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COMMUNIQUÉ

Exploring the potential of cooperatives to advance Universal Health Coverage and Sustainable Development Goals in Cameroon and Kenya

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is an important prerequisite for good health and well-being for all. However, in most countries, governments alone are not in a position to ensure UHC – the private sector and civil society organizations must complement these efforts. The International Co-operative movement strives to help implement the Agenda 2030, including SDG 3, to “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.” In this context, it is critical to better understand the strengths, weaknesses and potential of cooperatives, mutuals and other social and solidarity economy organizations (SSEOs), for example in sub-Saharan Africa. In recent months, a research team has conducted a needs assessment of cooperatives and other SSEOs whose operations impact the health sector of two countries: Cameroon and Kenya. The research is exploring the extension of their activities into health and social care, as exemplified by cooperatives in Guatemala, Peru, Venezuela, Ethiopia, and others reported in the 2014 international survey of co-ops and mutuals active in the health and social care sector. Directed by Jean-Pierre Girard, Lead Researcher and Editor of the survey and board member of the International Health Cooperative Organization (2001-2013), the research team includes

Willy Tadjudje, a specialist in African cooperative and mutual law, and Veronica Shiroya, a PhD student at the Institute of Public Health (Heidelberg University) and program and liaison officer responsible for East Africa at the Alliance for Health Promotion (a Geneva-based NPO in official relations with the WHO).

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The needs assessment in Cameroon and Kenya has demonstrated great interest on the part of existing cooperatives in both countries to extend their activities into health and social care, including possible collaboration with NorWest, Federazione Sanità and other organizations in support of this development. The recent Geneva Health Forum (April 10-12, 2018) was a unique occasion to share the study’s output with a wide audience and to welcome comments and questions. This event also enabled discussions with other organizations regarding next steps, which will involve the design of an intervention strategy in the two countries.

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