



# Weekly Digest

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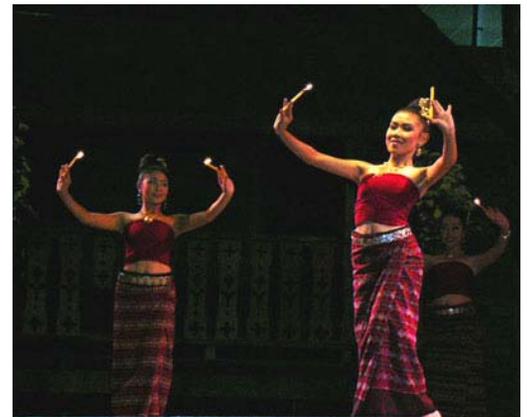
## Editorial

Welcome to the thirty fourth issue of the Weekly Digest. Every second year the ICA holds assemblies in each of its regions. During 2004, regional assemblies were held in Europe, Africa, the Americas and Asia Pacific. The Weekly Digest has so far carried reports of the European and African meetings. This week's issue focuses on the recent Asia Pacific Regional Assembly, Co-operative Forum and associated events. Thanks to Mr. P Nair the ICA Asia Pacific Communications Officer for his assistance in preparing this issue.

## 6th Regional Assembly - Asia and the Pacific

The 6th Meeting of the ICA Regional Assembly was held on 3-4 December, 2004 in Chiangmai, Thailand. Over 160 delegates from 17 Asia Pacific countries plus Canada and the UK attended.

The ICA Regional Assembly dealt with a range of issues including, amending its rules and the early election of the region's 11 standing committee members for a period of 4 years, that will now correspond to the election terms as outlined in the ICA Rules adopted by the General Assembly in Oslo. Mr.



report for the year 2004, the work plan and budget for the year 2005 and also the tentative plan and budget for a period up to 2008 were also approved by the Regional Assembly.

Mr. Mu Li formally presided at the Assembly, but requested Dr. Yehudah Paz to conduct the meeting on his behalf. Ivano Barberini, ICA President and Maria-Elena Chavez Hertig, Deputy Director General of ICA also participated.

*(Top photos shows Thai dancers at the joint opening of the Regional Assembly and the Co-operative Forum. The middle photo shows dignitaries at the opening - H. E. Chaturon Chaisang Deputy Prime Minister, Ivano Barberini, ICA President, Mr. Mu Li, and Mr. Shil Kwan Lee. Bottom photo, the Deputy Prime Minister inaugurating the Regional Assembly).*



## Forum focuses on 'Re-engineering Co-operatives in the Globalised Economy'



ICA Asia & Pacific held their 3rd Regional Co-operative Forum, at the Lotus PSK Hotel, Chiangmai, Thailand from 29 November to 4 December, 2004. The Co-operative League of Thailand, (CLT) hosted the forum. More than 250 delegates from Australia, Bhutan, Canada, China, Cambodia, Finland, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, United Kingdom and Thailand participated. (Photo above shows forum delegates.)

The main theme of the Forum was 'Re-engineering Co-operatives in the Globalised Economy', with sub-themes of (i) Co-operative Values-vis-à-vis Competition, (ii) Fair Globalisation through Co-operatives, (iii) Restructuring Co-operatives, (iv) Governance of Co-operatives, (v) Sectoral Concerns, and (vi) Social Cohesion through Co-operatives. Speakers included both researchers and practitioners, including

- Dr. Ian MacPherson, British Columbia Institute of Co-operative Studies,
- Mr. Paul Fitzgerald, Australian Centre for Co-operative Research and Development (ACCORD),
- Hagen Henry, ICA Legislative Advisory Group,
- Ms. Faye Lageu, ICMIF,
- Mr. Shigeri Fukamachi, Institute for the Development of Agricultural Co-operation in Asia (IDACA),
- Mr. Toshifumi Yamashita, JCCU,
- Ms. Lucita Lazo, UNIFEM,
- Mr. Huseyin Polat, ILO
- Mr. N. Suzuki, ICFTU,
- Mr. Wim Polman, FAO
- Mr. Seah Kian Peng, Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF),
- Mr. U.S. Awasthi, IFFCO, India,
- Mr. Y.S. P. Thorat, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) India
- Mr. Teo Say Hong, Youth Leader, Singapore.



ICA President, Ivano Barberini, (*middle photo*) and Deputy Director General, Maria-Elena Chavez Hertig also actively participated in the discussions. The sessions were chaired by Dr. Yehudah Paz, Dr. Robby Tulus, Mr. Tan Kin Lian, Mr. Boonmee Juntaravong, DG, Co-operative Promotion Department of Thailand, Mr. Leow Pengkui and Madam Rahiah Baهران. (*Bottom photo shows participants*)

The Forum and the Regional Assembly were jointly inaugurated by the Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, H.E. Chaturon Chaisang. Mr. Suwat Tantipat, Governor of Chiangmai, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Thailand and Mr. Wirat Iam-Ua-Yuth, Chairman of Co-operative League of Thailand and several co-operative leaders were present.

*(Photo opposite shows FAO's Wim Polman and Thai co-operative woman leader at the co-operative exhibition held in conjunction with the Regional Assembly and Forum.)*



## Reflections on the Forum Theme

Dr. Ian MacPherson, *(photo)*, summarised the forum proceedings along with Dr. Robby Tulus, former ICA Director for Asia Pacific. Some of Dr MacPherson's comments are reproduced in the extract below.



“There was also general recognition at the Forum that the ways in which co-operatives were operated needed to be revised, though there was a division into two kinds of responses: one arguing for improvements in standard modes of operation, the other advocating significant restructuring - re-engineering as the term is more narrowly understood.

A noticeable feature of the forum was the way in which the organisers sought to delve into the context within which co-operatives function. Relationships with kindred organisations – the ILO, trade unions, FAO and UNIFEM – demonstrated the potential and value of association with organisations having like aims and objectives, itself a key co-operative response to the pressures of globalisation. Other sessions demonstrated that global trends made more important the connections co-operatives have with their communities, both for demonstrating their distinctiveness and for opening up new avenues of business.

Several sessions showed that co-operatives were being profoundly affected – positively and negatively – by the changing roles of the State, especially in how they promoted economic growth and provided social services. The competitive environment was also changing quickly, meaning that co-operatives always needed to be concerned about improving effectiveness in all aspects of their activities. In several sessions particular attention was paid to environmental and fair trade issues, a manifestation of the growing concern in co-operative circles for sustainable communities.

The session on social cohesion, addressing gender and youth issues, was particularly lively and indicated the sincerity with which many people in the region are endeavouring to respond to them. Finally, particularly in the case of the presentation on the Australian situation, there was a clear warning that co-operatives had to take seriously the challenges of demutualisation, which can gain support quickly and vigorously, often stampeding co-operative leaders into hastily concluding that there is no viable option but to demutualise – or, even worse, making it particularly advantageous for some leaders to promote it over the long-term interest of the members and their communities. *(Photo opposite shows Dr Robby Tulus and Paul Fitzgerald, ACCORD at the Forum.)*

As mentioned above, it is perhaps best to consider how the delegates viewed “re-engineering” by dividing it into two categories. Several of the papers, notably from India, promoted the more careful following of established co-operative practice: better training of elected leadership, development of appropriate policies and accountabilities; reducing reliance on government; improving financial literacy; creating more inclusive approaches to women and youth so as to better use the resources available to a co-operative. This is a kind of re-engineering in that it can lead



to substantial change in practice and organisational cultures. It can create new connections to communities and open up profitable business activities.

There were some presentations on re-engineering in the way that some experts use the term. They explored interesting new forms of networking up and down as well as across the co-operative sector, new forms of capital formation, the extensive use of IT, the re-evaluation of traditional tier structures and management adaptations. It may be that a future session might look more specifically and more in depth into some of these and other issues associated with “re-engineering”.

### 3rd ICA Regional Research Conference

The ICA Asia & Pacific, in collaboration with the ICA Regional Research Forum convened the 3rd Regional Co-operative Research Conference at the Lotus PSK Hotel, Chiangmai, Thailand. The Conference was inaugurated by Ivano Barberini, ICA President, who stressed on the need for values, culture and professionalism to sustain co-operative growth in a competitive world economy. Mr. Amnat Rojanapaibul of the CLT welcomed the delegates. Mr. Akira Kurimoto, Chairperson of the ICA Global Research Committee, welcomed the delegates and explained the research activities of the ICA in different regions of the world. Mr. M.V. Madane, Chair of the Regional Research Forum, presided, and explained the background and the objectives of the conference.



The Conference was attended by 81 researchers and experts working in academic institutions and field-related co-operatives in the region. Mr. Shil Kwan Lee, the ICA Regional Director, explained the activities of the regional office during the current year.

Twenty-one papers were presented on the three themes kept for discussion at the Conference: Theme one: Widening the areas and scope of Co-operative Action; Theme two: Co-operative Governance and Globalisation; Theme three: Role and Dynamics of Women’s Co-operatives.

*(Photo shows Shil Kwan Lee, ICA Regional Director speaking at the inauguration of the research conference. Also present are M.V. Madane, Amnat Rojanapaibul, Vice President of CLT and Akira Kurimoto, Chair of the ICA Global Research Committee.)*

Out of the 21 papers, ten were presented by awardees of the fellowship given by the Consumer Co-operative Research Institute of Japan. The emphasis during the current conference was on empirical research to identify problems and development indicators. This emphasis was aptly justified by several presentations. It was possible to put the co-operatives on the path of progress, if need-oriented policies are formulated after identifying the disadvantages. Several papers proved the effectiveness of this approach.

Researchers engaged in on-going research as well as those who did case studies on the basis of conference themes demonstrated the effectiveness of research to identify critical areas and to facilitate action-oriented development programmes.

*(Photo shows Ms. Sayomporn Yuthasmutr of Thailand presenting a paper at the research conference.)*



Since the first Conference held in Singapore and later the second Conference at Cebu, Philippines, it is now clear that researchers, both young and established are keen to participate in ICA Research Conferences. However, most of them have financial constraints. The Consumer Co-operative Research Institute of Japan (JCCU, Japan) has taken a lead in providing fellowships to ten researchers. The chair of the conference noted “that it is hoped that other ICA member organisations will come forward to offer

scholarships to facilitate the participation of more researchers. Our three conferences have proved that effective research can lead to development oriented policy formulation.”

There was agreement that the next research conference will be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in conjunction with the next Regional Assembly.

## ICA Regional Women's Forum

The International Co-operative Alliance Asia & Pacific has been organising Regional Women's Fora since 1998, in collaboration with the ICA Regional Women's Committee. The three earlier fora, the first in Seoul, Korea, the second in Singapore, and the third in Cebu, the Philippines, were great successes. The fourth Regional Women's Forum was held at the Lotus PSK Hotel, Chiangmai, Thailand, on 30 November, 2004. *(Photo above shows women forum participants.)*



More than 80 delegates from several countries in the region have participated at the Forum and there were active discussions on the ways and means of empowering women and also for larger participation in decision-making positions in co-operatives in the Region.



The key note speaker was Ms. Lucita Lazo, Regional Organiser of UNIFEM. Ms. Rahaiah Baharan, Chair of ICA Regional Women's Committee chaired the Forum, which was included Ms. Maria-Elena Chavez Hertig, Deputy Director General of ICA.

It was decided to hold the next Regional Assembly in Colombo, Sri Lanka, during 2006.

*(Photo shows Mme. Rahaiah Baharan with Lucita Lazo of UNIFEM)*

## Meeting of the Consumer Sub-Committee on University/College Co-operatives and University Co-operative Leaders Workshop

The 10th meeting of the ICA Consumer Sub-Committee on University and College Co-operatives was held at Lotus PSK Hotel, Chiangmai. 28 delegates from Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, India, Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand participated.

Mr. Manabu Tanaka, Chairperson of NFUCA conveyed the greetings from Mr. Ohno. The meeting later elected Mr. Manabu Tanaka as its Chairperson, while Prof. Mohd. Ali Hassan from GAKUB, Malaysia, was re-elected as Vice Chair.

*(Photo shows Manabu Tanaka, the new Chairperson of the Sub-Committee, in the middle).*



Mr. Jiro Ito and Mr. T. Kuriki acted as Secretary and Co-Secretary respectively. *(Photo opposite is of T. Kuriki, NFUCA)*

The meeting decided that the Committee will continue to be a sub-Committee of the ICA Regional Consumer Committee and will focus on university/college co-operative activities.

However, when the ICA Regional Youth Committee is formed in the next couple of years, as proposed by the Regional Youth Seminar held in Malaysia, during September, 2004, the Sub-Committee will continue to collaborate with the Youth Committee in their activities. The meeting approved the activity plans for 2005.



There was general agreement that bi-lateral exchange of youth leaders should be arranged between countries and also have discussions with the Vice Chancellors of Universities and other stakeholders to convince them the importance and relevance of setting up university/college co-operatives. It was also felt that it is necessary to support setting up university/college co-operatives in Vietnam, Iran and Myanmar during 2005.

The representative from Sri Lanka offered to host the next Regional Youth Seminar in Colombo in conjunction with the next Regional Assembly. There was also a workshop of the Leaders of University/Campus Co-operatives in the afternoon, which reflected on the outcome of the Regional Youth Seminar in Malaysia, the setting up of a Regional Youth Committee, organising a Pro-term Youth Committee and holding its meetings prior to the Youth Seminar and Regional Assembly. It is expected that the Regional Youth Committee will be formalised during 2006 Regional Assembly.

## Other Meetings

Meetings of various other committees like the Regional Women's Committee, the Regional Co-operative Banking Association, the Consumer Committee, the HRD and Research Committee, the ICA Standing Committee were also held during this period.



*(Photo shows Members of the Regional Banking Association after their meeting.)*



Apart from these, the International Co-operative Agricultural Organisation (ICAO) organised a seminar on "New Strategies for Agriculture Marketing", in collaboration with the ICA Asia-Pacific, the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) and the Co-operative League of Thailand, on 30 November, 2004. Also the International Co-operative Fisheries Organisation also

held their Executive Committee meeting in Chiangmai on 30 November, 2004.

*(Photo shows Meeting of the ICAO/ICAROAP/CLT Joint Seminar- ICAO President speaking.)*

Copies of the presentations made at the Forum and other events covered in this issue of the digest are available at [www.icaroop.coop/](http://www.icaroop.coop/)

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