



Weekly Digest

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Editorial

Welcome to the thirtieth issue of the Weekly Digest. One of the important aspects of the ICA's work is the provision of an institutional framework for global co-operation among co-operatives. We do this through our organisational structures – both regional and sectoral. Regional Assemblies are important parts of this global democratic structure. They enable members in our four regions to meet and exchange experiences and to exercise their democratic member rights within the ICA by deciding on policy and programme priorities. This week we report on the activities of the ICA in Africa. In particular the recent ICA African Regional Assembly held in Cape Verde in West Africa. The forthcoming ICA Board meeting in Kenya is also detailed. As usual we would welcome your comments on the content and style of the digest. Remember, it's your ICA so let's hear from you!

6th ICA Regional Assembly for Africa



The sixth meeting of the ICA Regional Assembly for Africa took place in Praia, Cape Verde on October 8th, 2004 at the Conference Hall of the Ministry of Finance. Jose Maria Neves, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde officially opened the Assembly in the presence of Ivano Barberini, ICA President, Stanley Muchiri, ICA Vice President for Africa, and Iain Macdonald, ICA Director-General.

Ivano Barberini in his speech to the Assembly emphasised the importance of co-operatives in addressing the major development challenges facing Africa. These include poverty reduction, conflict resolution, unemployment, provision of decent work, social exclusion, and health.

The ICA President had made similar points in his address to the recent Summit of African Heads of States on employment creation and poverty reduction in Ouagadougou. “Unemployment and poverty are intimately related to the question of dignity and human rights.” He asserted his conviction and that of ICA that another destiny is possible for Africa. The world is in need of a new order which should rest on a new form of solidarity, a new partnership respectful of human and cultural values.

The President highlighted the fact that ICA and ILO are joining efforts to promote the dissemination of the ILO Recommendation 193 and for the launch of the global campaign against poverty. /2

Mr Barberini concluded by expressing his gratitude to all the partners who contributed to the organisation of the event, namely Norges Vel, ILO, SCC, for their support and collaboration. The ICA Vice President, Stanley Muchiri and Arlindo Silva, the President of the Consumer Co-operatives Federation (FENACOOOP) of Cape Verde also addressed the meeting during the opening session.

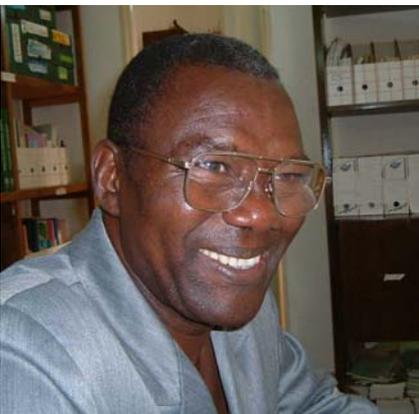
Regional Assembly Endorses New Structure and Director

Among the more important issues considered and decisions made by delegates to the Regional Assembly were:

- Confirmation of Stanley C. Muchiri, Chair of the Co-operatives Bank of Kenya as ICA Vice President for Africa.
- Adoption of the new organisation and appointments of ICA in Africa as follows:
 - There will be one African region with a Head Office based in Nairobi;
 - The Office in Ouagadougou will continue in the form of a Representational Office run by Eugénie Djibo-Zongo;
 - The appointment of Ada Souleymane Kibora as the Regional Director for all of Africa



Photo shows from left to right: Ousseynou Dieng, Iain Macdonald, Ivano Barberini, Jose Maria Neves, (Cape Verde Prime Minister), Stanley Muchiri, Arlindo Silva, and Ada Souleymane Kibora



Progress Reports

Ada Souleymane Kibora and Vincent M Lubasi presented directors reports to the Assembly. They covered the period since the 2002 meeting in Port Louis, Mauritius and also the future plans of the two offices. Currently, the ICA Regional Office for East, Central and Southern Africa (ROECSA) activities have three focal areas, namely agriculture, rural finance and co-operative laws and policies. These have the following objectives: strong agricultural marketing co-operatives and farmer organizations contributing to improved incomes and food security; improved and expanded co-operative rural finance services, effective co-operative governance and achievement of an enabling environment for co-operative development.

Also, a joint ILO/ICFTU/ICA SYNDICOOP project currently covers Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya. The aim of the project is to improve the working and living conditions of unprotected informal economy workers. It works through co-operatives and trade unions.

In regard to the future plans, the vision of ROECSA is to work towards the establishment and growth of independent democratic and viable co-operatives and other people friendly organizations, in which men and women participate on equal terms.

During the period 2002/2004, ICA's Regional Office for West Africa (ROWA) focused its activities on the following priorities: co-operative business and human resource development; promotion of gender and poverty reduction within co-operatives; promotion of micro mutual health insurance; promotion of ICA international presence in Africa; regional meetings, seminars and consultancies on various topics and planning an inter-co-operative commodity exchange. A desk evaluation of ROWA 1981/2004 programmes took place in the current year with the support of Norges Vel and ICA/HO. The results of this evaluation will be used to conduct a strategic planning session and to draft a new regional program for the period 2005/2009.

Photo above is of the new ICA Regional Director for Africa, Ada Souleymane Kibora.

Future Plans

The new ICA regional plan for Africa will be focused on the following areas.

- The fight against HIV/AIDS by and within co-operatives
- Good governance and conflicts management within co-operatives
- Poverty reduction and gender promotion within grassroots' co-operatives
- Promotion of co-operatives among informal economy workers
- Professionalisation and business development within co-operatives
- Preparing an inter-co-operative commodity exchange.



The main target groups of these activities will be village groups, small agricultural producers, co-operatives, women, young people, craftsmen, savers and consumers - all these groups are members of civil society with modest incomes. *Photo above is of members of a micro-finance scheme in Burkina Faso.*

Reports of Sectoral and Thematic Organisations



The Regional Assembly received reports from several ICA sectoral and thematic organisations. Esther Gicheru, ICA Board member (Co-operative College - Kenya) reported on the activities of the ICA's Gender Equality, and the Human Resource Development Committees. Ms Gicheru reported that the two committees organised events and activities to coincide with ICA board meetings. It was noted that the ICA Board had resolved to develop a strategy to combat HIV/AIDS within co-operatives. *Photo opposite shows Esther Gicheru, presenting her report on the HRD and GEC committees.*

Gideon Muriuki, Managing Director of Co-operative Bank of Kenya reported on the situation of the members of the co-operative banking association in East, Central and Southern Africa. He mentioned that the Co-operative Bank of Kenya is today the leading domestic bank. Despite the fact that it went through big losses following the bombing of its headquarters, it has recovered and been able to distribute dividends for the first time in the bank history. The causes of this success have been identified as: diversification of activities, micro finance activities, and tertiary business development.

The Gender Equality Committee and the International Co-operative Banking Association (one of the ICA's 9 global sectoral organisations) plan a future joint seminar in order to promote women access to credit and encourage women entrepreneurship. The two committees expressed the need to be supported in order to meet more often at the regional level. The various reports were unanimously adopted by the delegates.

Regional Workshop on Poverty Reduction

A regional bilingual workshop (Portuguese and French) on *The role of co-operatives in designing and implementing poverty reduction strategies* was organized by ICA/ROWA and ROECSA together with the Cape Verde Government. It received support from FENACOOOP, SIMPLICIDADE, FORUMCOOP in Cape Verde, as well as ILO, SCC, Norges Vel, and Legacoop. *Photo shows Vincent Lubasi addressing the Workshop.*



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The workshop held on 4-5 October 2004, preceded the Regional Assembly. Participants from West, East, Central and Southern African countries and co-operative organizations, training institutions, governmental institutions, NGOs and a number of international organizations attended the workshop. 14 African and 4 European countries were represented. A total of 65 participants including Portuguese speaking countries attended this workshop.

The opening ceremony was chaired by Sidonio Fontes Lima Monteiro, Minister for Employment and Solidarity of Cape Verde Republic, assisted by Stanley Muchiri, Ousseynou Dieng, ICA Regional President for West Africa, Jan-Eirik Imbsen, ICA Director for Development and ICA Regional Directors for Africa (Western and Eastern). *Photo above shows assembly delegates engaged in group work - this is the Portuguese language group.*

ICA President Meets with Senior African Politicians

During his visit to Cape Verde, Ivano Barberini, on behalf of both the local and international co-operative movements met with senior political and government figures. These included Jose Maria Neves, Prime Minister of Cape Verde, Sidonio Montiro, Minister of Employment and Solidarity, Juan Pereira Silva, Minister of Industry and Competitiveness. He also had meetings with OCPLP's leaders. OCPLP is the organisation representing co-operatives from Portuguese speaking countries in Africa. He visited a number of co-operatives as well as conducting several media conferences during the visit.

Director-General – “African co-ops are making a difference to peoples lives”

The ICA Director-General Iain Macdonald writes about his impressions of his African visit. “The Cape Verde Regional Assembly was a worthwhile, very participatory and upbeat event. Delegates were very confident in the future of ICA in Africa. It was generally considered that the new structure would facilitate the enlargement of membership especially from countries currently not part of the ICA. The presence of the Cape Verde, Prime Minister emphasised this positive message. A working group of both executives will now plan the future of ICA Africa especially from a democratic point of view.” *Photo above is of Iain Macdonald with members of a woman’s co-operative in Lac Rose, near Dakar, Senegal.*



“The co-operative movement is certainly alive and well in Senegal and Burkina Faso. In my first visit to continental Africa, I was presented with a movement of commitment and determination. My sense of presence was emphasised by a visit to Isle de Gorée, the island off Dakar where Africans were herded before being shipped to a lifetime of slavery in the 17th and 18th century – a place to reflect and to realise how much co-operation is the exact opposite of all slavery represents.

UNCAS arranged a series of meetings and visits. I saw the devastating effects of drought on the groundnut harvest combined with a plague of crickets. But in addressing the women’s co-operatives near Lac Rose, where business skills are supported by an UNCAS training programme, I could see how effective good co-operative planning can be. I intend to pursue support for these women’s co-operatives through our newly developed twinning programme.

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In Burkina Faso similar enthusiasm is evident. The Tanlili village has been transformed by assistance from ICA some years ago with the provision of a grain mill. However with huge numbers in this economically poor country living without electricity and running water it is a reminder to us of the continuing imbalance in the world and how important co-operative enterprise is to rectifying that. A visit

to KONGOUSSA and a women's credit union shows how this is being pursued, but so much more needs to be done. I hope here also we will be able to encourage more co-operation among co-operatives and seek support through the twinning scheme and increased trading links with our African friends."

ICA Board to Meet in Nairobi in December

The ICA Board's third and final meeting for 2004 will be held in Nairobi, Kenya on 10-11 December. The choice of Kenya for the meeting highlights the importance the ICA places on its African membership and the opportunities to increase the profile of co-operatives in this region generally. The meetings are being hosted by ICA member, the Co-operative Bank of Kenya. *A full report of the meetings will be carried in a future edition of the Digest.* Apart from the Board meeting a full programme of other statutory meetings will be held. Board members will also have an opportunity to visit a number of co-operative organisations including the Co-operative Bank of Kenya, the Co-operative Insurance Company of Kenya and the Co-operative College in Nairobi.



The series of statutory meetings include:

- 7 December: ICA Regional Directors' Meetings
- 8 December: ICA Audit and Control Committee and ICA Development Committee Meetings
- 9 December: ICA Governance Working Party Meeting
- 10/11 December: ICA Board meeting
- 11 December: Joint ICA Board/ICA Sectoral Organisations Meeting

ICA African Members

The ICA has 21 members from 15 countries in Africa. Current members include:

- Benin : Fédération des Caisses d'Epargne et de Crédit Agricole Mutuel du Bénin (FECECAM)
- Botswana: Botswana Co-operative Association (BOCA)
- Burkina Faso: Union Régionale des Coopératives d'Epargne et de Crédit du Bam (URC.BAM)
- Cape Verde: Federação Nacional das Cooperativas de Consumo (FENACOOOP)
- Côte d'Ivoire: Société des Coopératives Agricoles de Agboville (SCAGBO)
- Côte d'Ivoire : Union Régionale des Entreprises Coopératives de la Zone des Savanes (URECOS-CI)
- Egypt: Central Agricultural Co-operative Union (CACU)
- Egypt: Central Housing Co-operative Union
- Egypt: Central Productive Co-operative Union
- Egypt: Higher Institute for Agricultural Co-operation (HIAC)
- Egypt: Higher Institute of Co-operative Management Studies
- Gambia: Federation of Agricultural Co-operative Societies (FACS)
- Ghana: Ghana Co-operative Council
- Kenya: Co-operative Bank of Kenya Ltd.
- Kenya: The Co-operative Insurance Company of Kenya Ltd. (CIC Insurance)
- Mauritius: The Mauritius Co-operative Union Ltd. (MCUL)
- Morocco : Office du Développement de la Coopération (ODC)
- Namibia: Co-operatives Advisory Board (Namibia)
- Senegal : Union Nationale des Coopératives Agricoles (UNCAS)
- Tanzania: Tanzania Federation of Co-operatives Ltd. (TFC)
- Uganda: Uganda Co-operative Alliance Ltd. (UCA)

Elected ICA Board members from Africa are Stanley Charles Muchiri, ICA Vice President for Africa (Co-operative Bank of Kenya) and Ousseynou Dieng (UNCAS, Senegal). Esther Gicheru (Co-operative College- Kenya) is a co-opted member of the Board.

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