World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU)

The World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU) is the global trade association and development agency for credit unions. WOCCU promotes the sustainable development of credit unions and other financial cooperatives around the world to empower people through access to high quality and affordable financial services.

WOCCU represents 56,000 credit unions in 101 countries, serving over 200 million people. It is engaged in technical assistance programmes to strengthen credit unions in 10 countries through the introduction of new tools and technologies to strengthen credit union performance and outreach.

International Credit Union Operating Principles

The International Credit Union Operating Principles are founded in the philosophy of co-operation and its central values of equality, equity and mutual self-help.

At the heart of these principles is the concept of human development and humanity expressed through people working together to achieve a better life for themselves and their community.

The International Credit Union Operating Principles are broken down into three broad areas: ***Democratic Structure, Service to Members and Social Goals.***

Democratic Structure

- **Open and Voluntary Membership**

  Membership of a credit union is voluntary and open to all (within the credit union's accepted common bond of association) who can make use of its services and are willing to accept the corresponding responsibilities.

- **Democratic Control**

  Credit union members enjoy equal rights to vote (one member, one vote) and participate in decisions affecting the credit union regardless of the amount of savings, deposits or volume of business. Voting in credit union support organisations or associations may be proportional or representational, in keeping with democratic principles.

  The credit union is autonomous, within the framework of law and regulation, recognising the credit union as a co-operative enterprise serving and controlled by its members.

- **Non-Discrimination**

  Credit unions are non-discriminatory on all grounds including but not limited to race, nationality, sex, religion and politics.

…..continued overleaf

Service to Members

Credit union services aim to improve the economic and social well being of all members.

- **Distribution to Members**

  To encourage thrift through savings and to provide loans and other services, a fair rate of interest is paid on savings and deposits, within the capability of the credit union.

  After covering the cost of finance, operating costs, provision for loan losses and ensuring appropriate reserve levels, all surplus funds belong to and benefit all members. No member or group of members benefits to the detriment of others. This surplus may be distributed among members (in proportion to their transactions with the credit union) as dividends on shares, or directed to improved or additional services required by the members.

- **Building Financial Stability**

  A prime concern of the credit union is to build the financial strength, including adequate reserves and internal controls, to ensure continued service to membership.

Social Goals

- **On-going Education**

  Credit unions actively promote the education of their members, officers, employees and the general public, in the economic, social, democratic and mutual self-help principles of credit unions.

  They also have a responsibility to promote thrift and the wise use of credit to their members, as well as educating them on their rights and responsibilities.

- **Co-operation Among Co-operatives**

  Where possible, credit unions actively co-operate with other credit unions, co-operatives and their associations, at local, national and international levels, in order to best serve the interests of their members and communities. This is in keeping with their philosophy and the pooling practices of co-operatives.

- **Social Responsibility**

  Continuing the ideals and beliefs of co-operative pioneers, credit unions seek to bring about human and social development. Their vision of social justice extends both to the individual members and to the larger community in which they work and reside.

  The credit union ideal is to extend service to all that need and can use it.

  Every person is either a member or a potential member and appropriately part of the credit union sphere of interest and concern.

  Decisions should be taken with full regard for the interest of the broader community within which the credit union and its members reside.