



Weekly Digest

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Editorial

Welcome to issue eleven of the Weekly Digest. This week we examine the role of the ICA in fighting the pandemic of HIV/AIDS. The report challenges all of us to do more. We also profile the work and staff of the ICA in East, Central and Southern Africa. Finally, we examine the work of the ICA's research committees. A key issue in this area is to develop better ways of connecting researchers with the everyday realities facing co-operatives. As always we would welcome your comments.

HIV/AIDS addressed by Co-op Leaders in India



Co-operative leaders confirmed their political will and commitment to immediate action to fight HIV/AIDS at a workshop on HIV/AIDS awareness organised by ICA ROAP in collaboration with UNAIDS India and the National Co-operative Union of India NCUI.

Co-operative and government leaders from four states of India discussed how they could tackle the HIV/AIDS spread in India by co-operative action. The workshop participants learned that India has the second highest number of cases of HIV/AIDS in the world with nearly 5 million people infected. They were also reminded by Dr. S.S. Sisodia,



President of NCUI and ICA Board member, of the potential scope for action by the movement in India as it counted over 236 million members. Ms. Maria Elena Chavez Hertig, ICA Deputy Director General noted the high prevalence rates were linked to the imbalance between the roles of women and men, and thus promoting gender equality was an effective means to also help tackle the problem. Government representatives described their policy on HIV/AIDS and expressed the hope that co-operatives would take this issue on through their vast networks. Participants were taken also through effective sensitisation sessions by UNAIDS and ILO which led to concrete recommendations.

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Although co-operatives in the most affected states of India are already engaged in some member education and training programmes on HIV/AIDS, co-operative leaders vowed to spread the fight further. They agreed to develop materials to create awareness, distribute condoms through consumer co-operatives, provide training, and partner with national, state and district government, training and health institutions, NGOs and UNAIDS India. More information is available from Savitri Singh, Gender Programme Advisor of ICA ROAP, savitrisingh@icaroop.coop, who organised the workshop.

HIV/AIDS Taking its Toll on Co-ops in Africa

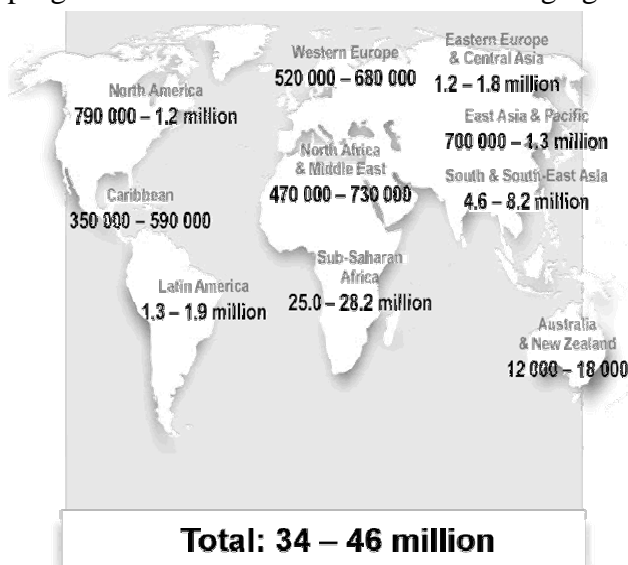
African co-operatives are hard hit by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The ICA Regional Office for East, Central and Southern Africa (ROECSA) carried out an initial survey on the impact of HIV/AIDS on co-operatives in Kenya, and their response. This survey revealed the scope of the tragedy. As the Board Chair of Nakurur Teachers Savings and Credit Co-operative sadly noted, “It is no more a shame to talk about AIDS in our country because we have victims with us ... The toll from AIDS death is very high. AIDS has claimed a lot of lives in this town. Sincerely – we are dying”. Care for chronically ill family members, losing productive adults in the household and taking in orphans, affects a huge number of co-operative members. All three have serious economic repercussions on the co-operative too. As death associated with HIV/AIDS increase, savings and credit co-operatives experience delinquency on loan repayments and defaults. Teacher’s co-operatives report that they are losing competent people and a void is left behind. Insurance co-operatives are forecasting difficulties as payouts and administrative costs increase with insufficient capitalisation.



Co-operatives are mobilising against HIV/AIDS with education programmes, but also examining policies and capitalisation strategies. ROECSA has collaborated with ILO, the Swedish Co-operative Centre and the Canadian Co-operative Association in regional workshops and activities. It has also identified potential partners for co-operatives in the region to undertake specific activities, and has initiated a network to share information – see www.icaroeCSA.coop/net_d.php?net_id=2 for information.

ICA Gender Equality Proposes ICA Strategy to Fight HIV/AIDS

The ICA Gender Equality Committee as a follow-up to its seminar: “Health, Gender and HIV/AIDS: Co-operatives Care!” is proposing a global strategy for ICA to encourage its members to address the HIV/AIDS issue. The Committee notes that ICA through its member network has the capacity to reach over 760 million individuals. With significant membership in nearly 100 countries, ICA could undertake a more systematic programme to raise awareness encouraging co-operatives around the world to address the HIV/AIDS



pandemic within their own organisations and the communities which they serve. Nearly 46 million people were infected with HIV/AIDS in 2003; co-operatives can help stop the spread.

The Strategy in broad terms is to build awareness among the movement emphasising the negative impact of the pandemic on the economic and social roles of co-operatives worldwide. It calls for dissemination of information and materials, training of trainers, sharing good practice through networking and seeking partnerships for implementation of activities.

The Board will review the proposal at its meeting in Beijing on 23-25 April 2004.

Get to Know Your ICA – Meet the Staff and Officials

This week we meet Bernard Kadasia, ICA Regional Director for East, Central and Southern Africa. Bernard (*photo opposite*) joined the regional ICA Office in 1987. He held a variety of positions within the office and was appointed Regional Director in 2002.

Before joining the ICA, Bernard worked as a government co-operative officer in Kenya and later was head of planning at the Kenya National Federation of Co-operatives. “At this point I thought that I should go and find out exactly what it was that made profit-maximising organisations different. I joined Nestlé Foods as Management Accountant for two years. I found a very different work environment. There the customer was very important and yet distant - we looked at only aspects of the customer, never the whole person. In seventeen years I have come to know the region and the co-operative people intimately. I have carried out numerous studies and workshops at some of the most remote sites”. When he is not writing project proposals, lobbying on co-operative policy or giving a keynote address, Bernard is growing coffee and maize or chairing his local community projects committee.



The ICA in East, Central and Southern Africa



The co-operative movement in the region has gone through many changes since the first Regional Office was opened in 1968. The 1970s and early 1980s were very successful, nearly euphoric years. Co-operatives were growing in business volumes and numbers in all the countries of the region. The mid-80s saw major doubts setting in as members became more and more disillusioned by excessive state control and failing business performance. The 1990s were the worst years for co-operatives in the region. They were all, but left to compete in imperfect, liberalised and globalised markets. Much of the co-operative movement collapsed, but many genuine spontaneous grassroots initiatives are now sprouting, first in

the microfinance field, but also in agriculture. Governments and development agencies are once more reaffirming support and belief in the co-operative model.

The main priorities of the Regional Office are helping co-operatives regain their rightful position. This entails lobbying governments and key decision makers in the community to understand and support co-operatives. Also needed are good laws and supportive policies that recognise the important role that co-operatives can play in national socio-economic development and in improving individual livelihoods.

The Regional Office helps co-operatives to become good businesses and true co-operatives. It identifies and disseminates Best Practice, generating and sharing new approaches, and supporting their replication or adaptation. Other key areas are professional management, corporate governance, business performance, competition, globalisation, HIV/AIDS, Gender, Image and Publicity, and Poverty Reduction. ICA ROECSA has members in Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, but also works in Ethiopia, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa and Zimbabwe. It is estimated that there are 12 million individual members and 40,000 co-operatives in the region. The photo, above left shows members of ICA Staff with a delegation of representatives of Government and co-operatives from South Africa, above right shows a coffee farm in Uganda where ROECSA are working with Norgesvel from Norway (www.norgesvel.no) to improve agricultural productivity and farm incomes.



Strengthening Co-ops in Laos

Co-operative development is one of ICA ROAP's priority areas. The Regional Office is focusing on those countries of Asia-Pacific where co-operatives have been victims of political ideology or instability. In this context, three countries, Afghanistan, Cambodia and Laos PDR have been identified.



Mr. Shil Kwan Lee, Regional Director, along with Mr. B.D. Sharma, Senior Consultant, visited Laos PDR on 8-11 April and held extensive discussions with senior officials in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, (MAF) and with leaders of water user associations, farmers and other self-help groups to examine the possibilities of promoting co-operatives. A National Workshop of agriculture and rural development officials was also held at the same time.

Among the conclusions of the workshop were that earlier co-operatives collapsed due to government interference and members' apathy. There is a need to promote co-operatives; however, this should not be imposed from above. Prospective members should be educated in co-operative principles and management. A few pilot co-operatives could be trialled; if successful a country-wide replication process could be undertaken. The ICA ROAP had a role to play in helping to develop supportive legal frameworks and in organising capacity building programmes.

Last year, ICA ROAP with the support of AGRITERRA of the Netherlands (www.agriterra.org) conducted a detailed study on the promotion of agricultural co-operatives in Laos PDR. The study was circulated at the workshop. Contact P. Nair at ICA ROAP for further details nair@icaroop.coop

Global and Regional Research Networks

Research is one of the ICA's four thematic areas. The ICA Committee on Co-operative Research was formed in 1957. The members of the Committee form a network of individual researchers from over 20 countries in Europe, Asia and America. The Chair of the Research Committee is Akira Kurimoto, (*photo opposite*) akira.kurimoto@jccu.coop from the Consumer Co-operative Institute of Japan. There are Vice Presidents drawn from the various regions, they include



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- South America: Mirta Vuotto, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina, mvuotto@mail.retina.ar
- Asia Pacific: Madhav Madane, Indian Society for Co-operative Studies, Pune, India, mvmadane@pn3.vsnl.net.in
- Europe: Yohanan Stryjan, Södertorns högskola, yohanan.stryjan@sh.se

The Committee acts a bridge between academic research and the co-operative world. It aims at strengthening activities and making the work of researchers more visible, particularly to ordinary managers and co-operators. The Committee holds an International Research Conference every two years normally in conjunction with the ICA General Assembly. Regional Research Conferences are also regularly held, where possible in conjunction with ICA Regional Assemblies. Selected papers from each conference are published in special issues of the Review of International Co-operation (www.ica.coop/ica/review). The next issue of the ICA Review includes papers from two recent research conferences. The *Mapping Co-operative Studies in the New Millennium Conference* (web.uvic.ca/bcics/conferences/map_conf_index), held in British Columbia, Canada and the *Asia-Pacific Co-operative Research Conference* held in the Philippines. A full range of papers from global and regional research conferences from 1996 are available on the ICA's website www.ica.coop/ica/ica/sb/research .

Copies of the Weekly Digest are archived on the ICA's website www.ica.coop.