a more inclusive economy and financial system that addresses people’s needs. In this way individuals will gain control, encouraging participation and responsibility in bringing about sustainable growth. ‘Growth’ as such needs to be redefined, giving less primacy to ‘quantity’ and more to ‘quality’. In our definition, growth only comes with increasing justice.
Our two core principles:

Working with and through stakeholders
Our partnerships revolve around solidarity, reciprocity and equality. We are inspired by others and inspire others. We develop programs in close cooperation with people in the field and their organizations and we believe in their strength to realize the changes that are needed.

Our partnerships and partners are very diverse. We enter into partnerships because we expect that we can realize our objectives with these partners. We engage primarily with civil society organizations, both in the ‘South’ and the ‘North’. They represent and work for the people for whom we want to bring about change. Faith-based organizations and churches, with whom we share a common identity, are our primary partners. But we also work with the private sector as principal movers towards meaningful change. Partnerships are undertaken at all levels: from global to field level.

Multi-stakeholder approach
For development and change to be effective and sustainable, we need to influence the underlying systemic relations that sustain poverty and injustice. This implies a multi-stakeholder approach. We intend to increase our power to change systems, by involving traditional and non-traditional players and linking these actors. We will set up coalitions with both partner and donor organizations that can contribute to a joint strategy.

Our fifty years’ worth of experience in the field place us in the ideal position to broker and to facilitate: we are experts in working with a variety of organizations, including producer organizations and cooperatives, social enterprises, trade unions, academic and research institutes, local and semi-government institutes, faith-based organizations, churches, human rights groups, minority right groups, community-based groups, training institutions and more.
Concurrently, our donor landscape is also rapidly changing. Decreasing funds from the Dutch government and our increasing reliance on other sources, means that conditions and provisions set out by donors are shifting. As a consequence, our partner relationships are also subject to change: partners are required to adopt specific roles and meet specific prerequisites within coalitions. This trend is strengthened even further by the new multi-stakeholder approach. Our traditional role as strategic financier is set decrease in favor of co-implementation together with partners in a multi-stakeholder environment.

**BOX 1: Examples of partnerships**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnerships can take on various forms:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Co-creation</strong> – Engaging with parties (private or governmental, global and local) to reach shared objectives. Each party contributes either material or immaterial resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Co-implementation</strong> – Playing a stewardship role within a cooperative process or program with a coalition of organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic financier</strong> – Funding a joint program - either through grant- or non-grant based funding – whilst also taking on other roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value chain development</strong> – Cooperating with other stakeholders in the chain to connect farmers, entrepreneurs and businesses, and intermediary actors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Investment</strong> – Investing in social- and financial-impact entrepreneurship.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Diversifying funding instruments**

Together with our partners, we will become more enterprising. This will involve adopting more innovative solutions and accepting a certain measure of risk-taking. Our partnering role is set to change once we engage more directly in change processes as co-implementer, investor, broker, facilitator, networker, lobbyist and advocate.

Our role as strategic funder is also set to change, as we gradually move from solely grant based co-financing, to mainly non-grant based funding, including loans, guarantees, participations and tailor-made solutions. With ICCO Investments, a new initiative of ICCO Cooperation, we also offer viable and relevant social venturing opportunities.

The use of new funding instruments will become particularly evident in our programs concerned with securing sustainable livelihoods. In some cases, we will become a co-implementer of programs funded by donors. In other cases, we will be co-creator, linking our resources to those of others in a mutually created change process. Other programs - justice and dignity - will remain grant based, as cost recovery and financial return on investments are difficult to realize. Within such programs, we will, however, be aiming at realizing a social return on investment.
Diversifying our funding:

INSTRUMENTS

coPrisma  Edukans  Kerk in Actie

ICCO COOPERATION

Grants  Social Venturing

structural approach framework MASP

Emergency relief  Capacity building  Social justice  Capacity building FED  Grant based BDS  Risk based BDS  Convertible grants  Philanthropy investing  Guarantee fund  Impact investing with ROI

grant model  revenue model

BDS = Business Development Services, FED = Fair Economic Development, ROI = Return on Investment, MASP = Multi Annual Strategic Plan
**Case Study III**

**Land rights for the poor in Cambodia**

When a company approached Un Tom to sell her land, she refused. She subsequently served 18 months in prison just for saying 'no'. She had been accused of 'living on land that was not hers'.

**Illegal land sales**

Un Tom's plight began over a decade ago when the government sold off land belonging to 108 families in a rural Cambodian village to a local company. The sale was negotiated and effected without the permission of the families concerned. The families revolted and the company sued them. Un Tom and 5 other people went to prison and the remaining families forbidden to farm their land. The families' loss was not only their land rights, but their livelihoods and their houses too.

**Legal support**

With the support of ICCO Cooperation and our partner NGO Forum, Un Tom's community filed legal action against the company that had purchased their land illegally. Un Tom's land-grabbing story is just one of many similar cases. Without the support from outside agents, these rural communities are powerless against the rich and influential companies and the Cambodian government. Although Un Tom's case has not yet been solved, she appreciates the legal assistance we can offer her. It gives both her and the community the chance to keep on fighting for their rights to land and a livelihood.

**Multi-stakeholder approach**

NGO Forum's slogan 'Cooperation for positive change' reflects our own multi-stakeholder approach. The NGO Forum land right projects in Cambodia are carried out in cooperation with relevant national and international civil-society organizations. This approach effectively connects the knowledge, skills and lessons learned of various organizations. In this way we can create a more powerful lobby within the government and other relevant institutions. We believe that such cooperation is the way forward in achieving our goal: a well-informed and sustainable civil society that supports poor, marginalized and vulnerable Cambodians to assert their economic, social and political rights.
4 HOW WE ARE GOING TO DO IT

Our strategy is the framework for all that we will be undertaking through to 2020. Defining our strategy in this way will give us unity of purpose and a clear focus as to where we are heading.

4.1 Achieve greater impact at beneficiary level – Leveraging our strengths

The issue and our objectives

- We have a vast number of programs in 44 countries. Most programs are linked to coalitions at national or regional level, based on single themes and geographically fragmented. There is too little or no synergy between these programs. We need to focus on fewer, bigger and interrelated programs to achieve greater impact and efficiency of resources.

How we are going to achieve this goal

- We make choices - We have fewer, larger, more efficient programs that have more impact. Instead of having many, thematically different programs in a single country, we carry out thematically connected programs within a limited geographical area and implement these with partners and other stakeholders. This focus will create the sought after synergy between our livelihoods and rights interventions.
- We connect the interface – Our programs connect the interface between sustainable livelihoods and justice and dignity for all. We work with fewer, selected partners in thematically linked programs, covering issues such as: food security, disaster risk management, connecting to value chains, human rights and business, rights of marginalized people, vocational education, health systems and natural resource, including water management.
- We set up viable and sustainable structures – We facilitate collaborative processes involving partners and civil society. The objective of such coalitions is to embed change in society. Similarly, we help strengthen cooperatives or value chains that give individuals access to international markets and lasting economic benefits. We support and broker relations within value chains and ensure that rights related issues are also connected to these chains.
- We broker and facilitate human rights networks at local and global level – Our focus is on, amongst others, gender and specifically gender-based violence, right to food, rights of people with HIV/Aids, minority rights. We link these networks with sustainable livelihood networks.
- We participate in effective and inclusive value chains – We only participate in value chains that provide the poor with the right of participation and true economic empowerment. Such value chains revolve around food security, agribusiness and climate.
- We welcome new members to the cooperative - Current global civil society looks beyond countries and sectors. By including international members to our cooperative, we are able to offer ideas, innovations, solution and know-how from other corners of the world.

4.2 Build on our strengths – Nurturing our reputation

The issue and our objectives
Individual actions or programs based on single issues, generally speaking, do not bring about sustainable and lasting gains. Increased impact in time and space can be gained if we converge with partners and other stakeholders and complement each other. We build on and strengthen our identity and reputation, so that it is clear to all within the cooperative - and to our external stakeholders - what we stand for and what we are recognized and respected for.

How we are going to achieve this
- **Creating impact at local level** – We have a strongly decentralized organizational structure. Together with our partners we create impact where it is needed: at local level. Companies who are looking to invest in sustainable economic development have access to our local know-how, within a vast and effective global as well as grass roots network.
- **Sharing vital know-how** – We’re an international organization with a strong and easily accessible faith-based partner network within the ACT Alliance. We also connect with civil society partners, private partners and knowledge institutes. Sharing know-how and best practices with our partners gives us valuable input for achieving results in all regions and at all levels. At a central level, our lobbying power is used to tackle issues including business ethics and human rights, and the shrinking political space.
- **Achieving change at different levels** – We’re realistic: we’re too small to be able to eradicate poverty, but we believe change can be achieved through a bottom-up and inclusive approach. We’re hands-on: we work with organizations of people in the field and involve all stakeholders. Our cooperative model enables us to create synergy between civil society organizations, companies and knowledge institutions worldwide, creating effective solutions for complex problems.
- **Empowering our own people** – We invest in our people and organize learning and exchange of best practices using up-to-date IT solutions. Within our own learning communities, we combine corporate and local learning practices. For instance, strengthening competencies of local staff members who are required to work in coalitions or cooperative processes. We also work together with knowledge institutes that provide us with the know-how and insights needed to be able to put in place sustainable solutions.

Box 2: As a global player:

- We work with people and their organizations - from grassroots to global players - that have clear-cut ideas and proposals on how to work towards change and create just societies and wellbeing for all.
- We make the connections and create the partnerships that are needed to drive such change. Equality throughout networks and within processes is key to our success.
- We are member of the ACT Alliance. This coalition of over 140 churches and affiliated organizations works in three targeted areas: humanitarian aid, development and advocacy.
- Impact at beneficiary level is indicative of the success of our strategic choices. Impact at international level boosts our results at local level. By joining forces at all levels, we create new possibilities. We aim to create an international cooperative network that offers ideas, innovations, solutions and knowledge from all corners of the world. Such a global community takes joint responsibility for creating a world in which people live in wellbeing and dignity.
- Our vision on poverty and injustice is inclusive: change is only sustainable if countries are willing to take on their social and ecological responsibilities.
4.3 Empower the poor – Addressing exclusion and injustice

The issue and our objectives
We work in low-income countries, fragile states and middle-income countries. Recently, the economies of the middle-income countries have been growing fast. Unfortunately, so has the gap between the well off and the marginalized. The poor in these countries are caught up in a vicious circle of human rights violation and social, political and economic deprivation. But, poverty is also still a global issue. Our goal is to empower all people, also in middle-income countries, to break through the poverty circle and build their own sustainable livelihoods within a society that upholds their rights. We partner to enterprising people.

How we are going to achieve this
- **We use our capabilities, skills and reputation** - As a partner to enterprising people, we work together with existing and new partners to improve the rights of disadvantaged groups, providing them access to decent jobs and to economic and social government services.
- **We don’t just give money** – Many of the poor and marginalized are outside of the mainstream development process. We work together with partners in strategic funding partnerships to develop business ideas and set up businesses for these people. Funding of programs can be grant based or non-grant based.
- **We provide loans, equity or guarantees** - We invest in social business plans. We expect a return on investment, but we also have social and ecological targets. One of our instruments is social venturing through ICCO Investments.
- **We act as watchdog** – We support networks that address social and economic injustice and exclusion. There where people are excluded from education, we lobby for their right to education. Where people are denied land rights, we support advocacy organizations. We want to empower people, but true empowerment only comes with the prospect of long-term livelihoods in a safe and just society.

“We aim to empower people, but true empowerment only comes with the prospect of long-term livelihoods in a safe and just society”.

4.4 Become an enterprising partner of choice – Partnering for synergy

The issue and our objectives
Due to the changing global landscape and major cuts in government funding, we need to shift towards partnering with more professional and sector-based organizations. We will reduce the number of partners and, at the same time, increase the scale and volume of our partnerships, with a focus on bigger, fewer and more cross-sectorial programs. Fewer partners and coalitions will receive higher amounts of funding. We need to develop our capabilities to identify and select partners, bring them together and help to get the best out of our partner network to achieve our strategic and program goals.

How we are going to achieve this
- **Partnering for synergy** – We select partners who are result-oriented and who work within coalitions in which all partners are complementary and create synergy through a joint approach. Partners and other stakeholders will be challenged to define relevant issues and develop joint programs and change proposals.
Making markets work for the poor – Partners share our enterprising approach. Together we create a niche and help people set up viable businesses and develop business ideas. Together we support cooperatives and producer organizations and help make them relevant market parties. Such organizations should become the driving forces in a region and in value chains, embracing farmers, producers, financiers and more. These sustainable mechanisms open up access to international markets for even the smallest farmer.

Fostering our synergies – We foster our successes and learn from our mistakes. Program support is focused on areas that need to be driven forward. We share our best practices with ICCO Cooperation members and external partners.

4.5 Secure and expand our financial resources - Our resource mobilization is focused

The issue and our objectives
In the face of a changing landscape for international cooperation, we will need to find new sources of income. Fundraising will become a central part of our strategy. At the same time, we will be looking to enlarge the membership of our cooperative. We aim for an overall budget of at least €70 million in 2016. These resources will be raised through the diversification of resources and income.

How we are going to achieve this

- **Fundraising** – Together with our strategic partners, we have a joint institutional funding mechanism. We are able to mobilize resources from a broad spectrum of people and organizations, including: institutional funders, social investors, companies, governments and multilateral institutions.

- **Resource mobilization** – We provide worldwide paid advisory and other services and products, including overall program coordination that meets stakeholder requirements within international cooperation models.

- **Attracting funds** – From solely grant-based strategic funding we will move to investments, refundable loans and to co-creation. We use each other’s networks and expertise for synergy to attract alternative sources of funding, such as companies or financial institutions seeking to invest in social entrepreneurship. We offer these the benefits of our local presence, long-term commitments, and proven, result-oriented approach. And importantly, our long-standing local presence gives these companies insights into and grip on context specific risks and opportunities.

- **Fund management** - Fund management for ICCO Investments is carried out by investment managers in our Regional Offices. It is vital that we establish professional and dedicated investment management capacity close to our investees and embedded in our local offices.

- **Using innovative solutions** - We use new financial instruments and revenue business models besides grants, loans and guarantees. These can include impact investments with return on investment, guarantee funds, philanthropy investments, convertible grants and risk-based business development services.
4.6 Know and show our results - Strengthening our accountability

The issue and our objectives
Promises need to be fulfilled. We must show our results. This is especially true in a world where investments are taking over from grants. Transparency and accountability are important for building a long-lasting relationship with our partners, investors, the communities we work in and all other stakeholders. Our current reporting system is based on reporting guidelines as set out by the Dutch government. This system does not offer true transparency as to our impact at beneficiary level. Our goal is to set up new methodologies that foster mutual accountability within the organization - and with our partners - and that provide independent stakeholder feedback.

How we are going to achieve this
- **Measuring performance** - Together with our partner organizations and beneficiaries, we invest strategically and form alliances to monitor, learn, enhance impact and steer on strategy, result performance and cost-effectiveness.
- **Financial management** - We require that all our partners have a sound financial management. This is necessary in order to comply with ICCO Cooperation requirements and good stewardship of our resources. It also ensures financial accountability and transparency towards back-donors, and ensures sustainability and viability in the long run.
- **Creating transparency** – We develop accountability and communication tools that offer availability and accessibility of narrative and financial information, giving insight into our operations and results for key stakeholders.
Development is often seen as a progressive linear process. But, in reality, frequent ruptures and even setbacks and regression characterize this process. In all of human history, the future has never been precisely forecast. Adversities as well as miracles remain notoriously difficult to predict.

Our license to operate is our goal to secure sustainable livelihood and justice and dignity for poor and marginalized people. These should never be taken for granted, although on the whole more and more people are enjoying better lives.

ICCO Cooperation is convinced that in our fast changing and inter-connected world, cooperation is key to move forward and create dignified societies. Relations between people and organizations, based on mutual commitment and trust can create social transformations for the better. A new multi-dimensional development agenda is called for with a sustainable balance between human beings and natural systems. But, there is no universal recipe: impact becomes concrete in different and local contexts where people live.

ICCO Cooperation wants to play a pivotal role herein, together with our stakeholders. With this strategy, we are moving towards becoming an international organization with a solid, broad constituency in the Netherlands and growing constituencies in the countries in which we work.

We make a difference in the wellbeing and resilience of many all over the world. That is our ambition for 2020.