



# ICA Digest

Issue 60

February/March 2008

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## Plugging into the global network



**C**o-operatives need to plug into the global network and the ICA can open the door; was the message for co-operators at a recent seminar in Sydney Australia, on the benefits of connecting to the wider co-operative world.

ICA board member, Gun-Britt Mårtensson, Trent Bartlett, CEO Capricorn Society (the only Australian ICA member co-operative) and Peter Gates, CEO The Mercury Centre, a co-operative that builds collaborative enterprises through consultancy, advice, research and training, discussed the advantages of linking into the world-wide co-operative movement through ICA membership. The seminar, organised by the Co-operative Federation of NSW, was held on 18 February during Ms Mårtensson's visit to Australia for the "[Living Co-operatively](#)" Symposium.

Helen McCall, EO of the Federation said, "There are many co-operatives elsewhere in the world that have ideas, and can

offer assistance and trading opportunities. We're keen to help the [Australian] sector to see that they're part of a large, successful international movement.

The challenges of the Australian co-operative sector (geographical and trade isolation, a fractured co-operative community and the need to reach out to new opportunities globally) underscores the importance of the current ICA restructuring process. 2008 is an exciting year as this vital work nears completion. Attention to value-adding and fairness in the subscription formulas that has driven some of the proposed changes to ICA membership are among developments to be welcomed—for the benefit to co-operatives everywhere, of a strong, representative peak body.

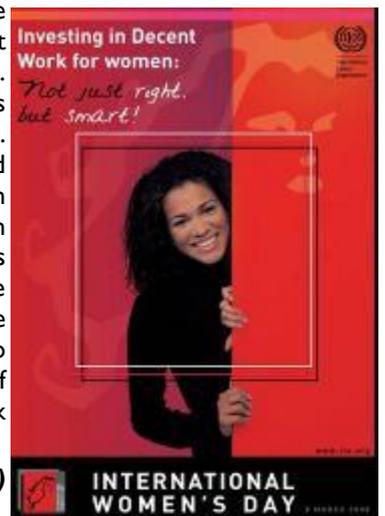


ICA's Gun-Britt Mårtensson in Australia

Miriam Margleez explores the benefits of ICA membership



## Don't forget IWD



(Cont. page 4)



Garry Cronan  
editor

Make sure you don't miss the new weekly blog, commenting on all the latest co-op news and issues being reported on icanews

[www.icanews.coop](http://www.icanews.coop)

## From the editor's desk

Welcome to the sixtieth edition of the *ICA Digest*.

This *Digest* has a decidedly Australian feel. We cover the visit by ICA Board member, Gun-Britt Mårtensson to my old home town of Sydney.

One thing that clearly comes out of our reports of her visit is the real value the Australian movement sees in ICA membership. Trent Bartlett in our featured interview makes the point about attending the 2005 ICA General Assembly — “the sensory impact of seeing so many people from so many countries and hearing them all talk about co-operatives so passionately and positively, really hit me”.

I think what is being expressed there is not an isolated view. Many ICA members value greatly the opportunities they have to meet with other national movements and share experiences. It is one of the real values of membership!

Also, in this issue the DG, Iain Macdonald focuses on the long “restructuring” journey which is hopefully to end at our special General Assembly this year in Rome.

Among other items in this issue are reports on several UN and ILO activities along our usual regional, sectoral and thematic news.

I would also like to mention that a new weekly “news” commentary service has been launched on icanews.coop so

## Stop press ... IDC 2008

The Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC) has announced that the theme for the International Day of Co-operatives 2008 is: “Confronting Climate Change through Co-operative Enterprise”.

IDC will be celebrated on 5 July 2008. More information available shortly on the [COPAC website](http://COPACwebsite).

take the opportunity to catch up with this if you can.

As usual we would welcome your comments or ideas.

[Garry Cronan](mailto:Garry.Cronan@ica.coop)

## EXPO 2008



## Co-operative World Fair—ICA EXPO 2008

The largest business fair of the Co-operative world will be held in Lisbon Portugal, 23-25 October at the International Pavilion of FIL.



More than 2,000 hotel rooms will accommodate an anticipated 15,000 visitors and buyers from around the globe.

Covering more than 10,000 square metres, “The Co-operative World Fair will showcase the trade of co-operative products and services, and facilitate international business connections,” said Luiz Branco, the Fair's chairman.

ICA EXPO 2008 will bring the world's most important co-operatives together “under one roof”. It is designed to promote the co-operative movement to qualified buyers in order to increase export levels.

“We also have a major business forum—a *Hosted Buyer Program*, for the principal buyers of the world that invest more than five million a year in co-operative products or services, plus an inter-co-

operative business program,” said Branco.

A third of the exhibition space has already been reserved, demonstrating that ICA EXPO 2008 will be a powerful business and marketing tool with unique characteristics.

Branco urges co-operatives to book now to ensure participation in the world's largest co-operative business fair.

For more information about ICA EXPO 2008, please contact [Luiz Branco](mailto:LuizBranco@icaexpo.coop) [luizbranco@icaexpo.coop](mailto:luizbranco@icaexpo.coop)

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## Restructuring ushers in new era for ICA

ICA Director-General, Iain Macdonald, reports on a long but worthy restructuring exercise. With the conclusion of the process now in sight, a new era for ICA is waiting in the

I am pleased to say that 2008 sees the continuation of ICA's slow but sure movement towards restructuring. The December Board meeting accepted that our strategy and tight budget would be geared to this year only and, following the decision of the special General Assembly in June, we will begin preparing the full four-year strategic plan to commence in January 2009, together with the new structure. It all sounds very straightforward, doesn't it?

In fact, restructuring proposals seem to have been going on for ever, but we are nearing conclusion. At the beginning of April, the Board will meet in Washington, to consider the final report and recommendations of the Restructuring Working Group, following completion of the consultation process.

Thanks to the tremendous work by our colleagues at Desjardins, I think the Board and the extra-ordinary General Assembly, due to be held in Rome on 5-6 June, will recognise that huge progress has been made. This exercise has defeated many attempts at change over the last twenty years. Using membership as the key indicator for subscription criteria has undoubtedly brought in that elusive level of fairness. Of course, some tweaking is still required, but I am sure it will be seen to be a big improvement on current practices.

On a more philosophical note, I find bureaucracy is very orientated these days to capitalistic or militaristic terminologies such as "strategy, targets, goals and leadership". All rather unco-operative! Shouldn't we really be talking about, "planning, purpose, promotion and profile"? I recognise the need for serious planning, but I sometimes think it is hindered by aping

the language and methods of the systems we challenge.

In 2007 we saw, yet again, a number of examples of failed capitalist enterprises, not least, Northern Rock in the UK—a demutualised business! Traditional banks and other financial institutions are always happy to point out when a co-operative fails, and usually attribute it to the 'out-of-date' model that co-ops represent to them.

When a business like Northern Rock fails, blame is usually attributed to bad management, a difficult financial market or even government. Never capitalism itself! And this, at a time when, post-Enron, governments and international organisations generally recognise that the values and principles espoused by the co-operative movement are the ones which business generally should follow.

## DG's Report



Iain Macdonald  
director-general

"Shouldn't we be really talking about planning, purpose, promotion and profile?"

Read the DG's previous monthly reports:  
[www.ica.coop/directorpage/](http://www.ica.coop/directorpage/)

## UN looks to International Year of Co-ops

The UN will commence a survey on the desirability and feasibility of declaring a UN International Year of Co-operatives, to raise awareness of the co-operative form of enterprise and the significant contribution of co-ops to economic and social development.

During its 62nd session at the end of 2007, the UN General Assembly, discussed the report of the

Secretary-General on co-operatives and decided that an 'international year' might bring the requisite impetus to changes in policy and legislation to provide enabling environments and a platform to raise the profile of the co-operative enterprise.

UN Resolution A/RES/62/128 submitted by 46 countries, calls on the UN to: "Consider effective ways and means for raising public awareness on

the overall socio-economic impact of cooperatives including the desirability and feasibility of proclaiming an International Year of Co-operatives". ICA, through the Committee on Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC) will work with the UN secretariat in New York to undertake the survey and to define actions for building recognition of co-operatives.

## UN News

More information, contact  
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[chavez@ica.coop](mailto:chavez@ica.coop)



## Cover story

### Plugging into the global network (cont.)



Peter Gates, CEO The Mercury Centre



The ICA as a source of inspiration and an agent for change was a theme of the presentations at the Sydney seminar. Trent Bartlett recalled his first ICA General Assembly in Cartagena in 2005. "The ICA is like the UN of co-operatives and it was a moving experience to see all of the nations represented at the opening ceremony—but a great disappointment that Australia was not among them. Our [Capricorn's] invitation to speak at the GA came through our relationship with [ICA communications head] Garry Cronan and it quickly became clear to me that we had to be part of this huge world-wide network. I committed to Capricorn becoming a member of ICA." Capricorn is expanding into

the UK and Trent said the ICA has helped guide this expansion; "Through networking, opening doors, offering guidance and experience."

Peter Gates said that during almost 20 years as a director of one of Australia's largest credit unions, it was connecting to the global network that showed him what could be achieved by working together: "My first international conference was the World Council of Credit Unions Forum in Cork, Ireland in 1994. But it was a side trip to Thailand on the way to Europe that showed me first hand how co-ops are a way to solve peoples' problems.

"We were in Thailand to meet with various co-

operative and credit union organisations and we were taken to a local member savings and credit co-op near the port area of Bangkok. This was a vast 'rabbit warren' market where people eked out a living with the barest of margins. When the landlord wanted to increase the rents causing more hardship to the stallholders they approached their co-operative to take over the market. It did, and at the same time, put a [credit union] branch in the middle of it. Members could deposit amounts as small as 20 baht a day (about one Australian dollar at the time). It was a great lesson in how co-operatives empower local people and revitalize local economies."

Gun-Britt Mårtensson & Suzanne Henderson, 'Living Co-operatively' Symposium

## Housing

"The event was a call to the co-operative movement in Australia to invest its collective and creative energy in solving Australia's housing crisis."

Suzanne Henderson, *Living Co-operatively Consortium* and editor

[CCC eNews](#)

[www.business.uts.edu.au/cacom/news/](http://www.business.uts.edu.au/cacom/news/)

### Co-ops answer housing crisis

Co-operatives are one solution to the pressing social problem of affordable housing in Australia and around the globe according to the *Living Co-operatively Consortium*. The partnership of university, local government and co-operative organisations invited ICA board member, Gun-Britt Mårtensson to Australia to deliver the Keynote address at a 2-day Symposium that examined the connection between co-operatives and strong sustainable communities on 13-14 February. "Australia is in the grip of a housing crisis," said Suzanne Henderson, co-convenor of the Symposium, "And co-operatives offer an alternative to the private or public (welfare) routes to providing more homes."

Mårtensson told an audience of almost 200 that housing co-operatives were a viable and widespread means of providing more affordable and integrated housing around the world.

In Sweden alone, 10% of the population live in housing co-ops. Mårtensson is the former chair and president of HSB, Sweden's largest co-operative housing organisation. As a result of her visit, a local authority has agreed to assess the feasibility of a pilot shared-equity housing co-op in Sydney's outer-west. "We are immensely grateful that Gun-Britt was able to bring her wealth of knowledge and experience in co-operative housing to de-



liver these real outcomes," said Professor Jenny Onyx, director of the Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Research Centre, University of Technology Sydney. How housing co-operatives build community and allow residents to address other critical needs such as child care, care of the aged, sustainable living and social isolation was a focus of presentations by more than 25 speakers. Papers and conference program at:

[www.mercury.org.au/lc](http://www.mercury.org.au/lc)

## Co-operating out of poverty highlighted at UN

The UN invited ICA to participate in a panel discussion at UN headquarters in New York (USA) on: "Reducing poverty through employment generation: The role of co-operatives".

Paul Hazen, ICA board member, and president and CEO of the National Co-operative Business Association, underlined how co-operatives impact the lives of people around the world, noting how participants in the room may have been unknowingly served by co-operatives in the US and beyond – for example, the orange juice was likely produced by a citrus growers' co-operative like Sunkist; perhaps they had read an article in the New York Times, provided by the news co-operative, Associated Press; or they may have bought coffee at Starbucks produced by a fair

trade co-op; and for those who lived in Manhattan, there was a 50% chance that they lived in co-op housing.

Co-ops offered a model of enterprise that allowed many people to improve their livelihoods in both industrialised and developing countries. Hazen gave examples of people co-operating out of poverty in regions from Cote d'Ivoire, Costa Rica, East Timor and India to South Africa, Vietnam and USA. The capacity of co-ops to generate employment was increasingly recognised by foundations such as the Gates Foundation, Chevron and Starbucks.

One project, supported by the Gates Foundation, will assist 50,000 cotton farmers in Mozambique to increase production through co-operative enterprise. It will

create 15,000 sustainable jobs, and almost a third will be employment for women.

The panel, held in conjunction with the 46th Session of the Commission for Social Development, was chaired by the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the UN, Mme. Enkhsetseg Ochir. Panellists included Professor Johnston Birchall, Stirling University (UK), Maria Elena Chavez Hertig, representing the Cooperative Branch of the ILO and Tadesse Meskela, general manager, Oromia Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union (Ethiopia). Meskela said the support received from ICA and ILO had enabled his co-op to grow and become a successful provider of more than USD 13 million in fair trade coffee.

## UN & ILO NEWS



Presentations will be available soon.

Contact [Maria Elena Chavez Hertig](#):

[chavez@ica.coop](mailto:chavez@ica.coop)

## ILO course targets policy & legislation

The ILO Training Centre will run a course on co-operative policy and legislation in Turin, Italy on 8-12 December 2008. The course includes comparison of national co-operative policies and laws with the new ILO

*Recommendation No. 193 on Promotion of Co-operatives*; design of a strategy to reform and/or update national co-operative policies, as well as laws on the basis of *Recommendation 193*. It is

designed for government and co-operative sector representatives and private professionals advising governments on co-operative policy and legislation.

For more information on ILO training courses contact [ILO ITC](#) at: [sme@itcilo.org](mailto:sme@itcilo.org).

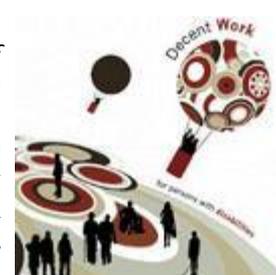
## Co-operatives enable says ICA

The recently adopted *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and its *Optional Protocol* specifically notes the role of co-operatives in providing employment for the disabled (Article 27 f). The ILO report: "*The Right to Decent Work of Persons with Disabilities*" reiterates the potential of such social enterprises. To assist implementation of

the Convention, ICA has suggested providing updated tools to promote co-ops for the disabled, building on work already undertaken including the 1993 *Manual on Co-operatives of the Disabled*.

ICA underlined the role that co-ops can play in providing access to worthwhile employment for the dis-

abled, at the inaugural celebration of *International Day of Disabled Persons* at the ILO on 3 December 2007. Despite significant progress in recent years ICA said new efforts are needed to break down barriers that prevent millions of people from contributing to the economic growth of their societies. [www.un.org/disabilities/](http://www.un.org/disabilities/)



## ICA Research

Lou Hammond Ketilson, Chair ICA Committee on Co-operative Research at last year's GA.



The 2008 ICA Research Conference to be held in

## Co-operatives under the microscope

Riva del Garda, Trento Italy on 16-18 October will focus on four themes:

1. Recent contributions of human sciences in understanding and explaining co-operatives.
2. The role of co-ops in developing and transforming countries.
3. Co-operative and social

enterprise concern for the community.

4. Co-operative social responsibility and social accounting.

The deadline for papers is 31 March 2008. Submissions to:

[ica2008@issan.info](mailto:ica2008@issan.info).

More information:

[www.ica.coop/](http://www.ica.coop/)

[icaccr/2008icaresearchconference.pdf](http://icaccr/2008icaresearchconference.pdf)

## Insurance

### Call for session proposals—Microinsurance Conference 2008

The 4th International Microinsurance Conference will be held in Cartagena Colombia on 5-7 November 2008, jointly hosted by the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP), the Working Group on Microinsurance, the Munich Re Foundation and Fasescolda.

Around 300 representatives from international organisa-

tions, NGOs, commercial insurance companies and policymakers, will discuss the challenges of microinsurance. Conference organisers are calling for proposals on the themes of:

1. Technology designed to make microinsurance viable.
2. Capacity building of individuals and institutions, including the financial literacy

of the target market.

3. Regulation, supervision and policy issues that enable an environment for microinsurance.

4. Innovative products and distribution channels to enhance inclusive access to microinsurance.

To submit a proposal see:

[www.microinsuranceconference2008.org](http://www.microinsuranceconference2008.org)

### ICMIF focus on microinsurance

The International Co-operative and Mutual Insurance Federation (ICMIF) is aware that many people, rich or poor, are reluctant to buy insurance because they do not want to think about loss, illness or death. Consequently, promotion of

microinsurance requires social marketing techniques along with financial education to change the attitude of the target market.

ICMIF is working on a series of short documents called *Microinsurance in Focus*. The first four in a series of twelve papers includes: *Mar-*

*keting: Promoting Insurance to the Poor, Product Design and Insurance Risk management, Premium Collection: Minimizing Transaction Costs, and Maximizing Customer Service, and Strategies for Sustainability.*

More information:

[john@icmif.org](mailto:john@icmif.org)



## Banking

It's good news for co-ops in the [2008 World Bank report on agriculture](#). The Report advocates the co-operative form of enterprise as an option for effective agricultural development and notes the contribution that

co-ops already make in providing options for producers to organise and improve their livelihoods. The report notes that policy changes are required to enable co-operatives to grow and be more effective, including legal reform and removal of government interference in co-op management. Citing a

number of co-operative successes, the report says financial co-operatives are re-emerging as promising institutions in rural finance, and bio-fuel and organic production and marketing co-operatives, are avenues for development.

<http://econ.worldbank.org/>

## Developing a co-operative accounting framework

What would a co-operative accounting framework look like? Exploring the development of an international Statement of Recommended Practice (iSORP), the new Centre of Excellence in Accounting and Reporting for Co-operatives (CEARC), based at Saint Mary's University, Halifax

Canada, is questioning the assumption that what works for investor-owned business also works for co-operatives. Recent experiences in IAS suggest that the co-operative difference in relation to accounting is neither clearly defined, understood or recognised.

CEARC welcomes feedback on its conceptual framework discussion paper due out February 2008.

Discussion papers examining different areas of iSORP content, will be available on the CEARC website:

[www.coopaccounting.coop](http://www.coopaccounting.coop)

## International Accounting Standards

## MMCCU—innovative training for credit unions

Rob Boyle, Assistant General Manager of Frederick Direct Charge Co-op, sees a critical need for programs like MMCCU (Master of Management—Co-operatives and Credit Unions) which starts by teach-

ing the basics of good conventional business practices. "Then we say, that's how it works in a traditional business. How does a co-op do it? How do you apply this principle so that it reflects the nature of the

ownership model?"

Co-ops are about serving the members, and that includes their communities, their employees, and their environment."

## Credit Union News

For information about the MMCCU program contact

[tom.webb@smu.ca](mailto:tom.webb@smu.ca) or

John Chamard:

[john.chamard@smu.ca](mailto:john.chamard@smu.ca)

MMCCU web site

[www.smu.ca/mmccu](http://www.smu.ca/mmccu)

## American States scholarship

A Memorandum of Agreement between Saint Mary's University and the OAS (Organisation of American States) provides a chance for less well-off individuals and co-operative businesses to benefit from the Masters Program, providing a social justice model rather than a charity one. The first person to receive an OAS-MMCCU scholarship, Annette Prevost-Dupuis believes the knowl-

edge she will gain from this unique Masters degree will benefit her future and that of her homeland, the Commonwealth of Dominica, a Caribbean country not to be confused with the Dominican Republic.

"It will provide me with the knowledge and skills needed to function effectively in the co-operative in which I am employed—or in any other

financial or business entity in the approaching CSME (Caribbean Single Market Economy) environment," she said.



"I feel I am a pioneer like the early co-operators from Rochdale"  
Annette Prevost-Dupuis

## Co-op merger thinks outside the square

Credit union and co-operative leaders are waiting on the outcome of a unique merger between Squamish Credit Union and the Canadian credit union giant, Vancity. Squamish Credit Union has 7000 members and assets of just \$62 million compared with Vancity which has assets in excess of \$11 billion, and 47

branches serving 315,000 members. "We leave all the things in Squamish that make it special," said Dave Mowat, Vancity CEO at the time.

"Our position was that if we couldn't keep a level of independence, we didn't really want to do it," said Squamish CEO Bill Brumpton.

"When Vancity came to us with their partnership model, we saw it as a terrific way to expand our product and service offering to our members without losing our connection to our community."

Brumpton said it would also create new opportunities for staff.

"If we couldn't keep a level of independence, we didn't really want to do it."  
Squamish CEO  
Bill Brumpton.

## Regional News Europe

### Europe's co-op banks—innovative and sustainable

The third convention on co-operative banks (Brussels, 15 February 2008) reflected on challenges ahead in light of the *Oliver Wyman studies* and the *July 2007 IMF Report on co-op banks in Europe* (which

tackled governance, anticipated threats and opportunities). Organised by DGRV and ADG in co-operation with the International Co-operative Banking Association, the convention aimed to raise awareness of challenges

for co-op banks, by demonstrating the modernity of the business model. The role of co-operative banks as an asset for customers at the local level, was highlighted.

### Cooperatives House—Europe

Cooperatives Europe has a new home in the heart of Brussels. The establishment of the Co-operative society with investor organisation members, supported the recent purchase of the

Brussels property and, after renovation and conversion, the plan is to open the house in April during the General Assembly meeting. Cooperatives House is the new location for the offices of

Cooperatives Europe and will be the contact point and meeting place for all co-operatives in the heart of Europe.

[r.schluter@coopseurope.coop](mailto:r.schluter@coopseurope.coop) for information.

### Trento Centre

Proposals for a European Co-operative & Social Enterprises Research Centre were launched on 12 December 2007 at a seminar in Trento, Italy. Carlo Borzaga said the Centre would encompass research activities, training, dissemination of co-operative culture and consultancy. Funding for 2008-10 has been secured with the



help of Cooperazione Trentina, the Autonomous Province of Trento and Trento University. More details will be provided in the coming months.

Contact:

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#### More Europe news? Visit

[www.coopseurope.coop](http://www.coopseurope.coop)

Or use the [RSS feed](#):

<http://feeds.feedburner.com/CooperativesinEurope>

## ICA Americas

“We need to create a more integral society to counteract the impact of global capitalism that endangers all that is local and traditional”.  
*Ivano Barberini*

### ICA President visits Paraguay

ICA President, Ivano Barberini visited Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina in December 2007. In Uruguay he took part in a seminar on co-operatives and politics held in conjunction with the MERCOSUR Social Summit.

Barberini visited Paraguay on 13-14 December to hold meetings with ICA member organizations, and gave a speech at Cooperativa Universitaria's Conference. At a press conference in the city of Asunción, Barberini said the principal challenges confronting the worldwide co-operative movement today

were: “The global fight against poverty, conservation of the environment, and securing world peace.”

“We need to create a more integral society to counteract the impact of global capitalism that endangers all that is local and traditional,” he said. “The ICA wants to contribute by creating a human development model, in addition to the current gross domestic product or GDP model.” Globally, for example, Mozambique ranks highest in terms of increase



Edgardo Form & Ricardo López of COOPERAR with Ivano Barberini

in GDP, but it is in last place on the Human Development Index.

In Buenos Aires, Barberini met Argentinean co-operative leaders at the headquarters of the Argentinean Cooperative Confederation.

## Big heart of Brazil's Unimed

The world's largest health co-op, Brazil's Unimed, has 377 co-ops, 73,000 clinics, 3,596 hospitals, 106,000 doctors, 14.6 million clients, 32 per cent market share and USD 13 billion turnover. But 'big' is not everything, according to CEO Dr. Almir Gentil, President of Unimed Foundation: "It's who you are, how you behave, how you are conceived—and much more!" Unimed has made an inspiring journey over the last six years since the organisation decided to become a brand name that represents given values, conduct and market quality.

"We wanted the people of Brazil to recognise and share our values and ambitions. To make the organisation less vulnerable to fluctuations, price attacks, and other threats, Unimed launched a campaign for social responsibility, instigating an exacting Social Responsibility Certificate for its co-operatives". Unimed also started a large number of health and social responsibility projects throughout the country.

"Today, we have more than 1,000 such projects, ranging from small ones where we contribute to a particular

school or daycare centre, to large projects, where we fight child mortality," said Gentil

Unimed spends more than USD 300 million a year on such projects in communities all over Brazil.

"It is in our DNA and in the very principles of co-operativism to care about society."  
CEO Dr. Almir Gentil



## Africa paves way for gender reform

The regional gender conference held in Maseru, Lesotho last year, recommended the establishment of an African Women Co-operators' Network. The first ICA Africa Co-operative Gender Forum (12-16 November 2007) was hosted by the Lesotho Ministry of Trade, Industry, Co-operatives and Marketing, with financial support from the Swedish Co-operative Centre.

Esther Gicheru, Chairperson of the forum steering committee, delivered a message on behalf of the Chair of the ICA Gender Equality Committee, Stephanie Marcone, highlighting that one of the most innovative factors linked with the African Renaissance is the active participation and leading role of women. The results of the 2007 Social Watch Gender

Equity Index (GEI) showed Rwanda ranks third on the list of GEI scores after Sweden and Finland, thanks to intensive affirmative action efforts. A number of high-income countries ranked much further down the list.

Bridging the gender gap is not only a matter of equality, justice and democracy, but an important element in innovation and improving economic and individual wellbeing. Co-operatives, as socio-economic actors, can be powerful change agents.

The Forum adopted a Gender Strategy Framework and decided that the steering committee, formed at the 7th ICA Regional Assembly in Arusha, Tanzania, should continue to collect and ana-

lyse data in order to understand the gender situation in African co-operatives.



Stephanie Marcone, Chair of the ICA Gender Equality Committee & Esther Gicheru, Chairperson of the forum steering committee (left)

The next Forum will be held in conjunction with the Regional Assembly in Abuja, Nigeria, in 2008. The adoption of the ICA Africa Gender Strategy in Abuja will mark the beginning of a more coordinated and systematic way of responding to the gender issues and concerns for the African Region.

## Regional News Africa



Meet the Challenge! 100,000 signatures = \$100,000  
**Say NO to Violence against Women**  
[www.saynotoviolence.org](http://www.saynotoviolence.org)



## Regional News UK **First Co-operative Trust School**

Watch *Minister's visit to Reddish Vale*, now playing on Brightcove.tv.

[www.brightcove.tv/  
title.jsp?  
title=1386343218](http://www.brightcove.tv/title.jsp?title=1386343218)

**E**d Balls MP, the UK Minister for Children, Schools and Families inspected Reddish Vale Technology College which aims to become the first Co-operative Trust school in the UK. Len Wardle, Chair of the Co-operative Group, said: "The Co-operative

Trust offers an inspirational opportunity for pupils, staff, community members and partners to share the strong values and principles which have been the basis of the co-operative movement for more than 150 years."



Ed Balls MP, Minister for Children, Schools and Families

## Minister meets young co-operators

The Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP with young co-operators



**T**he Secretary of State for International Development, the Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP met young people from five

schools working with the co-operative movement on fair trade. *Young Co-operatives* is a program run by [the Co-operative College UK](http://www.co-op.ac.uk) to give young people the opportunity to learn about fair and ethical trade though their own mini-co-operative enterprises. The program is supported by the Department for International Development and the Co-operative Fund. The students made a presentation to the Minister, including a drama exploring the impact of consumer actions on producers

in the developing world. Students then questioned the Minister on a range of issues, from fair trade policy, to why he became an MP. The Secretary of State commented, "Thanks to people like these, in just a few years, the fair-trade brand has become a household name. Shoppers worldwide now spend over £1 billion on fair-trade products every year - and that directly benefits over 7 million people including farmers, other workers and their families."

<http://www.co-op.ac.uk/>

## ICA AP

### 5th ICA-AP Regional Research Conference

The next Co-operative Research Conference for the Asia-Pacific region will be held in Hanoi on 2 December 2008.

The theme of the Conference is: "Strengthening co-operative advantage in the competitive environment".

**Call for papers:** Research, exploring ways of strengthening co-operative advantage, empirical studies, highlighting case-studies of co-operative advantage, studies focussing on specific sectoral co-ops, comparative studies across sectors, regions or countries, are welcome.

Abstracts should be sent to P Nair: [nair@icaroap.coop](mailto:nair@icaroap.coop) with a copy to Akira Kurimoto, Coordinator of the Research Group: [akira.kurimoto@jccu.coop](mailto:akira.kurimoto@jccu.coop) by no later than 31 May 2008.

### Co-ops amongst Fortune 100

**I**n *Fortune's* February edition which ranked the 100 best companies to work for in the US, two co-operatives made the list: Recreational Equipment (REI), ranked 34th, has 9134 employees of which 41% are women; The Navy Federal Credit Union (NFCU), ranked 78th, is the largest

credit union in the US, with three million members, and 6069 employees in the US. *Fortune* also reported that NFCU was never engaged in subprime lending, which says something about ethics and the co-op values.

Source: *Fortune*, No.2, Europe Edition, 4 February 2008

## Online global business intelligence database main priority for 2008 Global 300

A key priority of the ICA's Global 300 programme in 2008 will be the creation of a new "world class" online (co-operative) business intelligence database.

Our objective said Global 300 Director, Garry Cronan "is to enable co-operatives to access the same level of business information other investor oriented organisations take for granted.

"The new website and database will be especially focused on co-operative's needs. It will initially be populated with the now extensive Global 300 dataset of financial and CSR information, currently held in ICA's head office in Geneva.

"We hope to then add additional national and sectoral lists and also link to relevant news and other resources" he said.

"To make this work effectively however, we will need the help of our members and others who believe in the value of creating a truly global data and intelligence resource for the movement, Garry added.

Paul Hazen, ICA Board member and CEO of NCBA in the USA is a very strong supporter of this initiative. "we believe so much in this project that we have already committed funds to help make it happen" he said.

"NCBA understands the value of good data at a national level—it helps us make the case for co-ops and also helps our members gain better intelligence to run their businesses more successfully" Paul said.

"Not only do we need data at a national but obviously at a global level—the new online database is the next logical step in the development of the Global 300 pro-

ject" he said.

The ICA is currently seeking funding for this project. If you are interested please contact Garry Cronan [cronan@ica.coop](mailto:cronan@ica.coop)

### New research made possible by Global 300 dataset

Recent research has for the first time looked at the link between trust, inequality and the size of the co-operative sector. Using Global 300 data the researchers, Derek C. Jones and Panu Kalmi conclude that co-operative incidence is very strongly and positively related to the level of interpersonal trust in a society. They also find some evidence that the incidence of co-ops is negatively related to inequality in society.

For more information please contact Panu Kalmi, [Panu.Kalmi@hse.fi](mailto:Panu.Kalmi@hse.fi)

## World co-operative business forum

Nyenrode Business University and the Netherlands Institute for Cooperative Entrepreneurship (NICE) present the World Cooperative Business Forum, *Size Matters—Co-operative Champions or Investor Targets?* From Monday 23 to Friday 27 June 2008.

Many large co-ops are under external pressure from investors looking for attractive opportunities, and internal pressure from members wanting to cash in. The implications for co-operative

structures must be urgently discussed.

This Forum brings together international business leaders in the co-operative agri-food, retail/wholesale and finance (banking and insurance) sectors for a unique learning and networking event. It will be an evidence based, case-study approach featuring many co-ops included in the **Global 300** ranking.

There are five core themes:

Growth and financing growth; co-operative internationalisation; cultivating strong boards and co-operative executives; keeping strong member ties; and, marketing the co-operative mission.

The event features company visits. Groups wishing to tour northwest Europe prior to, or after the event, will be facilitated.

More information and registration: [www.nyenrode.nl/worldcooperativebusinessforum/index.cfm](http://www.nyenrode.nl/worldcooperativebusinessforum/index.cfm)



Onno van Bekkum, Programme Director

## Feature interview

### Trent Bartlett— “Be a student of co-operatives”

Self-described “co-operative convert” and outspoken champion of co-operative enterprise, Trent Bartlett, CEO of [Capricorn Society Ltd](#), explains how co-operative principles drive his vision for strong, sustainable and profitable, co-operative business.

“The sensory impact of seeing so many people from so many countries and hearing them all talk about co-operatives so passionately and positively really hit me.”

**Digest:** How did you come to work in the co-operative sector?

**TB:** After 25 years in senior roles in some of Australia’s largest retailers, I was fortunate enough to be considered for the role of CEO at Capricorn. I thought that the co-operative model was fascinating and that the Board was committed to it, but I was not specifically aware of the co-operative model’s principles, or of the importance of the sector globally, until I became more involved.

I quickly formed the view that Capricorn could only help its members as a co-operative if it made a profit and the degree of that help would depend on the sustainability of profits.

Our co-operative is a critical intermediary in the automotive parts value chain, and our members are automotive repairers. Like many industries, the automotive industry is being impacted by the forces of globalisation and competitive consolidation, which will influence and challenge our market dynamics and therefore, our members for many years.

My job is to ensure that Capricorn is prepared to meet these challenges and help our



members to be successful in business, and in their lives, (because for many of them, their business is a huge part of their life).

**Digest:** You have been described as a ‘co-operative convert’. Was there a crystallizing experience that got you started on the ‘co-operative path’?

**TB:** When I first joined Capricorn, I took over the reigns from one of our founding fathers, Frank O’Connor, and he asked if he could give me one piece of advice—and that was “to be a student of co-operation”.

It certainly made an impression and reminded me that I really needed to understand and become more involved in the sector. I resolved to continually increase my knowledge of the co-op movement.

I think the second most crystallizing experience was when I was asked to represent Capricorn and speak at the ICA GA in Cartagena in 2005. The sensory impact of seeing so many people from so many countries and hear-

ing them all talk about co-operatives so passionately and positively, really hit me.

I came to understand the importance and the significance of the contribution of co-operatives in so many ways—I began to realise that there was so much I still did not know. It was a revelation that challenged me to be a better co-operator.

**Digest:** What is the importance of linking with the international movement?

**TB:** Whilst we are a strong supporter of the various State bodies in Australia as well as New Zealand, Capricorn was proud to achieve membership of the ICA and still remains the only Australian member.

Capricorn is committed to co-operative values and principles and we seek to maintain our involvement in the wider international movement. We have also established a Mutual to allow our members to self insure and we have continued this philosophy by becoming a member of the International Co-



operative and Mutual Insurers Federation (ICMIF).

My belief is that the movement is well hidden from mainstream reporting and indeed from within its own ranks. The only way co-operators will learn is from one another and through networking and co-operating, and this is why involvement in the wider movement is essential in my opinion.

We have an alliance with the Co-operative College of the UK and held a workshop for the board and senior executives, which was a great success.

All of our management and staff in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa have received co-operative training and they have certificates from the College of which we're very proud. We induct new staff and conduct ongoing training which is fully supported by the College.

The workshops demonstrated how the application of the co-operative values can contribute to improved business performance and the achievement of our co-operative ideals.

We are about to take advantage of .coop and become part of the growing co-operative community on the internet.

**Digest:** How does Capricorn embody the co-operative principles?

**TB:** A typical Capricorn member will be the owner-operator of a workshop that repairs vehicles—quite often the extended family works in the business, and, therefore anything that Capricorn can do to help save time and money, helps the family.

We help the members by ag-

gregating and improving their buying power with key suppliers as well as enabling payment between our members and their suppliers, rewarding them for loyalty along the way. Every year, we pay rebates on trading volumes and dividends on shareholdings.

**Digest:** What are some challenges for the co-operative movement globally and how might it strengthen and go forward?

**TB:** There is no doubt that through the ICA, greater awareness is being created about our sector's contribu-

success of an enterprise, with the goal being to positively impact society while achieving business success, and embraces two main concepts—accountability and transparency—then co-ops can claim that we have the genuine model and have practiced this for many years.

The concept behind the **Global 300** provides a vehicle to highlight our sector's capacity and authenticity in so many areas. Our commercial significance is impressive, and so is our global contribution to so

## Feature interview (cont.)

Capricorn members at work



tion to global commerce as well as amazing social and humanitarian efforts.

I believe that society is seeking to align itself with organisations that stand for something; groups that resonate with people's values, and that embrace corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability, which has now become an expectation of many people and governments around the world.

If you accept that CSR is meant to focus on the social, environmental and financial

many social imperatives such as health, human rights and housing.

If the global movement can co-operate with one another, and help to draw attention to the contribution of the co-operative movement at a time when arguably the world is now ready to hear our message—surely this may strengthen our position in society.

## Co-op People

### ICA farewells Patricia and welcomes Martin



Always smiling—Patricia Vaucher

Patricia Vaucher has left ICA for pastures new.

She joined ICA in 1999 as part of the communications department and latterly worked for the Director-General, as a much valued personal assistant. Her gregarious and friendly nature was well suited to working with the international and very different personalities for which the co-operative movement is

well-known.

Patricia's work with the ICA board, in particular marked her out as someone with special skills, and she will be greatly missed.

However, we are very fortunate to have recruited Martin Inwood to take over from Patricia. Martin was part of our Canton team, working in communications and reception. He is pleased to become part of the permanent establishment of ICA.

Originally from England, Martin has already shown himself highly capable of fitting into the world of international co-operation. Martin had a career in telecommunications before joining ICA. He is fluent in English and French.

We wish Patricia well in her new career and welcome Martin to the ICA team.

## Member News

### New members

#### Statistics

This updates ICA Membership statistics to 225 member organisations, made up of 217 Members and 8 Associate Members from 87 countries.



**C**o-operative Development Scotland (C:DS) of the UK became ICA's 225th member in February 2008. CDS was launched by the Scottish Executive in 2006 and is a subsidiary of Scottish Enterprise, Scotland's peak economic development agency.

An Associate Member of ICA, CDS promotes and facilitates the development and success of co-operative enterprises in Scotland.

More information: [www.cdscotland.co.uk](http://www.cdscotland.co.uk)



### ZENROSAI goes .coop

The National Federation of Workers and Consumers Insurance Co-operatives (ZENROSAI) of Japan has notified us that it has introduced the use of .coop for its email and website. [www.zenrosai.coop/english/index.php](http://www.zenrosai.coop/english/index.php)



### New JCCU website

The Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU) based in Tokyo Japan has a new website.

Please visit: <http://jccu.coop/eng/>

### ICA Housing news

The next board meeting of ICA Housing will be 29 April 2008 in London UK.

Four ICA Housing best practice publications are now online. [www.ica.coop/al-housing/](http://www.ica.coop/al-housing/)

## You Tube and co-operatives

**Y**ou Tube was established in February 2005 and is the leader in online video allowing people to upload and share video clips.

For an important source of co-operative videos, go to **You Tube** website [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and enter 'co-operative' or 'co-operatives' in the search box. Co-operative related videos include:

"Co-operatives in Nepal"; a speech by the Minister for Agriculture and Co-operatives, Chhabi Lal Biswolarma, at the 15th Annual General Assembly of the National Co-operative Federation of Nepal.

"Operation Round Up"; from the National Rural Electric Co-operative Association in the USA, on community fundraising by electricity co-operatives.

"The Nyanya Project"; 'grandmother' co-ops in villages and cities throughout Africa where grandmothers of orphaned grandchildren come together.

"Young Co-operatives"; launch video for Young Co-operatives Fair-trade Business Schools Education in Glasgow, Scotland.



## Communications

### Blogs make news!

**A** blog from Grover Ainsworth underscores the tensions of co-op life in Kenya. Grover is a small-enterprise development Peace Corps volunteer, working with Malindi Handicraft Cooperative Society in Malindi, Kenya. [www.malindahandicrafts.org](http://www.malindahandicrafts.org)

In a blog posted last month, he reported: "We are the second largest wood carving co-operative in Kenya with over 600 carvers...

The last several weeks have been very difficult... Due to the contested results (of recent presidential elections)... hundreds of thousands of people have fled the country or have otherwise been displaced, and hundreds more have been killed. Property damage has been extensive and the country seems to be holding its breath waiting to see what will happen next. Malindi was generally free from the majority of the violence, but ... the widespread

food shortages and price increases of basic necessities probably did more to affect people in Malindi already living on the edge. Here in Malindi, I have many concerns with our business going forward."

Want to know more? Use the link from [icanews.coop](http://icanews.coop), the global co-operative news centre.

[www.icanews.coop/en/node/69511](http://www.icanews.coop/en/node/69511)



### Starting an agricultural co-operative?

"Starting a cooperative - farmer-controlled economic initiatives", is a joint publication by Dutch organisations, including the agri-agency, Agriterra. Partly based on general ICA recommendations, on how to design and establish a co-operative society, the brochure is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French. You can order it through our website: [www.ica.coop/development/publications.html](http://www.ica.coop/development/publications.html)



### Brand new world of peer to peer lending

**T**his industry has been inspired by the concept of Asian micro-lending, borrowing and business—the original idea being that co-operatives of neighbours, friends and family, pool money together to help out those who need loans.

Read more about *The Digerati Life*: [www.thedigeratilife.com/blog/index.php/2008/01/14/the-brand-new-world-of-peer-to-peer-lending/](http://www.thedigeratilife.com/blog/index.php/2008/01/14/the-brand-new-world-of-peer-to-peer-lending/)

### Go co-op! video

**C**o-operatives are a better way to do business, and they can change the world.

The Go Co-op! video presents points of view from many different sectors. Watch the video in its entirety or select a particular industry perspective: [www.go.coop/](http://www.go.coop/)

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**2008 Calendar of ICA events and related co-operative activities**

- 28-29 April 2008** Cooperatives Europe General Assembly - Brussels, Belgium:  
[www.coopseurope.coop/](http://www.coopseurope.coop/)
- 6-7 May 2008** ICMIF 2008 Communications Network, Communicating the Cooperative & Mutual Difference, Quebec City, Canada: [www.icmif.org/](http://www.icmif.org/)
- 14-16 May 2008** EMES European Research Network, 3rd Fair Trade International Symposium, Montpellier, France. Call for Papers:  
[www.ftis2008.org/cice2008\\_en/appel\\_a\\_communication](http://www.ftis2008.org/cice2008_en/appel_a_communication)
- 14-16 May, 2008** Global Microfinance Investment Congress, PlaNet Finance in association with American Conference Institute, New York City:  
[www.microfinancecongress.com](http://www.microfinancecongress.com)
- 30-31 May 2008** Regional Council Meeting, Canada. More information:  
[member@aciamericas.coop](mailto:member@aciamericas.coop)
- 5-6 June 2008** Extra-ordinary ICA General Assembly , Rome Italy: [ica@ica.coop](mailto:ica@ica.coop)
- 23-27 June 2008** World Cooperative Business Forum. Nyenrode Business Universiteit and the Netherlands Institute for Cooperative Entrepreneurship (NICE), Netherlands  
[www.nyenrode.nl/worldcooperativebusinessforum//index.cfm](http://www.nyenrode.nl/worldcooperativebusinessforum//index.cfm)
- 27-29 June** UK Co-operative Congress, "Going for Growth, growing a sustainable co-operative sector", Hilton Blackpool,  
[www.cooperatives-uk.coop/Events/congress2008](http://www.cooperatives-uk.coop/Events/congress2008)
- 3-8 July 2008** EMES (with Cinefogo and the Pasquale Paoli University of Corsica), "Social enterprises, third sector, social economy, solidarity-based economy: Empirical realities and theoretical debates", International Summer School, Corte (Corsica):  
[www.emes.net/index.php?id=419](http://www.emes.net/index.php?id=419)
- 9-12 July 2008** Third Sector and Sustainable Social Change: New Frontiers for Research, 8th ISTR International Conference & 2nd EMES-ISTRY European Conference, Barcelona: [www.istr.org/](http://www.istr.org/)
- 13-6 July** WOCCU 2008 World Credit Union Conference, Hong Kong:  
[www.woccu.org/events/wcuc](http://www.woccu.org/events/wcuc)
- 22-25 July 2008** ICA-Americas Regional Conference San José, Costa Rica.  
More information: [member@aciamericas.coop](mailto:member@aciamericas.coop)
- 22-24 Sept 2008** CIRIEC Social Economy Conference, "Innovation & management. Responses of public, social & cooperative economy enterprises to major challenges" Seville Spain: [www.congresociriec.es/](http://www.congresociriec.es/)
- 16-18 Oct 2008** ICA Research Conference, "The Role of Co-operatives in Sustaining Development and Fostering Social Responsibility", Riva del Garda (Trento Italy):  
[www.ica.coop/icaccr/2008icaresearchconference.pdf](http://www.ica.coop/icaccr/2008icaresearchconference.pdf)
- 23-25 Oct 2008** Co-operative World Fair—ICA EXPO 2008, Lisbon, Portugal:  
[luizbranco@icaexpo.coop](mailto:luizbranco@icaexpo.coop)
- 5-7 Nov 2008** Microinsurance Conference 2008, Cartagena, Colombia:  
[www.microinsuranceconference2008.org](http://www.microinsuranceconference2008.org)
- 8-12 Dec 2008** ILO Training Centre course: Co-operative Policy and Legislation (in English), Turin Italy: [sme@itcilo.org](mailto:sme@itcilo.org)

[Calendar of ICA events and related  
co-operative activity:  
www.ica.coop/calendar/index.html](http://www.ica.coop/calendar/index.html)

Copies of the ICA Digest are archived on the ICA's website [www.ica.coop](http://www.ica.coop)