

Inside this issue:

- From the editor's desk 2
- New members 2
- Statistics — time to act! 2
- Global 300 project 3
- Update on poverty campaign 4
- Regional news: Africa, Asia/Pacific, 6
- International Co-operative Day message 8
- Strong support for co-op day 9
- From the journals 11
- Interview with ICA Director of Development 12
- Calendar 14
- Call for papers 14

2005 International Co-operative Day - 2 July



“Microfinance is our business - co-operating out of poverty”

This year's International Day of Co-operatives on Saturday 2 July focuses on co-operatives and micro-finance.

Co-operatives have been providing microfinance to people throughout the world for over 100 years. Microfinance is a proven and sustainable way out of poverty.

In this the UN Year of Micro-credit we celebrate the long and proud record of co-operatives as pioneers of microfinance.

You can read the ICA's message in full on pages 8 and 9. We also report on how several of our members and partners are celebrating this important day.

Photo shows women members of an African credit co-operative proudly displaying their micro-insurance certificates



How large are the world's largest co-ops?

No one really knows the overall size of the largest co-operatives in the world.

All that is about to change. The ICA is currently compiling a list of the largest,

300 co-operatives and mutual businesses in the world. We intend to produce an annual ranking by turnover, along with other criteria including assets, membership and employees. See page 3 for more details of this new project.

Read more about our Global 300 Project

Editor: Garry Cronan
cronan@ica.coop

www.ica.coop

From the editor's desk



Welcome to the forty-second issue of the *Digest*.

This Digest has a name change. We are now called the **ICA Digest**. Our new title better reflects the fact that we are being produced every two to three weeks rather than weekly and that we now contain features as well as news.

Saturday, 2 July is International Co-operative Day.

We include the ICA message along with other messages of support from partners and members.

In a packed issue, we also report on activities from our regions and bring you up to date on the latest news from our global poverty campaign.

The importance of good reliable statistics is again mentioned as is our exciting new **Global 300** pro-

ject which you will be hearing more about in coming months.

In an extended interview with the ICA's Director of Development, Jan-Eirik Imbsen, he outlines possible new directions for our long-running development activities.

As usual we would welcome your comments.

Garry Cronan

ICA membership continues to grow

The ICA has two new members. Both organisations were approved at the last ICA Board meeting and have subsequently formally joined. They are:

- Land O'Lakes - International Development Division, (USA). Land O'Lakes is a USA based food and agricultural co-operative. Its International Development Division provides technical assistance, co-operative education and training and is involved in co-operative research. Land O'Lakes has 1,300 member associations and 6,000 individual members. It has over 6,500 employees with revenues of USD 6.2 billion. See www.landolakesinc.com
- Oikocredit—Ecumenical Development Co-operative Society, (Netherlands). Oikocredit is a unique international co-operative society, registered under Dutch law. It is one of the largest financiers of microfinance in the world. At the end of 2004, it supported over 398 projects with outstanding capital of 114 million euros. See www.oikocredit.org

Land O'Lakes, Inc.



We now have 223 members from 89 countries

Time to act on statistics!

Someone once said that there were "lies, damn lies and statistics"!

The problem for co-operatives is not so much the misuse of statistics, as their absence.

The lack of good, reliable and supportable statistics means the co-operative movement is hostage to, if not lies, then myths and misunderstanding. We need to be able to support our case

on the importance of co-operatives with well researched, reliable statistics.

Such a platform provides a solid base for communications, advocacy, representation and development.

There are a number of initiatives and activities currently underway at global, regional, sectoral and national levels aimed at improving the gathering and analysis of statistics.

It is time for a concerted effort to bring these initiatives together in such a way that we can all benefit through the sharing of such information. It is in the interests of all our members and the international movement generally that we act on this as a matter of urgency. We will shortly be making an announcement about how this might happen. Contact: Maria Elena Chávez Hertig chavez@ica.coop



Don't turn your back on AIDS campaign

The ICA Strategy for Co-operatives Fighting HIV/AIDS, approved in April 2004, calls on the ICA and its members to make efforts to help combat the spread of HIV/AIDS as well as help mitigate its impact.

Raising awareness is just one of the actions that the ICA Board recommended to ICA members. UN AIDS has shared its posters from the World AIDS Campaign to help governments and civil society around the world in their own campaigns. Copies can be ordered free of charge in English, French, Spanish, Russian from agarwals@unaids.org.

The ICA is committed to stopping HIV/AIDS and has already undertaken a number of seminars in Africa

and Asia. A workshop organised by the ICA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific will be held on 1-2 July 2005 in Bangkok in collaboration with the Co-operative League of Thailand (CLT).

The ICA has also been invited to participate in expert group meetings of HIV/AIDS in recognition of its potential in encouraging co-operatives around the world to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic within their own organisations and the communities which they serve. The most recent meeting was on the development of ILO/World Health Organisation guidelines for health care professionals who work



Copies of this and other posters can be ordered free of charge from agarwals@unaids.org.

Is your co-operative one of the top 300 in the world?

You will soon be able to find out.

The ICA has commenced detailed work to identify the world's largest co-operative businesses.

Preliminary estimates suggest that the largest 300 co-operatives and mutual organisations are a very real and significant global presence. The aggregate turnover is much larger than expected and they are leaders in many market segments and countries. Over 26 countries are represented on the global list so far.

You could be excused for not knowing this. It is rarely reported, virtually

invisible to the mainstream media, governments and the wider community. If you read the main business press, co-operatives appear to have no real role in a globalised and competitive economy.

The news however is that they do! They are proving it every day of the week.

Many of the Global 300 have been competing and growing for at least fifty years, they are some of the oldest and most competitive businesses in the world and they represent the tip of the iceberg of co-operative enterprise throughout the world.

This project is designed to

show the world the importance of co-operatives, by highlighting the size and economic significance of the largest co-operatives.

The figures we are compiling are based on audited public accounts. However, we need your help in ensuring that we have included everyone in our list.

If you have a turnover of over USD 100 million then you may possibly be on the list. Can you please let us know?

For further details about this project, please contact Garry Cronan cronan@ica.coop

Global 300 Project

“...this project is designed to show that being a co-operative is equated with success, and that co-ops are competing with the best in the world - the figures will prove it...”

COOPERATING OUT OF POVERTY



Ivano Barberini,
ICA President,
who initiated the
ICA's global poverty
campaign

New Co-operating Out of Poverty Website to be launched

A new *Co-operating Out of Poverty* website is to be launched, shortly.

The new site will support our poverty campaign and contain the very latest information about its activities and relevant background documents and publications on co-operatives and poverty. It will also link to the GCAP campaign.

The ICA Director-

General, Iain Macdonald, is currently writing to all ICA members and partner organisations with details of the new website and an outline of the campaign, including an executive summary of the key background document.

Contact: Jan-Eirik
I m b s e n [i m b -
sen@ica.coop](mailto:imb-sen@ica.coop)



www.outofpoverty.coop

ICA meets with GCAP campaign leader



Dr Kumi Naidoo is the
Secretary General and CEO
of [CIVICUS](http://www.civicus.org), as well as chair
of the GCAP campaign

Senior ICA staff recently met with Dr Kumi Naidoo, the chair of the GCAP campaign.

The meeting was held in Geneva on 28 June 2005. Its purpose was to discuss the co-ordination and involvement of the ICA in GCAP activities as well as more general international development issues.

Dr Naidoo is a former Rhodes scholar, with a deep knowledge and experience in civil society. He was the first civil soci-

ety leader to be invited to give the World Bank Presidential Fellows Lecture in 2003, and was recently appointed by the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the eminent Persons Group on United Nations-Civil Society Relations.

Dr Naidoo has been greatly encouraged by the ICA's engagement with the GCAP call to action. He indicated that he looked forward to a much closer association in the future.

The ICA has previously



www.whiteband.org/

worked with CIVICUS and Dr Naidoo at the World Civil Society Conference in 1999.

ICA meets with UK Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development



Gareth Thomas MP

Gareth Thomas MP, UK Co-operative Party Chair and UK Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development recently visited Geneva for talks with the ICA on furthering the UK Government's support for international co-operative development.

The ICA took the opportunity to brief him on the *Co-operating Out of Poverty* campaign, and the *Co-operative Facility for Africa* project, see [Digest No 41](#).

The Under-Secretary is a strong supporter of the role co-operatives can play in reducing poverty and expressed interest in being

involved in a number of the ICA's and ILO initiatives in this area.

He also indicated that he would be encouraging the active participation of senior staff from the UK's African Commission in the ICA's forthcoming African Ministerial Conference in Lesotho, see page 6.

ICA members involved in GCAP White Band day

The 1st of July is the world's poorest countries. White Band day.

This is one of the most visual symbols, so far of the GCAP call to action against poverty.

Co-op stores around the UK are supporting the UK GCAP coalition partner *Make Poverty History*.

The Co-op stores are the only major retailer to be selling the bands, which have gone on sale in advance of the G8 Summit in Scotland where the leaders of the world's richest countries will be urged to deliver trade justice, debt relief and more and better aid for

The wristbands are currently available in stores operated by the Co-operative Group, Midlands Co-op, OSG, Scotmid, Plymouth and SW Co-op, Chelmsford Star, Lothian and Borders, Ipswich & Norwich and West Midlands societies.

The Co-operative Group has also demonstrated its

additional support for the coalition's campaign by wrapping its supermarket in the small Perthshire town of Auchterarder, close to the G8 Summit venue at Gleneagles, in a symbolic white band.

For more information of how the consumer co-ops in the UK are supporting this campaign see www.co-op.co.uk/

The Auchterarder Co-op store wrapped in a white Make Poverty History band

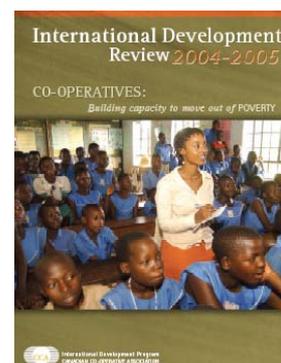
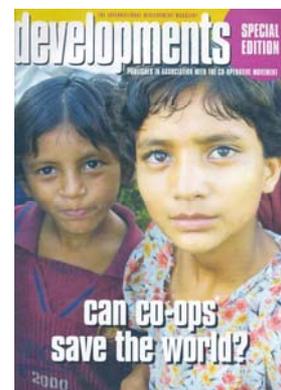


COOPERATING
OUT
OF
POVERTY

More books, publications on co-ops and poverty reduction

Our last issue of the [Digest No 41](#), reported on a number of books and magazines which examined the role of co-operatives in poverty reduction. We have been advised by our members of a number of other publications on this topic. These included:

- The international development magazine *developments* has recently devoted a special issue to covering the role of co-operatives in poverty reduction. The magazine was produced in association with the UK's Co-operative College. The 20-page special issue contains a range of articles on fair trade, things you didn't know about co-ops, the role of electricity co-ops in Bangladesh, rebuilding after the tsunami as well as the role co-operatives play in helping poor Africans help themselves. See www.developments.org.uk
- *International Development Review 2004-2005* is a look back at Canadian Co-operative Association's (CCA) international co-operative development work over the past year. The theme for this issue is "building capacity to move out of poverty". The Review includes articles on the tsunami, agricultural development, health, housing and food security. It outlines the role of CCA and its long-standing international co-operative development programme.
- Another CCA publication is the *International Development Digest*. This publication is published three times a year and provides readers with in-depth stories about people using co-operative approaches to break out of poverty. www.coopscanada.coop/resources/publications/developmentdigest/



Regional News Africa

ICA workshops on microfinance and agriculture

In May and June 2005 the ICA Regional Office for Africa held two workshops in the region.



Participants at the Agricultural Marketing workshop in Lusaka, Zambia

“...recommendations focused on the need to increase participation of African agricultural co-operatives in trade agreements like the EU-ACP Cotonou Agreement...”



A.S. Kibora, Regional Director of ICA Africa, involved in detailed planning with members and government for the forthcoming African Ministerial Conference in Lesotho

The workshops are part of two ongoing projects on rural finance and agricultural marketing.

The first workshop was ICA Africa's 2005 Co-operative Microfinance Workshop on 9-11 May, in Lilongwe, Malawi. The topics focused on financial co-operatives and included accounting and auditing, corporate governance and capacity building.

Over thirty participants attended from Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, Swaziland and Uganda. The workshop was opened by the Minister for Trade and Private Sector Development in the Government of Malawi. Others attending included A. S. Kibora, ICA Regional Di-

rector for Africa and S. Kiwanuka, the Rural Finance Project Manager.

Key recommendations included the need to take stock of the available accounting packages being used by financial co-

operatives in the region and harmonising accounting practices. It was further recommended that good corporate practices should be embraced by financial co-operatives and performance measures for the boards instituted. Participants took part in a field study visit to examine how the study circle approach is implemented in member education and training among rural financial co-operatives.

The second event was the Agricultural Marketing Workshop of the AGRIMAT Africa Network. It took place in Lusaka, Zambia, from 15-17 June 2005. The Workshop was attended by twenty-five participants from six countries, including Zimbabwe, Swazi-

land, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia. It was opened by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives of Zambia. Also attending was S. Kibora, S. Kiwanuka and V. Lubasi, senior consultant.

The key recommendations made at the workshop focused on the need to increase participation of agricultural co-operatives in regional trade and how they can exploit trading agreements like the EU-ACP Cotonou Agreement.

Differences in standards of traded commodities was identified as a barrier to promotion of regional trade. The ICA was requested to survey the prevailing national standards in key traded commodities in the region as a first step. Another recommendation focused on the need to set up national committees and a regional task force on co-operative lobbying and advocacy to support the ICA/ROAF initiatives and actions. For more information contact A.S. Kibora ski-bora@icaafrica.coop

Plans proceeding for next African Ministerial Conference

Planning is well advanced for the 8th ICA African Ministerial Co-operative Conference to be held in Lesotho from 6-9 September 2005.

Some 20 African member states will be participating with Ministers of Co-operatives, senior officials

from Departments of Co-operatives; leaders of national co-operative apex bodies plus a number of international co-operative development agencies working in Africa all attending.

Invitations have also been sent to representatives of

the African Union and the Africa Commission. Given the increasing attention being paid to Africa the 8th Ministerial Conference is shaping up as the most important yet.

Contact A.S. Kibora, ski-bora@icaafrica.coop

Centre for Women Artisans in Gujarat, India

Co-operatives are often used in helping communities rebuild after natural disasters like the recent tsunami or the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat, India.

In Kutch district in Gujarat, a new tie dye facility for women artisans has just been opened. The facility has been constructed under the EU - ICA Domus Trust Project on Post Earthquake Rehabilitation of Artisans in Kutch.

The new centre will be managed by elected leaders of the 27 local self-help groups now

federated into a co-operative society of women tie dye artisans.

The co-operative has a membership of 461 artisans. Mr. Sanjay Joshi, Project Manager of EU - ICA Domus Trust Project, has been nominated as the Manager of the co-operative society.

The facility will provide design, processing and value-adding services so enabling the products to reach wider and more diverse markets throughout India.

The new centre was opened on 4 June by the Governor of Gujarat state and attended by over 450 women artisans. Rajiv I.D. Mehta, Director,

Regional News Asia



A.K.Taneja, Programme Officer at the ICA New Delhi office, and B.D. Sharma, senior consultant of ICA Domus Trust, also attended.

Some of the women co-operative members at the opening of the new facility in Gujarat

Regional co-operative health organisation meets

A special report on the Implementation of Micro Insurance and its relationship to Health Co-operatives was presented at a meeting of the Asia-Pacific Health Co-operative Organisation, (APHCO) in Tellicherry, Kerala, India earlier this year.

The occasion was the 11th Board Meeting and 5th General Meeting of APHCO. APHCO is the

ICA's regional health sectoral organisation.

The meetings were hosted jointly by Tellicherry Co-operative Hospital and Kerala Co-operative Hospitals Federation; 31 people from India, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal and Sri Lanka attended. Apart from the special report the meeting approved APHCO's work programme for the next two years and admitted two new members - Colombo Co-operative



Hospital and Nuwara-Eliya Multipurpose Co-operative Society Ltd, both from Sri Lanka. The chair of APHCO is Dr. Yasuyuki Takahashi, from Japan. Their next meeting will be in Vietnam.

APHCO attendees

Forthcoming events in Asia Pacific region

There are a number of events planned for the next few months in the Asia-Pacific region. These include:

- Meeting of the ICA Asia-Pacific Youth Steering Committee, 15 - 16/07/2005
- 5th ICA/Japan Women Leaders' Training Course, 25 - 28/09/2005. The leaders training course will be held in Malaysia and Japan.
- ICA/CLT HIV/AIDS Workshop for Co-op Leaders, 1 - 2/07/2005
- National Institute of Co-operative Development, Polgolla, Kandy, Sri Lanka, 1 - 6/08/2005

For more information click on the image of the ICA Asia Pacific's website opposite.

www.icaroap.coop/events



2005 International Co-operative Day Message

“...Co-operatives are among the most successful microfinance institutions”

83rd ICA International Co-operative Day 11th UN International Day of Co-operatives 2 July 2005

“Access to finance and to financial services is essential to reduce poverty. Microcredit, or more broadly microfinance is one way of assisting poor and low-income communities gain access to these services. It is changing the daily lives of women and men, improving their living standards and revitalising communities.

This is the United Nation's Year of Microcredit. It is also the year in which we celebrate

twenty years - it has over a century of history.

Savings and credit co-operatives (or credit unions) were pioneered by local leaders such as Friedrich Raiffeisen and Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch in the 19th century as a means to reduce poverty and indebtedness among small farmers and craftsmen in urban and rural areas.

Today, they exist and thrive in every region of the world, and have been able to adapt to very different socio-economic environments. Some co-operative banks in the industrialised world have become powerful financial institutions. In fact in many high-income countries co-operative banks are often the only banking types with a broad branch network ensuring proximity to clients as well as financial services adapted to the communities that they serve. They provide competitive rates of interest, while taking into consideration local realities.

Credit unions too have demonstrated that they can provide microfinance services to poor and low-income communities in a sustainable way. Being rooted in local communities and managed by local people, such co-operatives can take advantage of social capital in situations where financial capital is scarce. The role of credit unions in the provision of microcredit to women is especially noteworthy. For example, access to financial services has enabled women around the world to start small enterprises which in turn have improved the livelihoods of their families allowing them to send their children to school and to access health-care and decent housing.

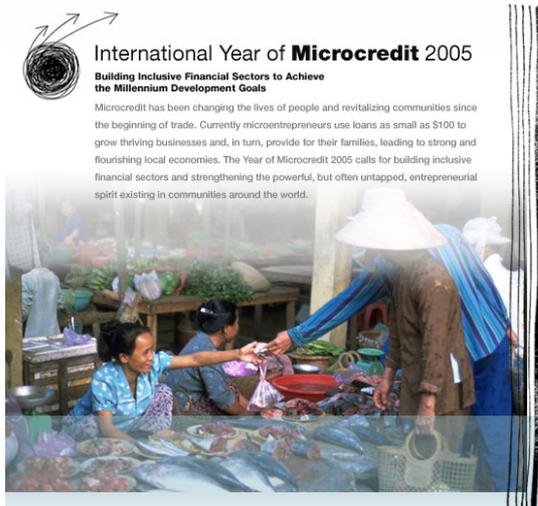
Credit unions are also active

in remittance schemes to enable families to access financial resources in a fair and low-cost manner, while offering them financial services suited to their needs on both the sender and receiver side. Capacity-building in money management, saving approaches and enterprise planning have also proven to be essential building blocks for effective and sustainable co-operatively managed microfinance.

Micro-insurance schemes run by co-operatives provide services such as loan protection, health, life, property and funeral insurance to name only a few. Co-operatives thus protect the assets of members, no matter how small, to ensure that they do not fall into poverty as well to protect their lower-income members.

Co-operatively managed microfinance institutions enable the poor to pool their resources so that they can be used for productive investments and job creation within a sustainable future. The social control and democratic management style that are intrinsic to co-operatives secure savings even at low levels and ensure repayment of loans. Co-operatives thus provide the women and men with appropriate financial solutions that enable them to collectively work towards improved living standards whether in low-income countries or in the highly industrialised.

On Saturday 2 July, the ICA calls on co-operatives around the world to celebrate the co-operative movement's proud history of over 100 years of microfinance services to people throughout the world.”



International Year of **Microcredit** 2005

Building Inclusive Financial Sectors to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals

Microcredit has been changing the lives of people and revitalizing communities since the beginning of trade. Currently microentrepreneurs use loans as small as \$100 to grow thriving businesses and, in turn, provide for their families, leading to strong and flourishing local economies. The Year of Microcredit 2005 calls for building inclusive financial sectors and strengthening the powerful, but often untapped, entrepreneurial spirit existing in communities around the world.

The ICA message has been translated and disseminated widely in such countries as Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Czech Republic, Finland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Romania, Thailand, and Vietnam.

See also
www.ica.coop/ica/ica/coopday/

the role co-operatives have played in providing microfinance to generations of people. A co-operative approach to microfinance is based on encouraging self-help. It allows people to co-operate out of poverty as well as helping them from falling into poverty.

Co-operatives are amongst the most successful microfinance institutions. In particular, savings and credit co-operatives, insurance co-operatives and mutuals, and co-operative banks have assisted many millions of people to help themselves and build a more secure and sustainable future. Microfinance is not something that co-operatives started doing in the last

Wide variety of activities to celebrate International Co-operative Day

ICA members around the world have chosen to

cesses and needs of their specific movements.



The poster drawn by a student in Argentina "co-operation gives us freedom, ...gives us security" for a better future...."

celebrate Co-operative Day with meetings, events for members, government officials and advocacy events, fairs, contests and greeting cards. The ICA message and theme have been featured.

The ICA's message has also inspired co-operatives to use the occasion to issue their own messages focusing attention on the suc-

In Argentina, the co-operative movement will hold a joint celebration with the provincial authorities of Buenos Aires while in Iran a joint celebration with the Ministry of Agriculture will be held.

In Thailand, the Co-operative League is sponsoring an event where over 250 young people are expected to participate. To raise awareness on co-operatives, they have also sponsored a painting contest on the theme of "Co-operatives Concern to Sustainable Development of Communities". Finally, CLT has chosen ICD to issue scholarships to twelve students selected from

co-operatives in the Tsunami affected area in Thailand.

In Vietnam the ICA message was featured during Vietnamese Press Day while in Catalunya, Spain, an event will highlight the social responsibility of co-operatives.



These activities are all aimed at raising awareness on the co-operative form of enterprise and its role in improving the lives of people.

2005 International Co-operative Day

Poster from the co-operative movement of El Salvador for International Day of Co-operatives provided by ICA member, FEDECACES

"Co-ops a force for good around world"

Paul Hazen, President and CEO of the National Co-operative Business Association of the USA, told a United Nations panel in New York that co-operatives can be a "tremendous force for good" in the developing world.

Speaking at an event marking the International Day of Co-operatives, Paul Hazen said co-operative development boosts economies while also fostering political stability in some of the world's poorest countries.

The UN seminar was organised by DESA, ILO, DPI, the Mission of Mongolia and NCBA. Other speakers included Djankou Ndjoukou, ILO, Valerie Brunig, WOCCU, and Henriette Keijzers from the United Nations Capital Development Fund who spoke on the fund's microfinance work in the least developed countries.

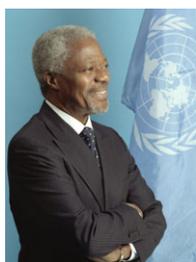


Microfinance enables people such as this woman to start her own business

The ICA Message is available in English, French, Spanish, Catalan, Finnish, Italian, Japanese and Portuguese on the ICA website www.ica.coop/icala/

Contact Felice Llamas, llamas@un.org

2005 International Co-operative Day



UN Secretary General Kofi Annan

“...the United Nations works hard to promote co-operatives. On this International Day, I strongly encourage Governments and all stakeholders to do so as well...”

Kofi Annan

Strong support for International Co-operative Day

There have been strong expressions of support from several major international organisations for this year's International Co-operative Day. This reflects the importance and the regard with which this day is viewed by many of our partner organisa-

United Nations Secretary General's message

The following are extracts from the UN Secretary General's International Co-operative Day message.

“Microfinance is our Business! Co-operating out of Poverty” is a fitting theme for the International Day of Co-operatives..... UN studies suggest that, by providing improved access to credit, safe and secure savings and insurance, such services can help poor people to boost their incomes, protect their assets and reduce their vulnerability to crises.....

That is why, in our global effort to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development, we should view co-operatives as instruments of proven effectiveness in extending the reach of microfinance to poor people, particularly women, and thereby empowering them to take control of their own lives. For that reason, the United Nations works hard to promote co-operatives. On this International Day, I strongly encourage Governments and all stakeholders to do so as well. **Kofi Annan**

ILO's Co-operative Day message

The International Labour Office's message reflects that organisation's long-standing commitment to co-operatives. Some extracts from the message of Juan Somavia, the ILO DG's message are reproduced here.

“The ILO is pleased to join the international co-operative movement in celebrating the 83rd ICA International Co-operative Day, and the 11th UN International Day of Co-operatives. In the Year of Microcredit, it is most fitting that we put the spotlight on the connection between co-operatives and financial services and their role in effective strategies for poverty reduction.

The ILO is proud to be a founding member of the global campaign “Co-operating out of Poverty” – an outcome of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the ILO and the ICA in February 2004. This Campaign is also a valuable contribution to the implementation of ILO Recommendation 193 (2002) on the Promotion of Co-operatives. The ILO remains committed to promoting co-operatives, including financial co-operatives, as a key means of realising the goal of decent work for all.”

International Federation of Agricultural Producers

“The theme of this Day: Microfinance is our Business! Co-operating out of poverty underscores the essential role of co-operatives in providing microfinance services. For farmers, credit is critical for the development of agriculture, and farmer co-operatives are an adapted tool for financing family farmers' projects.....IFAP calls for much greater attention to be given to helping family farmers to access credit, savings and insurance. Co-operatives are the most appropriate tool in this regard.....”

UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation message

“ Many credit unions or savings and credit co-operatives in developing or transition countries are, in effect, user-owned microfinance institutions offering savings and credit services to their members.The whole principle of co-operation remains fundamentally important in rural areas.FAO recognises the great potential for co-operatives in the provision of micro financial services.....”

From the journals

This week we continue our popular new series by looking not only at the journals of our members but also at publications which are produced by organisations or institutions which support, represent and promote co-operatives. All three journals featured this week are produced in English and are well worth taking the time to have a look at.

USA: Co-operative Extension Service

Rural Co-operatives magazine is published six times a year by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

It is an award winning publication which carries a wide variety of articles focusing on the USA's farmer-owned co-operators, as well as utility and consumer co-operatives operating in rural areas.

The goal during the publi-

cation's 72-year history has been to expand public understanding of new co-op business models and to provide information that may help improve the operation of co-operatives.

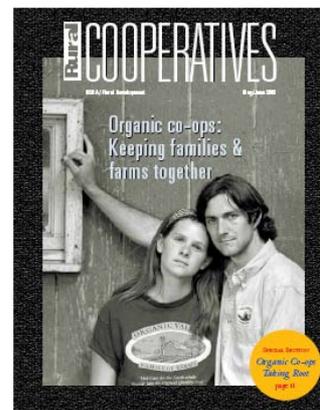
The magazine is, in the words of its editor, "a co-operative effort of the USDA and the co-op sector we work so closely with".

A very wide range of topics are regularly covered including good co-op governance

practices, legal issues, recent court decisions impacting co-ops, features on innovative co-ops along with analyses of co-op failures.

The previous six years' 36 issues are available at the USDA's co-operative service website along with a wealth of other co-op material.

www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/pub/openmag.htm



UK: Co-operatives UK

Co-operatives is the main publication of Co-operatives UK. The most recent issue, the fifth, takes an "unashamedly international slant".

Its focus is on the UK co-operative movement's increasing international engagement. Its lead item is "where to go next in international develop-

ment?" It links to the GCAP campaign.

However the current edition also carries a wide range of other interesting articles, on topics as varied as co-operative housing in the UK, consumer co-operation in Japan and the opportunities business succession provides for co-operative development.

This edition also carries an interview with Jim Brown the author of a recent UK study into capital raising options. He raises some interesting and useful suggestions on this perennial co-operative "problem". See Co-operatives UK website www.cooperatives-uk.coop



International: Oikocredit, Netherlands

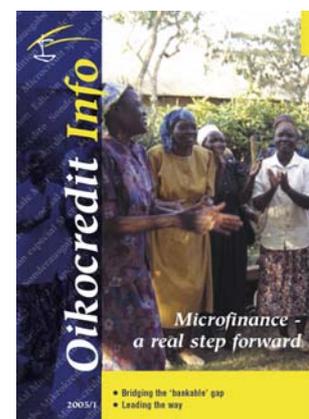
Oikocredit Info is the twice-yearly newsletter of our newest member Oikocredit - Ecumenical Development Co-operative Society, from the Netherlands.

The current issue 2005/1 focuses on the UN Year of Microcredit. It includes articles on reconstructing business opportunities after the

tsunami, bridging the "bankable" gap, and "small loans - great change", the latter article describing Oikocredit's long history of involvement in the fight against poverty.

This edition also includes an article under the title *Hope woven into responsibility*. It examines the experience of the Savings and Credit Co-operative CENT, in Kenya. CENT

started in September 2002 and by the end of 2002 already had 3,860 members. CENT is focused on improving the lives of the rural poor in Kenya. It notes that as if poverty is not enough of a problem, many women in CENT also take care of AIDS orphans. See www.oikocredit.org/site/en/doc.phtml?



Knowledge Exchange

Interview

Director of Development talks about new directions

In the first of a new series of occasional interviews, we talk with the ICA's Director of Development, Jan-Eirik Imbsen. Jan-Eirik is a long-time co-operator and development specialist. He is well known throughout the ICA and among its members and partner organisations as a passionate advocate for the role and importance of co-operatives as an effective development tool.



Jan-Eirik Imbsen on board a flight in West Africa.

Q Firstly, can you tell us a little about yourself and how you came to be interested in co-operatives and co-operative development?

A I was born in Trondheim, Norway. After finishing university, my wife and I went to Kenya for three years as volunteers, teaching at a secondary school in a remote rural area, where we had no water, electricity, medical or other facilities.

These three years gave us the opportunity to see first hand what life is like for people living in a poor, marginalised area. Our son was also born there during this period.

I was subsequently hired by the Royal Norwegian Society for Development (NRD/NORCOOP) to work in Norway with the co-operative development programme initiated by NRD and the Norwegian co-operative movement.

My wife and I then went back to Kenya. I was in charge of the Association

for the Physically Disabled of Kenya. Our twin daughters had just been born. So, all three of our children would spend the bulk of their childhood in Africa.

We spent the next five years in West Africa, where I was in charge of the Norwegian co-operative movement's support programme. I also worked with ICA's Regional Office for West Africa. This led to an invitation to work with ICA's development programme in Geneva.

Q How long has the ICA been involved in co-operative development?

A Our development programme has over forty years of experience. The ICA acts as a coordinator and catalyst of co-operative development, with the aim of promoting and strengthening autonomous and viable co-operatives throughout the world.

Each of the ICA regional offices identifies priorities and regional programmes through a process of consultation with member organisations and development partners.

Q What examples of co-operative development have impressed you?

A When I go to the regions, I try, whenever possible, to visit the field. I do this both to learn, but also to remind myself what

this is all about.

I have seen a lot of good, examples of co-operative development. It is impossible not to be moved when you attend a member education class and you see the pride in the face of a woman when she for the first time writes her name on a board in front of her peers.

In West Africa, co-operative members are increasingly affected by poverty. The ICA has initiated poverty reduction projects targeting women in Benin, Senegal, the Gambia, and Burkina Faso.



Africa: Through microfinance and insurance programmes this woman has become a leading entrepreneur in her local community in Burkina Faso. She can also insure the future of her child and family.

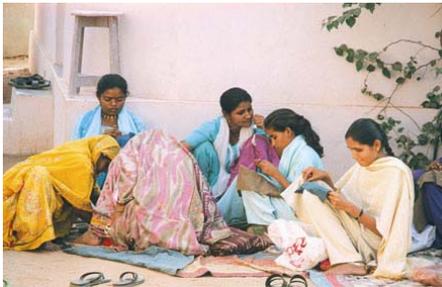
One area that I have visited on many occasions is Kongoussi, a very dry and poor rural area about 150 km north of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso. The programme has involved four village groups in which about 100 women have benefited from loans to undertake income generat-

“...It is impossible not to be moved when you attend a member education class and see the pride in the face of a woman when she for the first time writes her name on a board in front of her peers

Jan-Eirik Imbsen

ing activities and to cover health insurance for women and children. This programme has also been replicated in Senegal.

Another visit was to Costa Rica. The two co-operatives visited were CoopeAgri and CoopeSilencio, both members of the Forestry Network established by the ICA with the support of SO-CODEVI (Canada). These co-operatives show once again the success of the co-operative model in helping to create a better



Asia: women artisans in Gujarat, India

life for people. They are also outstanding examples of fair trade practices and environmental sustainability.

Q You are currently reviewing the ICA's development strategy. What do you see as its likely future direction?

A The ICA's strategy should lead to an enabling environment for co-operative development.

It should have a member service delivery that will strengthen their development as businesses. It should also add value to the work that our partners are doing. This is not new, but the way in which we propose to achieve this objective requires a new

orientation.

Without pre-empting the result of this process, I can foresee more emphasis on the following areas:

- policy development
- advocacy
- lobbying
- representation
- networking
- coordination

The ICA is particularly useful as a network in which co-operatives, governments and development partners can pursue their objectives more effectively.

The ICA should facilitate partnerships; organise joint approaches to multilateral and bi-lateral donors; create access to government policy makers through regular regional collaboration. At the global level, the Joint Meetings of Agencies have led to concrete collaboration. This is something that the ICA is particularly equipped to do by virtue of its being the global co-operative apex organisation.

The ICA should also build up a knowledge base to get co-operatives on to the international development agenda; to produce, collect and disseminate statistics and information on best practices in co-operative development.

Q You are also leading ICA's involvement in its Global Co-operative Poverty Campaign and the linking of this to the Global Call to

Action Against Poverty (GCAP). Can you explain a little about this?

A Poverty reduction is a central theme of our work. The ICA supports the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

Through the joint ICA/ILO campaign, we want to highlight the role and contribution of co-operatives to poverty reduction. We will work at all levels to create a conducive environment for co-operative development by informing and sensitising policy makers in governments and international institutions. The Essential Research for a Co-operative Facility for Africa project (funded by the UK's DfID and implemented by the ILO with ICA involvement) is one example of a concrete project under this campaign.

One of the key benefits of joining the global GCAP campaign is that we can highlight the potential of co-operative enterprise to a broader audience.

The ICA is working with GCAP at global and regional levels. We are also encouraging our members to link with the many national coalitions already campaigning. The GCAP initiative gives the ICA and its members a wider platform on which to build support for co-operative enterprise solutions for poverty reduction.

Interview cont'd



Photo shows Jan-Eirik Imbsen, second from right, with ICA Americas Regional Director, Manuel Marino along with other ICA staff and two co-op staff from CoopeAgri

“...ICA's new strategy should have as one of its main objectives the creation of an enabling environment for co-operative development....”

It should also add value to the work that our partners and members are doing. .”

Jan-Eirik Imbsen

INTERNATIONAL
CO-OPERATIVE
ALLIANCE

ICA
15 Route des Morillons
1218 Grand Saconnex
Geneva, Switzerland
Tel +41 22 929 8888
Fax +41 22 798 4122

www.ica.coop

*Remember the
ICA Digest
Index is now
available at
www.ica.coop*

Copies of the ICA
Digest are ar-
chived on the
ICA's website
www.ica.coop

Call for Papers - "co-operatives and the pursuit of peace"

Below is a call for papers by Dr Ian MacPherson, BCICS, Canada on the theme "Co-operatives and the Pursuit of Peace".

"Co-operative thought and action, by their nature, have been linked to efforts by human beings since the dawn of time to benefit from collaboration, to reach across barriers and competition, and to avoid war. Since the establishment of the formal international co-operative movement in the nineteenth century, co-operative organisations and co-operators have sought, with varying degrees of success, to foster peace among peoples around the globe. The ICA has formally recognised and encouraged the roles that co-operatives can play in ensuring more peaceful relations at local, national and international levels, but there has been limited research undertaken to understand how effective co-operatives have been or could be in achieving such goals. This initiative is intended to help overcome that limitation.

Interested researchers are invited to submit proposals for papers on the theme Co-operatives and the Pursuit of Peace.

The proposals will be considered for a series of inter-related events in June 2006, including a number of conferences. Dr Yehudah Paz, Chairperson, Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Development and member of the Board of the ICA and Ian MacPherson, Director of the British Columbia Institute for Co-operative Studies at the University of Victoria, are organising the participation in these events and the publication of a book." Contact cooppeace@uvic.ca



Dr Ian MacPherson



Dr Yehudah Paz

Calendar of ICA Events and Activities

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 2 July | 2005 International Day of Co-operatives. Contact: Maria Elena Chávez Hertig chavez@ica.coop see www.copacgva.coop |
| 24-27 July | WOCCU, 2005 World Credit Union Conference, Rome, Italy. See www.woccu.org/ |
| 11-12 August | ICA Global Research Conference, Cork, Ireland. Contact: Olive McCarthy, o.mccarthy@ucc.ie see www.ucc.ie/acad/foodecon/CCS/ICA/index.htm |
| 8-9 Sept | ICA African Ministerial Conference, Lesotho. Contact: A.S. Kibora, Regional Director, ICA Africa, skibora@icafrica.coop |
| 18-21 Sept | ICA Board, Sectoral, Thematic, Youth and other pre-General Assembly meetings. Cartagena, Colombia |
| 22-23 Sept | ICA General Assembly, Cartagena, Colombia. Contact: Gabriella Sozánski, sozanski@ica.coop see www.ica.coop or www.icacartagena.coop |
| 10-21 Oct | ILO Course on Co-operative Policy and Legislation, Turin, Italy. (This course will be offered in French) Contact: Jürgen Schwettmann, schwettmann@ilo.org |
| 15-18 Nov | ICMIF Conference, Singapore. See www.icmif.org/ |