

Scotmid marks International Day of Coops with news of charitable donations

Scotmid has provided a contribution to more than £100,000 of emergency supplies to cooperatives and communities in India during the pandemic.

Today is the International Day of Coops when all kinds of international support is highlighted. The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) worked with women's coops in India to make the donations of essential basic supplies. This included paracetamol, masks and critical supplies of oxygen.

Mirai Chatterjee, Chairperson, SEWA Cooperative Federation said: "We would like to thank you for the solidarity of the co-operative spirit in action. We are very happy to be your partners in the rebuild. The situation in India is thankfully slowly improving and we are seeing a reduction in cases in the urban areas, although we are less sure about the rural areas as the data is sparse.

"Our country is now slowly coming out of the health emergency, but we are now staring in the face of a huge livelihood and humanitarian crisis. Workers and families have been busy with the health emergency but now they are extremely anxious about how they can restore their livelihoods and that's where your contribution and your support to us has been critical."



During the crisis period, 4,000 household health kits were prepared by the Indian co-operatives that form part of SEWA. These included masks made by an artisan co-operative and soap and immune boosters produced by a health co-operative distributed across eight states across India. Crucially they also provided lifesaving information about the symptoms and spread of Covid to families in rural and low income urban areas – to dispel myths and provide accurate health information.

The support from the UK retail societies will support seven Indian co-operatives to restart their businesses, buying raw materials and re-establish market links. SEWA also used this substantial donation as a bargaining tool to leverage support from corporate donors, securing additional funds for women farmers and a catering co-operative in this way.

The emergency response was co-ordinated by Co-operatives UK and the Co-operative College, who worked together as part of

the International Working Group to collect and co-ordinate the donations from The Co-op Group, Midcounties Co-op, Central England Co-op, Scotmid, Lincolnshire Co-op, Southern Co-op, East of England Co-op, Channel Islands Co-op, Chelmsford Star Co-op, Heart of England Co-op and Co-op News.

Rose Marley, CEO of Co-operatives UK said: "This is true co-operation in action, with some of the largest co-ops in the UK collaborating to provide financial support and solidarity to co-ops on the other side of the world. Our global co-operative movement is based on values and principles that are as strong today as they ever were. It's fitting that we are sharing news of the impact of this donation on International Day of Co-operatives, which has a theme of Rebuild Better Together, which is exactly what this support will help to do."

"The response from the co-operative community was really quite phenomenal and it meant that we were able to get funds directly through this female network of co-operators to provide support on the ground, where it was needed, at speed with minimal red tape or admin fees," she added.

John Brodie, CEO of Scotmid, said: "This worthwhile initiative, which came through the co-operative national buying group, demonstrates the strength of co-operation.

"We're pleased to see this donation is having an impact on the ground in India, helping co-ops to restart their businesses after the lockdowns. Working with SEWA as our overseas partner, we can ensure we are truly collaborating with co-ops in India. It's not just handouts, its sustainable support through solidarity and self responsibility."

