



Cooperative Connections

Newsletter | March 2024



Celebrating International Women's Day: Empowering Women Economically

We celebrated International Women's Day on March 8 this year, and on that day, we joined hands with millions around the globe in honoring the achievements and contributions of women throughout history. International Women's Day is not just a day of recognition but a call to action, a reminder of the ongoing struggle for gender equality in all spheres of life.

This year, the theme for International Women's Day 2024, "Count Her In: Accelerating Gender Equality Through Economic Empowerment," resonates deeply with the global agenda for advancing women's rights. The theme underscores the significance of economic empowerment as a catalyst for achieving gender equality. It mirrors the priority theme for the 68th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 68), organized by the United Nations, which aims to explore pathways to greater economic inclusion for women and girls worldwide.

Economic empowerment is not merely about financial independence; it encompasses access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power. When women are economically empowered, societies thrive. They invest in their families' health and education, contribute to community development, and drive economic growth.

At the Antigua and Barbuda Cooperative League, we recognize the pivotal role that financial services play in empowering women economically. Access to banking, credit, and financial literacy programs can break barriers and unlock opportunities for women to start businesses, pursue education, and secure their financial futures.

As a sector committed to fostering financial inclusion, we are dedicated to providing tailored financial solutions that meet the unique needs of women. From savings accounts to small business loans, we strive to empower



INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY



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Celebrating International Women's Day: Empowering Women Economically (Cont'd)

women to achieve their financial goals and aspirations.

Moreover, our financial education initiatives aim to equip women with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed financial decisions, thus enhancing their economic independence.

Let us reaffirm our commitment to gender equality and economic empowerment. Let us work together to dismantle barriers, challenge stereotypes, and create an inclusive world where every woman and girl can thrive. As we celebrate the achievements of women past and present, let us also look forward with hope and determination towards a future where gender equality is not just a dream but a reality.

Together, we can truly "Count Her In" and accelerate progress towards a more just and equitable world for all.

Happy International Women's Day!



5 surprising facts on Women's equality

1 Global Progress Varies Widely: Women's equality is not a uniform issue worldwide. While some countries have made significant strides in women's rights and equality, others lag behind due to cultural, political, and socioeconomic factors. For instance, Nordic countries like Iceland, Norway, and Sweden often rank highest in global gender equality indexes, while countries in the Middle East and parts of Africa struggle with gender disparities.

2 Gender Pay Gap Persists: Despite decades of advocacy and legislative efforts, the gender pay gap remains a pervasive issue globally. On average, women still earn less than men for the same work across most industries and professions. Factors contributing to this gap include occupational segregation, unequal distribution of unpaid care work, and discriminatory practices in hiring and promotion.



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5 surprising facts on Women's equality

3 Underrepresentation in Leadership Roles: Women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions across sectors such as politics, business, academia, and media. While there has been progress in increasing female representation in some areas, the glass ceiling remains a significant barrier for women aspiring to reach top positions. Efforts to address this issue include quota systems, mentorship programs, and diversity initiatives.

4 Intersectionality Matters: Women's experiences of inequality are shaped not only by their gender but also by intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, disability, and age. Intersectional feminism emphasizes the importance of recognizing and addressing these multiple layers of identity and oppression to achieve meaningful equality for all women. Failure to consider intersectionality can result in marginalized groups of women being overlooked or excluded from mainstream gender equality efforts.

5 Violence Against Women: Violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, and harmful traditional practices like female genital mutilation, remains a pervasive and urgent issue globally. These forms of violence not only violate women's human rights but also have serious physical, psychological, and social consequences. Efforts to combat violence against women require comprehensive strategies that address root causes such as gender stereotypes, inequality, and impunity for perpetrators.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

8 MARCH 2024



International Women's Day (IWD) is a global observance celebrated annually on **March 8th** to honor the **achievements and contributions of women** in various fields and disciplines across the world. The day also serves as a platform to raise **awareness about gender equality**, advocate for **women's rights**, and address issues such as gender-based violence, discrimination, and the socio-economic disparities that women face.



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Financial Wellness Spring Cleaning: Declutter Your Finances for a Fresh Start

You know the feeling. Sometimes, things around us just need a good cleaning! It's not just our homes that could benefit from a good spring cleaning - our finances could use some tidying up too! Just as you clear out the clutter in your living space, decluttering your finances can bring a sense of clarity and control to your money matters. Here are some practical tips and strategies to help credit union members refresh their financial goals and streamline their finances for the first quarter of the year.

1. **Organize Financial Documents:** Start by gathering all your financial documents in one place. This includes bank statements, investment account statements, insurance policies, property tax documents, and any other important paperwork. Consider going paperless by scanning and storing documents digitally, making them easily accessible whenever you need them.

2. **Review Budgets:** Take a close look at your budget and spending habits. Are there areas where you can cut back or reallocate funds towards your financial goals? Use budgeting apps or spreadsheets to track your expenses and identify areas for improvement. Aim to create a realistic budget that aligns with your financial priorities.

3. **Consolidate Accounts:** If you have multiple bank accounts, credit cards, or investment accounts scattered across different institutions, consider consolidating them. Having fewer accounts can simplify your financial management and reduce fees. Look for opportunities to transfer balances to accounts with better terms or consolidate high-interest debt into a single, more manageable loan.

4. **Reassess Saving and Investment Portfolios:** Review your saving and investment strategies to ensure they are still aligned with your financial goals and risk tolerance.

Are you on track to meet your short-term and long-term objectives? Consider rebalancing your investment portfolio to maintain an appropriate asset allocation. Explore different savings vehicles, such as high-yield savings accounts or certificates of deposit (CDs), to maximize returns on your cash reserves.

5. **Set SMART Financial Goals:** Take this opportunity to set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) financial goals for the rest of the year. Whether it's building an emergency fund, paying off debt, saving for a major purchase, or investing for retirement, having clear goals will keep you focused and motivated. Break down larger goals into smaller milestones to track your progress along the way.



Resources and Tools:

Credit union members can leverage various resources and tools to streamline their finances and achieve financial success:

- **Financial Education Seminars & Courses:** The Antigua & Barbuda Cooperative League and many credit unions offer courses on topics such as budgeting and debt management. Attend these sessions to gain valuable insights and practical tips for improving your financial literacy.
- **Online Banking and Mobile Apps:** Take advantage of your credit union's online banking platform and mobile apps to conveniently manage your accounts, track spending, and set up automatic transfers or bill payments.
- **Credit Counseling Services:** If you're struggling with debt or credit issues, consider seeking assistance from your credit union's loan officers who can provide advice. They can help you develop a plan to repay debt and improve your credit.

By taking the time to declutter your finances and refresh your financial goals this quarter, you can set yourself up for greater financial wellness and success in the months ahead. Remember, small changes today can lead to big rewards tomorrow. Happy spring cleaning!



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Recently, our CEO, Dorothea Blackman Brown had the opportunity to attend CaribDE49 in Montego Bay, Jamaica. The following is an article reproduced from the Jamaica Gleaner talking about this important training seminar, critical to the cooperative movement.

CaribeDe hosts 49th training seminar

FORTY-ONE CREDIT union staff from 12 countries around the Caribbean convened at the Sea Garden Resort & Spa in Montego Bay to participate in the 49th staging of the Caribbean Development Educator (CaribDE) programme. This was a one-week immersion on the financial cooperative movement, which took place from Monday, March 11 to Friday 15.

Participants who graduate from the programme, dubbed by them as a “rigorous masterclass”, become development educators and join ranks with thousands of others across the globe. Gateway Co-operative Credit Union who have been patrons of the programme for the last four years, jointly hosted the event.

CaribDE is one of seven existing worldwide. In addition to the Caribbean, the development programme convenes in the USA, Canada, Africa, Asia, Europe and the Philippines every year.

The Caribbean Development programme has graduated approximately 1,779 candidates since its inception in 2010. Facilitator and director, Melvin Edwards of St Kitts & Nevis, conceptualised the Caribbean Development Programme as a voluntary development project after completing a similar programme internationally. Edwards is the former president of both the Caribbean Confederation of Credit Unions and the World Credit Union Council.

The Jamaica Gleaner. (2024, March 27). CaribDE hosts 49th training seminar. The Jamaica Gleaner, pp. C7. (Original publication date: 2024, March 27)





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CORPORATE GOVERNANCE TRAINING


| DATE | TIME | TARGET AUDIENCE |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| March 27, 2024 | 5:30 - 7:00 PM | Volunteers & Managers |
| April 3, 2024 | 2:30 - 4:00 PM | Staff |



FACILITATOR
MORVIN G WILLIAMS

Director of International Banks & Non Banks,
Financial Services Regulatory Commission

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Word Search

Y M M G S X W Z X Z E T R M O V H N D I
E C B F Y C O H B A C C S G Y P D D I O
X Q L T J E M L R E W I B M U I S N R S
N Q S A O L J W P H N Q F L Z K C Y Y Y
W D T D S E X S Q I Z J E L E L Q T W T
N N H V O B E J M S Q W H Q U R I I A I
J R G O L R G E D Y S N U S E N U S L L
Y E I C I A F N V Y I I I P U Z N R P A
Q M R A D T B U I M T O R T Y B V E E N
E P O C A I S Y O Y N E R V T V L V G O
T O X Y R O Q V R V S O L X I M I I E I
R W S X I N P X A E P W X T N F B D C T
W E Z J T R W J N P X U T I G E E Y I C
D R D T Y O Q T O A J N K Q I D R T T E
U M G T P O A I J T A P F W D Q A I S S
S E Q L N T Q P S S E R G O R P T L U R
P N U P I H S R E D A E L U X L I A J E
S T C O I J I Q C E M P A T H Y O U X T
H W N J Z U A M T C A S T P A X N Q E N
Z H Q L J E T H L I V S M M P W V E S I

Words can be found in any direction (including diagonals) and can overlap each other. Use the word bank below.

Word Bank

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. feminism | 6. respect | 12. empowerment | 17. leadership |
| 2. representation | 7. advocacy | 13. equality | 18. diversity |
| 3. liberation | 8. solidarity | 14. inclusion | 19. celebration |
| 4. justice | 9. rights | 15. equity | 20. intersectionality |
| 5. dignity | 10. empathy | 16. progress | |
| | 11. opportunity | | |



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We'd love to hear from you. Please contact us at.....

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