



ICA Digest

Issue 55

April 2007

Inside this issue:

- From the editor's desk 2
- Online poll results 2
- DG's report 3
- Special report - demutualisation 4
- ICA President's report 6
- Sectors 7
- Youth 10
- Gender 11
- Members 12
- Americas 13
- Europe 15
- Asia-Pacific 16
- Research 17
- Tsunami 18
- Communications 21
- Interview 22
- Calendar 24

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18 - 19 October 2007

Raffles City Convention Centre

Theme: "Innovation in Co-operative Business"



Defining challenges of the 21st century ICA General Assembly, October 14-19,

Innovation in Co-operative Business is the theme of the ICA General Assembly.

ICA will address defining challenges of the 21st century including sustainable development, climate change and the international accounting standards. ICA's statutory business will include elections for the ICA board and proposals for future structuring of the organisation including a membership subscription system.

Look out for your invitation and registration information, mailed to all ICA members during the first week of April with a provisional schedule of meetings. Global sectoral organisations and Asia-Pacific regional committees will meet during the Assembly. Global thematic committee meetings and a Global Youth Conference (see p2 & 10), will also be held.

This year ICA, assisted by our hosts, the Singapore

National Co-operative Federation (SNCF) offers members online registration and hotel reservations.

To find out more about the GA, register for the meeting and book your hotel and tour packages, visit the [ICA General Assembly Singapore website](http://www.ica.coop/assembly)

2007 International Day of Co-operatives theme announced - see our back page

Keeping a watch — ICA launches new web page on demutualisation



A new section on the ICA website offers resources on demutualisation including a list of significant publications on demutualisation. Further publications will be progressively added.

What are the factors that influence demutualisation? What are the lessons of demutualisation? And, what strategies are necessary to strengthen mutual-ity?"

The ICA is committed to fostering an awareness of the role and significance of the mutual and co-operative sector and the threat of demutualisation. The **Global 300** Project was established by the ICA to further this understanding.

"To understand the nature of the demutualisation threat requires us to consider certain questions," says ICA Webmaster, David Griffiths, who developed the new web page.

"For example, how do mutual businesses differ from other businesses?"

Visit: <http://www.ica.coop/coop/mutuality2.html>

The ICA is also establishing a new Global Group of experts to look at the demutualisation issue - see page 5 for details



Garry Cronan
Editor

“...ICA is responding to a need from members for more information on the issue of demutualisation...”

From the editor's desk

Welcome to the fifty fifth edition of the ICA *Digest*.

We lead this issue with reports on the forthcoming General Assembly in Singapore. The theme for this year's GA is *Innovation in Co-operative Business*.

On a related business theme we report on the ICA's recent initiatives in the area of meeting the threat of demutualisation. It is clear from our reports that this is a very real challenge for co-operative leaders in a number of countries.

In this issue we also carry detailed sector reports, particularly focusing on health, housing and indus-

trial and service co-operatives. The CICOPA report in particular points to co-operative opportunities in the area of worker buy-outs for failing businesses.

The ICA Youth Network is becoming increasingly active as is evidenced from reports on its activities in two of the ICA's regions. The network is also well advanced in its plans for a youth conference at the General Assembly.

Our regions have also been very busy. Reports from Europe, Asia-Pacific and the Americas show the variety and relevance of the work carried out by the regions on members' behalf.

We preview a number of research conferences and highlight the role of co-operatives in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

We continue our ongoing coverage of the ICA's role in tsunami reconstruction with detailed reports on activities in India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

Our feature interview this month is with ICA Board member, Steiner Dvergsdal from Norway.

As usual we would welcome your comments on or contributions to the *Digest*.

Garry Cronan

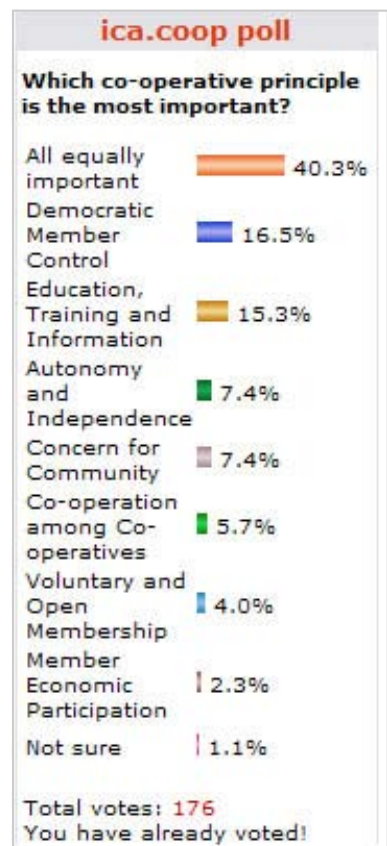
Online polls

Results of online poll on co-operative principles

The results of our first online poll on www.ica.coop show a clear winner.

The question was *Which co-operative principle is the most important?* Over 40% of the respondents believe that it is the combination of all of them that is important. The next most important was democratic member control followed by education.

It is interesting to see that member economic participation should be so low. Remember to visit our website for the next online poll.



Membership



Gretchen Warner

ICA subscriptions reminder

ICA members are reminded that subscription payments for 2007 should have been remitted to the ICA before March 31, 2007 in accordance with the ICA Rules and Standing Orders.

If members have not yet received the membership subscription documentation, please contact Gretchen Warner at ICA head office, warner@ica.coop so these can be re-sent.

ICA thanks you in advance for your continued support.

Let's stand up and be counted on co-operative principles

Coming from the UK, more particularly Scotland, one is inclined towards a fairly conservative view of the rest of the world - one that has the UK at its centre, at least of the English speaking part of the world over which we have had some influence. However, from a co-operative point of view, a few visits to Asia, Africa and South America, which I have been fortunate enough to undertake recently, occasion some reflection to say the least. For instance the recent Human Resource Development (HRD) conference in India shows how we are relying on the co-operative movement there to take forward our setting up of the global portal of co-operative education opportunities. I was delighted to open their new technological centre in Pune, designed for that purpose.

My recent visit to Seoul identified Korea as one of the most co-operative countries in the membership of the ICA. Korea's National Agricultural Co-operative Federation (NACF) is placed at number five in the **Global 300** list. Similar progress in China, Eastern Europe and

South America shows that our co-operative world is changing. It is long overdue that the assumed centre of cooperation shifts from Western Europe, more particularly UK and acknowledges advances elsewhere. It is surely time for us to stop lecturing others on things they already do better.

Indeed the more the world moves away from the influence of former colonialists and their modern partners the better. And it is time, I think, that we emphasise one of the least promoted aspects of our beliefs - that of peace and social justice. Time, perhaps, to be less pragmatic? What about standing up and being counted on these issues?

WTO talks: It is time for ICA to have a policy here. Many of us can see that the less developed nations of the world require our support and if the co-operative value of solidarity is to mean anything our more affluent members should be campaigning on their behalf.

Unfettered capitalist globalisation is not a pretty sight and is diametrically opposed

to our values and principles.

Peace and Justice: Everywhere in the world, the co-operative movement must campaign for peace through co-operative enterprise. We cannot accept the dictates of the governments of countries when they adversely affect co-operators. It is time for the ICA and its members to challenge governments who pay lip-service to co-operative principles and values. Perhaps then we will gain the respect and attention we know we deserve. Let's encourage them to use co-operative enterprise to build new and equal societies rather than, for instance, spending obscene amounts of money on weapons of mass destruction and wars.

So enough of the co-operative movement's favourite occupation of navel gazing - what do you think?

DG's report



Iain Macdonald
Director-General

“Unfettered capitalist globalisation is not a pretty sight and is diametrically opposed to our values and principles . . .”

Iain Macdonald

You can read all of the DG's monthly reports by clicking [here...](#)

Recent Activities of Director-General March-April 2007

- Strategic planning teleconference, March 2
- 37th Legacoop Conference, Rome
- Restructuring Committee Teleconference, March 7-9
- Meeting with representative from the Mongolian Mission, Geneva, March 12
- IFAD/NACF workshop on agriculture co-operatives, Seoul, South Korea, March 14-18
- Meeting with CEO of Migros, Zurich, March 23
- Preparation for upcoming board meeting, Mexico Mexico, May

The next ICA board meeting will be held in Leon, Mexico on May 4-5. Contact macdonald@ica.coop

Co-ops in Mexico

Thanks to a change in the Mexican law of co-operatives in 2001, local organisations can apply for grants for specific co-operative projects. The government funds 70% of the project and the "co-operativistas" fund the other 30%. In some parts of Mexico, it is almost unthinkable not to be in a co-op.



Demutualisation feature



“You have to sell the message that co-ops are about strong businesses with longevity ...”

David Griffiths

Special report on demutualisation in Australia

Digest 54 (p13) reported the US victory over the threatened demutualisation of the Lafayette Credit Union. In this issue, we look at the situation in Australia and New Zealand.

The strong, united membership-led revolt seen in the Lafayette case, backed by peak body support (from USA's NCBA) is not mirrored everywhere. In Australia, there is a history of non-resistance to the threat of demutualisation and a lack of critical media reporting of these events.

David Griffiths, secretary of the Co-operative Federation of Victoria and ICA webmaster, offers an explanation: “The difference between the Australian and

the European experience is that the Australian co-operative movement is pragmatically based and there is not a lot of co-operative ideology underpinning it.

Historically co-ops have not been good at promoting the strengths of the co-operative identity.

“You have to sell the message that co-ops are about strong businesses with longevity. You have to educate and remind the members of the benefits that the co-operative model offers.” The Co-operative Federation of Victoria Ltd has been working with the UK Co-operative College to provide co-operative identity workshops.

The rationale is that co-operative education is fundamental to the continued development and survival of co-operatives



and to prevent further demutualisation because co-operatives are uniquely different from public and investor enterprises.

“Unfortunately there is not a lot of evidence that the co-operative movement in Australia today, unlike the UK, accepts that a major rebranding exercise is necessary, and government policy is at best indifferent to the co-operative message,” says David.

Australian health insurer first to go

Recent news that private health insurer, NIB Health Fund will demutualise illustrates the ideology underpinning this trend among Australian mutuels.

On March 21, 2007 the Adelaide Advertiser reported.

“The demutualisation will allow NIB's approximately 320,000 members and contributors to realise their share of the value, which is currently trapped in the business, and which will continue to grow over time. People who were NIB members or contributors as of yesterday will benefit as we go through the process of unlocking value which is not possible under the current business structure,” said NIB chairman, Keith Lynch. He said NIB

had reached a point where its mutual structure limited its potential to build the business nationally and expand the brand.

Once a mutual is demutualised, it ceases to be a business where the key driver is service not profit. Members trade lifetime benefits for a one-off cash pay out, or shares.

The NIB board went on to sound the death knell for other Australian health mutuels: “We anticipate more aggressive competition from a privatised Medibank Private and for other funds to follow our lead in demutualising.”

On a more positive note, Police & Nurses Credit Society in Western Australia has rejected a takeover proposal from investor owned



Home Building Society.

The takeover was rejected because the Police & Nurses Credit Society board believed that it undervalued the co-operative and was not in the best interests of members - a loss of mutual status was not part of the credit society's vision.

Established in 1990, Police & Nurses Credit Society is the largest credit society in Western Australia. [More](#)

For more information on the Australian demutualisation story visit: australia.coop and then select [co-op governance](#).

“Once a mutual is demutualised, it ceases to be a business where the key driver is service not profit...”

“Members trade lifetime benefits for a one-off cash pay out, or shares ...”

Global 300 - possible demutualisation challenge

ICA Digest is reassured to see some media reporting on the latest move to list New Zealand co-operative dairy giant, Fonterra. The importance of Fonterra as a co-operative extends beyond New Zealand. Fonterra is ranked 24 in ICA's **Global 300** - the top co-operatives and mutuals throughout the world by turnover.

Fonterra Co-operative Group is one of the top ten dairy businesses in the world and the largest exporter of dairy products globally. Its products are sold in 140 countries. Sales total \$13.8 billion and it is New Zealand's largest company.

If Fonterra decides to demutualise, this would not only remove Fonterra from the ICA's **Global 300** but also impact on New Zealand's ranking in terms of the percentage of GDP from co-op gener-

ated revenue. Countries with the largest percentage of their GDP from **Global 300** revenue are Finland, New Zealand, Switzerland, Netherlands and Norway. The [New Zealand First](#) political party has warned that farmers will lose out if Fonterra is publicly listed.

"Expert opinion is absolutely right that a full public float could cost farmers control of their livelihood," said the party's primary production spokesperson, Doug Woolerton

"We have seen this happen with other producer businesses when they have been listed on the stock exchange."

"The NZ experience has often been one of listing [on the stock exchange] and losing. Profits go offshore, and the people these companies were set up to serve end up losing out. Fonterra's review of its capital structure needs to take account of the principles of the

co-operatives upon which it is based and with a long term view of how the industry may best control its own destiny. Making Fonterra a target for foreign investment predators is not a good option for the company, and certainly not in the best interests of farmers, or indeed New Zealand," concluded Mr Woolerton.

In his article on the Fonterra listing in The New Zealand Herald, January 15, 2007, Stephen Ward asks farmers to consider, "Whether any listing, no matter how partial, would be privatisation by stealth."

A comprehensive analysis of the pros and cons of demutualisation is not seen in the reporting of similar situations by the Australian media who treat impending demutualisations as inevitable or even positive

Demutualisation



"The New Zealand experience has often been one of listing and losing . . ."

Doug Woolerton



Graham Melmoth

Is demutualisation of a co-operative a betrayal?

Investor-owned companies searching for investment windfalls and profits from the demutualisation of co-operatives subvert the co-operative consciousness through bids that tempt members of a co-operative particularly those about to retire.

However, the profitable bid is not for the business as a co-operative, but for a demutualised co-operative, a company where the driver is profit *not* service. For long-serving co-operatives, there have been generations of members. Preceding generations have created the success of the co-operative for current and future members.

The age of co-operatives is significant as demonstrated by the International Co-operative Alliance's [Global 300 Project](#). The Project has revealed, for instance, that 49% of the world's largest 300 co-operatives were established prior to 1940.

The current members should be maintaining this success for succeeding generations - so when a generation supports demutualisation it is a double betrayal to both past and future generations. Commentary from: www.australia.coop/

The ICA will shortly be establishing a high level global group of experts to monitor demutualisation threats to members and give advice where appropriate.

Former ICA President and the UK's Co-op Group CEO Sir Graham Melmoth has agreed to chair the group.

Contact Garry Cronan for information cronan@ica.coop

ICA President

Society needs co-operative network urges president

Modern society needs a co-operative network to check growing inequalities and poverty in to-



8th Asia-Pacific Co-operative Ministers' Conference

day's world," said ICA president, Ivano Barberini, at the opening of the 8th Asia-Pacific Co-operative Ministers' Meeting in Kuala Lumpur on March 12.

By uniting entrepreneurial efficiency and social responsibility, the co-operative network had often proven to be useful to build trust, share knowledge, encourage enterprise and manage complexities, he told the gathering.



ICA President meeting with staff of the ICA's Asia-Pacific office

"This is what modern society greatly needs, particularly now when it is becoming evident that the world can no longer continue in a direction that leads to ever-growing inequalities and poverty," Barberini said. As member-based organisations, co-operatives must put people first, and as value-based enterprises, they embodied the principles of corporate social responsibility. "It is for this reason that co-operatives are recognised to be best suited to achieve fair globalisation," he said. To ensure they could successfully play their role, co-operatives needed a favourable environment built from sound public policies, and their own efforts to reinforce the co-operative identity.

"The laws and other tools provide for co-operatives to compete in a global market that respects the universal criteria accepted by the UN, ILO and other international organisations," he added.

Thirty-two countries participated in the four-day conference (March 11-15, 2007) which was opened by Malaysian Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. The Prime Minister said that co-operatives must address several concerns that would ensure their long-term survival and relevance as a socio-economic movement.

"Although some co-operatives were global in their reach, they might not have fully addressed the effect of globalisation through the effective use of networking," he said.

"Ultimately, a significant number of co-operatives suffered from a serious lack of com-

petitive, resilient and sustainable business operations."

Closing the conference, Entrepreneur and Co-operative Development Minister, Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin, advised co-operatives to look to the global markets and exert their global potential or risk being left on the sidelines. He added that co-operatives need enlightened members and leaders, entrepreneurship, and a favourable environment to continue to move forward.

Conference papers and the "K.L. Declaration", the framework unanimously adopted by the governments for future legislative and policy reforms, is available on the [ICA-AP website](#).

Maintaining his hectic schedule, Mr Barberini flew to New Delhi to attend the 15th Indian Co-operative Congress on March 26-27, in the presence of India's vice-president, Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat. The theme was "Reforms initiative - vision for autonomous and competitive co-operatives". On the same day he went to the National Co-operative Union of India (NCUI) to pay his condolences to the late Dr SS Sisodia, and he visited ICA's regional office in New Delhi.

On March 30, the President went to Bangalore for the silver jubilee celebrations of the Regional Institute of Cooperative Management (RICM). On April 1-3, Mr Barberini was in Kathmandu for the 50 year celebrations of the Nepal Co-operative Movement.

CICOPA champions worker buy-outs

CICOPA is ICA's sectoral organisation representing co-operatives in the various industrial and service sectors. Co-ops that result from successful worker buy-outs of failing industrial enterprises also fall under CICOPA's umbrella.

The fact that this is one of the fastest growing co-operative sectors is reflected in the creation of national, specialised federations in various parts of the world, including the US, Brazil, South Korea, Estonia, and most recently Argentina. We are also seeing increased news coverage of this sector with stories on French TV and in *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*.

Growing government

recognition of such co-operatives in Italy and France is matched by an increase in the number of international congresses, including the Berlin-based 'solidarity economy' congress.

Faced with high policy stakes, CICOPA is positioning itself to engage in the ongoing Economic Union (EU) debate on services of general interest, and building contacts with the leaders of the new International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

Digest 53 (p6) reported the establishment of the ITUC in Vienna on Nov 1, 2006, ending decades of divided trade union movement. A key issue to be debated with ITUC is the worker ownership status of the worker-member in industrial and service co-operatives.



Discussions are likely to include the role of industrial and service co-operatives in the informal sector, and conversion of enterprises in crisis.

Following promising talks between the ITUC and CICOPA in Brussels last June, the organisations will resume their discussions soon.

[More](#)

Sectors CICOPA

“Simply put, the challenge is to provide effective representation to working people in the globalised economy ...”

Guy Ryder,
ITUC General
Secretary

France: Media reports growing demand for worker co-ops

In a win-win for workers, employees of the PAMCO foundry in the French city of Alençon have been allowed to buy-out their enterprise and transform it into a worker co-operative. PAMCO will restart operations as a co-operative with 196 former employees out of the original 272.

French media have reported on the growing support for this form of enterprise transmission. As part of its coverage of the PAMCO buy-out, French television Channel 3 broadcast a longer story on French enterprise buy-outs.

In the February 27 issue of *Le Monde*, Patrick Lenancker,

President of French worker co-operative confederation, CGSCOP, proposed the establishment of an *Agency for the Transmission of Enterprises to their Workers*, to co-ordinate a range of policies surrounding such buy-outs.

CGSCOP, an ICA member, is seeking a commitment from French presidential candidates concerning public policies in favour of worker buy-outs, including specific funding for workers investing in worker buy-outs, risk guarantee mechanisms, protection policies, and fiscal incentives to both sellers and acquirers.

Lenancker further argued that French worker co-operatives

had proved that they could position themselves in the globalised competition without having to delocalise.

[Read the full Le Monde article here](#) (in French only).



Patrick Lenancker,
President, CGSCOP

“French worker co-operatives had proved that they could position themselves in the globalised competition without having to delocalise ...”

CICOPA

South America: Trade alliance backs co-ops

MERCOSUR, also known as the Southern Common Market, is the Regional Trade Agreement between Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Paraguay.



First social summit of MERCOSUR, Brazil.

On December 14, Brazil hosted the first social summit of MERCOSUR, convened to give impetus to the integration of civil society within the MERCOSUR framework.

Article 18 of the final summit declaration stated that the co-operative movement and the solidarity economy should be supported by regional policies as effective instruments for the construction of a fairer society.

The declaration went on to say:

“We also underline the necessity to establish activities and a common legislation for the promotion of the co-operative movement and of training and exchange among the sectors, and to stimulate the structuring of productive chains.”

Read the full [declaration](#)

Germany: New law paves way for co-ops



Bruno Roelants

A new law that lowers the minimum number of members needed to establish a co-operative (from seven to three) was among the topics discussed at Berlin’s ‘solidarity economy’ congress last year (November 24-26). The event attended by 1400 participants was organised by a number of German social

organisations, including CICOPA member, Network for Self-Management and Self-Organisation.

Bruno Roelants, general secretary of CICOPA and CECOP, explained how the co-operative movement was organised at the European and world level. He outlined how Italian legal and financial mecha-

nisms allow workers to transform failing industries into co-operatives and to develop existing ones.

Germany’s new law creates huge potential for co-operatives in that country.

[More](#)

Housing

ICA Housing Sector News



Mike Doyle, Chair of ICA Housing

The board of ICA Housing will meet the European Liaison Committee for Social Housing (CECODHAS) in Vienna on May 31, 2007.

The two organisations will discuss issues of mutual interest and ways in which ICA Housing and CECODHAS can work together in the future. ICA Housing will also hold a board meeting in Vienna on June 1, 2007. A topic for dis-

cussion is the board’s initiative to create an ICA Housing member database.

The database will be used to promote its members externally and will also serve as a resource for sharing information and best practice among members.

A joint meeting of ICA Housing and the UNECE’s Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network is scheduled.

ICA Housing’s partner organisation, HUMAN, is developing a proposal to improve the management of multi-family housing stock in Eastern Europe and will give a presentation on their work at the Vienna conference.

ICA Housing will discuss its role in the implementation of this project. [More](#)

IHCO supports ACYM network on social protection

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) sponsors the programme Strategies and Tools for the Extension of Social Protection (STEP).

The recently-formed America Cooperativa y Mutual (ACYM) network (part of the International Health Co-operative Organisation) is now a member of STEP. ACYM is a permanent member of the America Mutuality Alliance (Alianza del Mutual-

ismo de America or AMA) and the Americas Association of Cooperative and Mutual Insurance Societies (AAC/MIS).

ACYM's aim is to provide information about social protection within the American continent.

A strategy to help professionals in co-operative and mutual insurance companies exchange information will be developed. Also, information products such as a website, a bulletin

and reports on relevant studies.

ACYM will work with other organisations interested in co-operative insurance in the region to build a database of information on the future development of insurance and insurance technology.

Health



Meeting on Cooperation, Subcontracting and Public Procurement within Health Care and Welfare, May 21-24, Östersund, Sweden

What kind of private and co-operative health care services should be publicly financed, and how should they be managed?

Swedish IHCO member, Medicoop, is organising the next IHCO board meeting and a conference on public procurement within health care and welfare, May 21-24, 2007.

Participants include Swedish government representatives, the European Commission and Swedish co-operatives dedicated to health care and welfare.

Dr José C Guisado, IHCO president, and Per-Olof Jönsson, IHCO vice-president and president of Medicoop, will attend.

The conference begins on

May 21, with a reception in the Östersund Town Hall. The IHCO board will meet on May 23 in Kretsloppshuset, Mörsil. [More](#)



Medicoop President
Mr Per-Olof Jönsson

What kind of private and co-operative health care services should be publicly financed, and how should they be managed?

NGO Advisory Group meeting on health promotion

An NGO Advisory Group meeting was held on March 9, 2007 in Geneva. The aim of the group is to advise the World Health Organisation (WHO) on health promotion and related topics.

Bernard Kadasia, International AIDS Society (IAS), chaired the meeting. Dr Gauden Galea, recently appointed WHO coordinator for health promotion, proposed guidelines for collaboration between NGOs and the WHO Department of

Chronic Diseases and Health Promotion. A two-year action plan was discussed.

A number of organisations will be approached to research and present a paper on 'The role of civil society in primary health care' at the 60th World Health Assembly.

The Bangkok Charter will be promoted and a website developed for members of the group. Out-

comes from these projects will be presented at the 7th Global Conference on Health Promotion in 2009.

General Secretary, Estanislau Simón, represented the IHCO at the meeting.

Health promotion
NGO Advisory
Group meeting in
Geneva



ICA Youth

Peru: National Youth Conference

Delegates, organisers and speakers at the National Youth Conference in Perú. Junior edition

The Peruvian co-operative movement is taking youth seriously. Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito de Trabajadores de Empresas de Luz y Fuerza Eléctrica y Afines (CREDICOOP Luz y Fuerza Ltda.), one of ICA's newest

members, organised the Peruvian National Youth Conference on March 9-10. Encouraged by the success of last year's Regional Youth Conference, ICA-Americas was keen to address youth development within co-operatives and to encourage

others to focus on youth issues.

Sixty young people between the ages of 15 and 35 participated in the two-day event, organised by ICA-Americas and Kipus, Colombian Youth Network. The experience shared by the young co-operators strengthened established relationships and showed that true cooperation can be experienced internationally.

The challenge is to keep the spirit and commitment alive, not only in young people, but also in co-operative boards. There is still a lot to do and resources must be made available to expand youth and co-operative endeavours.



Singapore: young co-operators gather for first time

“The challenge is to keep the spirit and commitment alive ...”

ICA Youth Committee for Asia-Pacific meets in Singapore

ICA Youth Committee for Asia-Pacific met for the first time on February 3, in Singapore.

Fourteen young co-operators from eight countries participated. The new chair is Teo Say Hong from Singapore, youth representative on the ICA Asia-Pacific board.

Ms Hoa of the Vietnam Co-operative Alliance (VCA) and Ms Lasalette of the National Confederation of Co-operatives (NATCCO) Philippines, were elected vice-chairs.

The committee drafted the agenda for the ICA Global Youth Conference 2007 which will be held on October 14-15 in Singapore, as a led up to ICA's General Assembly.

The theme is “Co-operative business innovation through youth”. Topics include youth networking, young people as catalysts for innovation in co-ops, youth employment and entrepreneurship, co-operative values practised by young people in co-ops, educating future young co-operators, and how to improve the role of

young employees in co-operatives.

ICA AP Youth Committee invites interest from potential speakers. Young co-operators are encouraged to participate and build on the good participation rate at the last Global Youth Conference in Cartagena 2005.

Global Youth at GA 2007

Great news for young co-operators - Global Youth Conference participants, under 35 years of age are invited to attend the ICA General Assembly as observers, free of charge.



Co-operatives fighting HIV/AIDS

The ICA and International Labour Office (ILO) are working together to identify and promote innovative and effective co-operative initiatives with respect to HIV/AIDS.

The joint project aims to provide these initiatives with greater visibility and public recognition to encourage more action and share good practice.

ICA members were sent a questionnaire at the end of March asking them to provide information on good practice in tackling HIV/

AIDS. The information will be used by the ILO AIDS programme as input on HIV/AIDS prevention and impact mitigation in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The ICA [Strategy for Co-operatives Fighting HIV/AIDS](#) asks members to make materials available that have been developed by co-operatives that are dealing with the HIV/AIDS issue.

ICA urges members and other co-operatives to reply to the questionnaire and assist ICA and ILO further its

work promoting and strengthening co-operatives worldwide.

For further information email [Ms Erika Gutierrez](#) of the Cooperative Branch of the ILO or [Maria Elena Chavez Hertig](#) at ICA Head Office.



ILO/ICA



Maria Elena Chavez Hertig

Gender

Co-operative action to stop violence against women

Violence against women is the most common, but least punished crime in the world according to the UN.

This year International Women's Day (March 8) drew attention to the fact that domestic violence is the most prevalent form of abuse of women worldwide, irrespective of region, culture, ethnicity, education, class and religion.

The joint statement of the ICA and its Gender Equality Committee called on co-operatives to take action to prevent violence against women and girls in their co-operatives, their local communities and countries.

The Co-operative Movement can contribute to changing attitudes for the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for women

around the world.

The statement highlighted good practices in some housing and agricultural co-operatives. The Movement would gain by sharing information and experiences to make more co-operatives aware that violence is unacceptable and that action to prevent violence against women must be taken.

The next step is to initiate contacts with the Organisation of American States to identify avenues for collaboration and ways of stopping violence against women.

ICA Americas and its Regional Women's Committee also issued a statement as did the Confederation of Colombian Cooperatives (CONFECOOP).

These statements together with the ICA statement in English, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese can be found on

the [ICA Gender Equality website](#).

ICA members commemorated the day with activities and seminars. Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito CREDICOOP Luz y Fuerza Ltda. of Perú hosted an ICA-Americas' seminar and the Singapore National Co-operative Federation held a women's seminar on the Day.

International Women's Day is observed annually on March 8 by women and men around the world to celebrate women, and promote issues that significantly affect the lives of women and call for change.

Further information, email [Maria Elena Chavez Hertig](#), Secretary, ICA Gender Equality Committee.



Stefania Marcone, Chair of the ICA's Gender Equality Committee



Member News



Co-op People

Susanne Westhausen was appointed chief executive of Kooperationen (Denmark) on Jan 1, 2007. She succeeded Jørgen Christiansen. Previously, Susanne was managing director, City of Copenhagen Training Centre and worked for the Workers' Education Association and the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions, LO. "In

Denmark we have come to a turning point where we have to 'reinvent' the co-operative values in a 2007 context and, in doing that, we will be looking for inspiration abroad as well as through new national partnerships," said Ms Westhausen.

Kooperationen was founded in 1921 and became a member of the ICA in 1924. It

represents 890 co-operatives and promotes the co-operative enterprise as an alternative to private business.

It is member of the European Confederation of Workers' Co-operatives, Social Co-operatives and Social and Participative Enterprises (CECOP) and works closely with the Swedish Co-operative Institute KOOPI.



István Tokár was elected president of the Hungarian Industrial Association [OKISZ](#) succeeding László Hörömpöly. Mr Tokár, an economist, began working with OKISZ in 1986.

He was the president of the Metal-Wood and Construction Co-

operative until 1992 and managing director of KUNFERR Steel Structure LLC until 2002.

Mr Tokár served in the Hungarian parliament from 1994-2002. He is co-president of North Plains' Regional Development Council and president of the employers arm of North Plains' Regional Labour

Council.

OKISZ was established in 1920 and became a member of the ICA in 1972. It represents co-operatives and other small and medium industrial and worker enterprises and protects the members interests.



Jong Koo Lee succeeded Jong-Sik Park as president of the [National Federation of Fisheries Co-operatives \(NFFC\)](#) of Korea on January 25, 2007.

Previously, Mr Lee was president of Jinhaesi Fisheries Cooperative.

He will take over the

vice-chairmanship of the International Co-operative Fisheries Organisation (ICFO) in place of Mr Park.

NFFC was established in 1962 and became an ICA member in 1979.

NFFC represents co-operatives in the fisheries sector and provides banking and insurance services

to its members.

It is an active member of ICA sectoral organisation, ICFO.

New website

ICA member, Fédération Nationale des Coopératives de Consommateurs (FNCC) has just launched a new website. Visit [here](#)

Swedish Medicoop signs new agreement

Swedish IHCO member [Medicoop](#) has signed a new agreement with KFO, an employers organisation with 2,400 co-operative companies as members, embracing more than 80,000 employees.

"We need to be as many as possible in order to strengthen our power as a pressure group," says Medicoop president, Per-Olof Jönsson.

"We want to intensify the concept that NGOs should form a consider-

able part of the social resources within the fields of health care and welfare," he said.

Online assistance for ICA-Americas Members

ICA-Americas

ICA member organisations in the American region can access a new online consulting service that addresses co-operative legislation, taxes and accounting.

ICA-Americas launched the free service in January. Members can access the service via ICA's website.

The consultations are han-

dled by a group of co-operative specialists. This service is part of the ICA's Governance Project in collaboration with [Swedish Co-operative Centre](#) (SCC).

*Diana Retana,
Manager of
Communications and Information
for ICA-Americas*



Book Review: Latin America's experience of co-operatives

ICA-Americas has compiled eleven case studies that give insights into the co-operative movement and the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), in the new publication titled, *The Co-operative Movement and Globalization in Latin America* (Dec 2006).

The case studies from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, Dominican Republic and Uruguay, were conducted in 2005-2006 during the implementation of a project by PRICA (the Regional Process of Co-operative Integration of the

Americas). They were supported by Société de coopération pour le développement international (SOCODEVI) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The book is available from ICA-Americas.



Book Review: The ABC of Working Co-operatives

The National Committee of Working Co-operatives of Colombia (Confecoop-Ascoop), with the support of ICA-Americas, has published *The ABC of Working Co-operatives*, underlining its commitment to support this sector.

The book gives a straightforward explanation of how to generate worthwhile, autonomous and sustainable jobs in a self-governed co-operative business.

An attachment to the publication gives details of *The Worldwide Declaration on*

Working Co-operatives promoted by ICA.

Collaboration on this publication is part of ICA-Americas Advocacy and Co-operative Development Project supported by the [Swedish Co-operative Centre](#) (SCC).



Seminar in Public Policies

A workshop, *Advocacy Training for Trainees in Public Policies*, was held on February 5-7, in Honduras, in co-operation with the Research and Training Co-operative Institute (IFC) and with support from the Swedish Co-operative Centre (SCC).

The workshop attracted 23 members of the IFC's trainers group, who will use their newly acquired skills to train others working in social economy co-operatives.



Spanish language editions of the ICA Review are now available on the ICA global website see www.ica.coop/publications/review/review_es.html

Americas



Manuel Mariño, ICA Americas, Regional Director

ICA Americas is very active in promoting the co-operative cause on behalf of ICA members in the region

Corporate Governance and Co-operatives Seminar

A Corporate Governance and Co-operatives workshop organised by the Global Corporate Governance Forum and Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), and financed by the World Bank and OECD, was held on February 8. Regional Director of ICA-Americas, Manuel Mariño, presented *Guidelines for Governance, Ethics and Leadership*, developed by ICA-Americas.

The Corporate Governance Forum will collaborate with ICA-Americas to organise several workshops in the region to disseminate the guidelines among co-operatives.

International accounting standards seminar

A seminar on the implications and impacts for co-operatives following the introduction of new International Norms in Financial Information (NIIFs), took place during ICA-Americas council meeting on March 8, in Rio de Janeiro. The

International Norm in Accounting (NIC-32) was given special attention.

Over 40 people attended the event organised by the Financial Co-operatives Committee of ICA-Americas (COFIA) and the Organização das Cooperativas Brasileiras

(OCB).

Mario Freitas, OCB president, said: "The Seminar exceeded all expectations, with the OCB invited to be part of the Countable Pronouncements Committee (CPC)".

25th Regional Board Meeting of ICA-Americas

ICA-Americas held its regional board meeting on March 9, in Rio de Janeiro. The 2007 operative plan

and budget was approved and the board agreed that the 15th ICA-Americas Regional Conference will be held on October 1-5 in Santo

Domingo, Dominican Republic.

The next regional council meetings will be held on May 11 in Puerto Rico and late November/early December in Paraguay. On May 11, the regional council will also meet the Financial Co-operatives Committee of America (COFIA) in Puerto Rico.

The 2nd ICA-Americas International Encounter of Co-operative Business will take place in early June in Buenos Aires, Argentina to coincide with the Co-operative Exposition taking place in that city.

Alternatively, the international encounter will take place in Paraguay to coincide with the regional council meeting.

Email [Manuel Mariño](mailto:Manuel.Mariño@ica.org)



Regional board meeting of ICA-Americas in Rio de Janeiro

Paris: First network for third sector leaders

Europe

One hundred third sector representatives from 16 countries gathered in Paris on March 16, 2007 to launch **euclid**, the European network of third sector leaders.

Euclid is the result of discussions which began a year ago between leaders in the UK, France and Sweden. It was established to connect and support European third sector leaders. Formal registration is planned for late 2007.

Stephen Bubb, acting sec-

retary general, said: "This unique body will help drive up civil renewal and engage citizens across the continent through a more professional third sector." One of the major challenges facing the sector is formal recognition and support by the various European governments and wider society.

The OECD has asked a delegation to present euclid at the OECD world conference in Istanbul in June. To learn more about euclid, contact Filippo Addari. Download the manifesto approved in Paris, [here](#).



Launch of euclid, the European network of third sector leaders.

Co-operatives feature in DVD

Co-operatives set an example in a DVD on 'mini-companies' made by the European Commission. The DVD, available in 16 languages, features secondary-school students from around the world, who run micro-enterprises.

The European Commission made the video as part of its education programme in entrepreneurship, with the aim of encouraging entrepreneurial mindsets among young people and to inform them about the business world.

Third Co-operative Convention, Prague, June 18-19, 2007 "Co-operatives: a future social partner for Europe"

Co-operatives Europe is seeking a more active role in the European Social Dialogue - a key element of the development process of European Union policies. In many EU countries, co-operatives are part of the national social dialogue and they are recognised through a distinct legal framework.

In the same way, the European Union has created the statute of

the European Co-operative Society (SCE) which is applied in the 27 EU member countries.

Cooperatives Europe and its members believe that the values and principles of the co-operative movement, as well as the practices of democracy, participation of workers, governance and social responsibility, can enrich the European Social Dialogue and help contemporary society become more modern, humane and sus-

tainable.

The Third Co-operative Convention will be held in Prague on June 18-19, focussing on concrete ways to make the co-operative sector a more effective and integral part of the European Social Dialogue.

[Draft Programme and Registration details here](#)

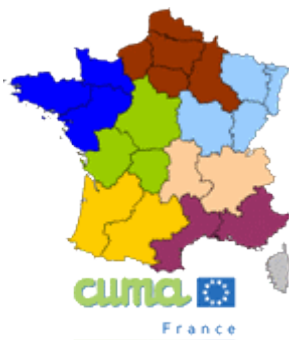


Rainer Schlüter, Director, Cooperatives Europe

Europe

FNCUMA Congress, June 6-7, 2007

“Co-operatives: a key player for rural development in Europe”



The National Federation of Cooperatives of Agricultural Equipment Use (FNCUMA) is organising a congress with the theme, “Co-operatives: a key player for rural development in Europe”, in B o u r g - e n - B r e s s e (Rhône-Alpes region) on June 6-7.

Organised in partnership with Coop de France and Cooperatives

Europe. It will bring together the leaders of French and European co-operatives as well as politicians and social economy specialists.

The 13,100 FNCUMA members are service co-operatives with the aim of securing optimal mechanisation costs.

Activities include open-space management, renewable energies, employment

and small product processing.

Members contribute to the development of rural areas through agriculture and wider community development initiatives.

[Registration and programme details here](#)

Asia - Pacific

2nd ICA-Japan Training Project February 5 - March 2

The second training project for *Capacity Building for Marketing 2006* funded by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) was a great success. Twenty-four participants from nine ASEAN countries studied market-

ing methods for farm products and strategies for rural development.

The [IDACA](#) developed the curriculum that included field study visits to agricultural co-operatives, the headquarters of MAFF, the ASEAN rural community plaza in

Tokyo and JA Zennoh distribution centre.

The course will train participants as facilitators to pass on their knowledge and help organise and strengthen the marketing activities of their respective primary co-operatives.

International Co-operative Fair 2007 - Mauritius

The International Co-operative Fair in Mauritius, July 7-11, will

attract some 25,000 visitors. The Fair provides a platform to explore and market products and services produced by local and foreign co-operatives and co-operative organisations.

available on the website of the [Ministry of Industry, Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives](#).



Republic of **Mauritius**



Further information about the Fair is

International Co-op Trade Fair & Symposium - Indonesia

The Co-operative Council of Indonesia (DEPOKIN) and the Indonesian Ministry of Co-ops and SME's is also organising a major trade fair for co-operatives. It will be held in Bali from the 12-15 July 2007.

The following countries have agreed to participate Indonesia, India, Philippines, Pakistan, Nepal, New Zealand, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. For more details contact Benny Kusbini, DEKOPIN benmitra@indosat.net.id

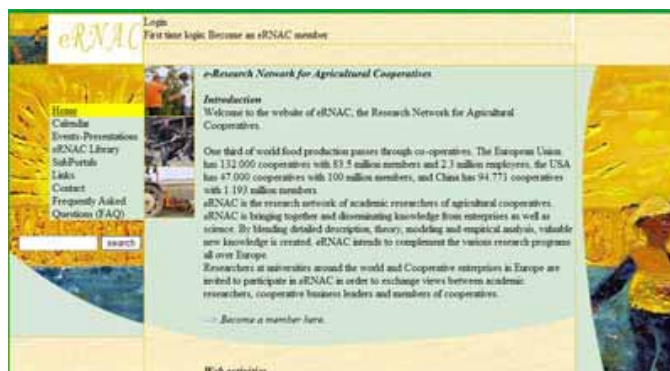
Online Research Network for Agricultural Co-operatives launched

Research

A new network of academic researchers involved in agricultural co-operatives, [eRNAC](#) provides a platform for encouraging and coordinating research on agricultural co-operatives.

Researchers at universities around the world

and co-operative enterprises in Europe are invited to participate in eRNAC in order to exchange views among academics, co-operative business leaders and members of co-operatives.



Visit eRNAC's website
www.ernac.net/cirkel/

4th Social Enterprise Research Conference

The 4th Social Enterprise Research Conference will be held at South Bank University in London on July 4-5, 2007. The Conference was first launched by the Co-operatives Research Unit at the Open University in July 2002. The themes for this year's event will be determined by a panel of UK academics active in social enterprise.

London: social enterprise journal sparks debate

The *Social Enterprise Journal (SEJ)* provides a forum to debate and discuss the research carried out by social enterprise academics and practitioners.

On March 30, [EMES](#) (the European Research Network) joined [Social Enterprise London](#) (SEL) in organising a panel discussion celebrating the third

successful year of the Journal.

Speakers included Roger Spear and Mike Aiken, CRU-Open University and EMES. Also, Iain Snaith, Senior Lecturer in Law at the University of Leicester and author of the Journal, who talked about legal structures of social enterprises.

Roger Spear well known co-operative researcher and former Chair of the ICA's Global Research Committee



ISTR 8th International Conference & 2nd EMES-ISTR European Conference in partnership with CINEFOGO

The International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR) invites you to participate in their 8th biennial conference to exchange ideas and research about civil society, philanthropy and the third sector.

The [conference](#) will be held at the University of Barcelona, Spain from July 9-12,

2008.

ISTR is a major international association promoting research and education in the fields of philanthropy, civil society and the non profit sector.



Tsunami Report Part 2

Lembah Lhok Seudu about to test-drive community Palung



Co-operative Strengthening and Capacity Building

Our special report last month gave an overview of ICA's tactical response to the Asian Tsunami. In Digest 55, reporters Jan-Eirik Imbsen, Robby Tulus, Rajiv Mehta and Suroto Ph report on co-operative reconstruction in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India.

Indonesia - Aceh

ICA and members worldwide have donated to begin reconstruction of some of the

most devastated co-ops in Aceh. The UK co-operative movement has provided support and funding for two fishery co-ops to enable the rebuilding of essential infrastructure.

The co-operative spirit is 'alive and thriving' in communities serviced by the six pilot co-ops in the three pilot areas of Aceh Besar, Banda Aceh and Pidie. Yet it will take a long time for some co-ops to rebuild because of the extensive damage to land, villages – and community spirit.

The Bahari Karya fishery co-op in Pidie has reopened its consumer store selling to fishers and has rebuilt an ice-making facility. Lembah Lhok Seudu fishery co-op in Aceh Besar now operates a community boat and a pick-up van. Construction of another Palung for Bungong Jeumpa co-op in Aceh Besar is progressing.

These resources have increased the income to fishers and given communities the confidence to rebuild their lives.

Empowering women – micro-loans pay encouraging dividends

With support from ICA, the Kami Sepakat Women's Co-operative has revived its savings and loans activities.

The 32 members borrow micro-loans in order to generate new, small enterprises includ-

ing kiosks, fish drying and selling to local markets and cake-making. The women are overjoyed about restoring their own livelihoods and those of family members.

Training and education provided by DEKOPINWIL/LAPENKOWIL in Aceh has meant that the women themselves can manage their co-op yet more classes in accounting and bookkeeping are needed.

Although small, the Kami Sepakat co-op has a board of directors to develop policies.

The board has appointed Mas Asriyani to manage the co-op. Mursidah, a member

of Kami Sepakat, said that the board is transparent and open-minded. "It allows us to discuss every issue during our Friday-meetings following prayers.

I benefit a lot from being a member and have raised additional income from the loan. I can now buy and dry fish, which I sell at the market," she said.

In 2006, the co-operative earned a net profit of Rp. 2,300,000 (USD 250).

Kami Sepakat Women's Co-operative – and a few men



Tsunami

Trailblazing young co-operators

The community can be proud of the young people involved in co-ops in Aceh, especially Tuah Shikai. Eighty per cent of the co-op members are young, and even board members are chosen from this refreshing group of bright young men and women.

With assistance from ICA, the co-op has been able to promote a consumer store, a Shariah-based savings and loans unit, and distribute essential commodities. In collaboration with the Jasa Rahardja Institution, it has built bus shelters, supplied com-

puters to members and created new business ventures.

However, there is stiff competition because the consumer store is now being threatened by privately-funded consumer stores charging high prices. It is crucial that Tuah Shikai co-op remains the main channel for delivering commodities to members and to economically challenged communities in Banda Aceh.

Members have benefited from the training and education conducted by DEKOPINWILLAPENKOP-

WIL, with support from ICA. Future training will focus on membership, administration and marketing.

All smiles and a few giggles – Tuah Shikai's young people in a colourful training session



Vale: Dr Ibnoe Soedjono, committed co-operator

The reconstruction programme in Banda Aceh was progressing under the leadership of Dr Soedjono (Pak Ibnoe) Director of LSP2I until his death on November 1, 2006. Pak Ibnoe was a committed co-operator with a wealth of knowledge and experience that he was always willing to share. We benefited greatly from his guidance, inspiration, advice and wisdom in our joint project to reconstruct co-operatives in Banda Aceh.

Sri Lanka

ICA's primary concern was to rebuild sustainable livelihoods for surviving co-operative members and families in the communities hit by the tsunami. A joint effort between government and national co-operative federations demonstrated cooperative solidarity and collaboration and the lessons learnt were replicated in other tsunami-affected countries.

The ICA and its four member organisations (National Institute of Cooperative Development (NICD); Thrift and Credit Cooperative Fed-

eration of Sri Lanka (SANASA); Consumer Cooperative Federation of Sri Lanka (COOPFED); and National Cooperative Council of Sri Lanka (NCC)) met with the Sri Lankan prime minister and the Ministry of Co-operatives. The government followed up with an extensive report on the damage suffered by co-operatives in Sri Lanka.

A Co-operative Empowerment Programme was adopted with the aim of building the capacity of the most vulnerable co-operatives. A training manual on sustainable business development

proposals was prepared for co-operative leaders and managers. Reconstruction of damaged facilities was funded by the Israeli Co-operative Movement.

A measure of the programme's success was the way in which people tapped into local resources rather than waiting for external assistance.

Many co-operative leaders and managers obtained investment credit from local banks and an entrepreneurial spirit was fostered.

The project has helped to

“ICA's primary concern was to rebuild sustainable livelihoods for surviving co-operative members ... “

Tsunami, part 2 (cont.)

India

Experience with the aftermath of the killer earthquake in Gujarat in 2001 meant that the res-



Inspecting tsunami relief reconstruction efforts in India

cue and relief operations in India were managed well. However, like in Sri Lanka, most of the agencies catered for the needs of individuals rather than focussing on the co-operatives.

As such, people, whose livelihood depended on co-operative societies, were largely left unattended. For political reasons, contributions and

donations from co-operatives could not be used in the reconstruction of co-operatives. But local governments, aware of the distribution capacity of co-operatives, channelled the supply of essential commodities through temporary shops run by primary co-operatives. The Post-Tsunami Reconstruction Project targeted Cuddalore district in Tamil Nadu and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. In Nicobar Islands alone, the tsunami washed away almost 90% of households and civil infrastructure rendering thousands of tribal families homeless and jobless. The project financed by the UK co-operative movement and the NCUI (National Co-operative Union of India) was carried out by ICA AP and the NCUI in collaboration with state governments.

The aims were to restore primary co-operative infrastructure at village level, regenerate co-operative busi-

nesses and assist women members of co-operatives to shoulder family responsibilities through micro-credit enterprises. Reconstruction work carried out voluntarily by co-op members gave them a sense of ownership of the assets. Phase one of the work has been completed and facilities handed over to the primary co-operatives. A second phase in Nicobar, financed by the UK co-operative movement, is well under way. The disaster response and reconstruction work have enhanced the image of co-operatives in the affected communities and initiated the release of financial resources for co-operative rehabilitation by various state governments. A disaster relief workshop organised by ICA AP and NCUI for co-operative leaders and local government representatives will ensure that they are better prepared to respond to future disasters.

Obituaries



Dr. S.S. Sisodia

Long time Indian co-operator passes away

Dr S.S. Sisodia, President of National Co-operative Union of India (NCUI) and the ICA-AP Standing Committee Member died on 24 March 2007 from a heart attack.

Dr Sisodia was also a long serving member of the ICA's global Board.

Dr Sisodia was re-elected unanimously for the second term of five years as President of NCUI in March 2005. Dr. Sisodia has been associated with the co-operative movement for the past forty years and has worked in

various positions at different levels from the primary level co-operative society to the national and international organisations. He is a member of the International Raiffeisen Union (IRU) and President of the Asian Farmers Group on Co-operation (AFGC), Japan.

A trustee and Chairperson of the Indian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development.

Dr Sisodia was a member of Parliament for

some fourteen years.

Author of books and articles on different subjects concerning co-operatives, literature, legislative, social and culture, his contribution in the field of co-operatives, social and culture is well recognised.

ICA President, Ivano Barberini was present in India at the time of Dr Sisodia and was able to pass on the condolences of the international movement.

Fair Trade Broadband initiative

British-based company, Community Broadband Network (CBN) has proposed a Fair Trade broadband provider for sub-Saharan Africa, set up as a co-operative social enterprise. The goals are to negotiate a satellite broadband agreement to meet the needs of the Fair Trade and NGO communities and develop delivery mechanisms that build local skills in member countries.

Telecommunication services that Europeans take for granted are out of the question for many organisations, especially those in sub-

Saharan Africa, where access to internet services are limited and connection speeds are slow. In Europe, broadband packages are 800 times faster for a quarter of the cost. Skilled IT expertise can be difficult to source but, in an age of satellite broadband, CBN argues that there is no technical reason why sub-Saharan Africa should be so poorly served. CBN needs £500,000 seed funding for hardware and to place up to five 'flyaway satellite' terminals on the ground to train local businesses and support teams.

By establishing the broadband

provider as a co-operative means any trading surplus can be re-invested into new services, disbursed to members as dividends and used to fund technology-related educational projects in member countries.

The plan is to become a 'virtual network operator.' If you are interested in helping or would like more information on Fair Trade Broadband contact [CBN](#).



Communications Africa

Poverty website launched

Cooperating Out of Poverty initiated jointly with the International Labour Organisation is a strong commitment of the ICA in the fight against poverty.

It is a call for action to the global co-operative movement and its partners to join hands in fighting poverty. Many good initiatives have been undertaken by the ICA and co-operative development agencies.

In an effort to better showcase those initiatives and to give more visibility to the *Cooperating Out of Poverty* campaign, we have revamped the *Cooperating Out of Poverty* website. The new site will improve the flow of information and will ease communications with members, partners and other related organisations. It will hopefully also strengthen and develop long-term and new partnerships for co-operative development.

Generating new and interesting

content will obviously be a major challenge. We have included links to other campaigns and poverty websites, and together with the newsfeeds they will provide continuous and up-to-date information on issues related to poverty

reduction.

However, we also request ICA's members and partners to work with us so that the website will truly reflect the co-operative contribution to poverty reduction

The ICA will also be shortly relaunching the co-operative development pages on its main website www.ica.coop

Feature Interview

Norway's Steinar Dvergsdal on how to make the 'small' producer powerful

“Over the last century, Norway has transformed from being one of the poorest to one of the richest countries in the world. People acting together in co-operatives have influenced this transformation. Co-operatives have contributed to a high standard of living and a homogeneous population, as well as to the growth of well-functioning cities and an active rural life,” says Steinar Dvergsdal, in the *Digest's* feature interview this month.

ICA board member, Steinar Dvergsdal, and member of the Norwegian Standing Committee on Co-operative Affairs is a dynamic and committed co-operative leader. A farmer, with more than 25 years participation in the co-operative movement, Steinar has vast experience in agriculture, consumer co-ops and co-operative affairs.”



Digest: How did you become involved in the co-operative movement?

SD: I grew up on a family farm in the Norwegian countryside. My family was strongly in favour of the co-operative movement and I inherited this attitude.

I was only ten when my father became ill and I had

to take on the responsibility for the farm work. Both my parents died young, leaving me at 23, to manage the farm.

Farms in Norway are relatively small. The first co-operative farm was the small dairy Dvergsdal Meieri (Dvergsdal means 'dairy'). There were approximately ten farmer members and the co-op was located on our farm. It is the natural way of life in Norway to cooperate on a large scale to be successful in the marketplace.

In the co-operative movement, we believe that this kind of organisation is a tool for desired development, not only in developing countries but also in developed countries.

Norway is a country with a strong cooperative culture. Co-operative organisations have developed continuously over the past 100 years. Today, Norway has a vibrant market economy with a strong democratic tradition. Co-ops have transformed into powerful, democratic business organisations.

They are market leaders in dairy, meat, supply and housing with most operating on a

national level and some are transnational.

The cooperative way of organising and doing business builds a more homogeneous community with fewer differences between rich and poor. Profits raised are shared among many participants. This ideology appeals to me.

Digest: What is your current role in the co-operative movement?

SD: My main involvement in the agricultural sector has been with the supply and marketing co-operative Felleskjøpet.

Today, I am chairman of the board of the largest Norwegian supply marketing co-op Felleskjøpet Agri, chairman of the board of the national 'umbrella organisation' Norske Felleskjøp, and board member and former chairman of the Norwegian Federation of Agricultural Co-operatives.

My co-operative Felleskjøpet has experienced 45% growth in turnover over the last five years. The net result for 2006 is our best ever with

Steinar Dvergsdal interview...continued

Feature Interview



“I believe the co-operative organisation is a very good way to make the ‘small’ farmer powerful in a bigger market ...”

Steinar Dvergsdal

the strongest return to our members. So right now, I am kind of proud.

Digest: What are the main challenges for the co-operative movement globally?

SD: To maintain their strength in a changing world, co-operatives have to adjust their structure to do successful business. This is a major challenge.

Today many co-operatives have to compete with multinational companies. Although they can expand to a certain extent, perhaps transnationally, co-ops cannot compete with major international companies. We have not yet found the answer to these challenges.

Digest: What are some benefits for co-operatives since Global 300 launched?

SD: The size and struc-

ture of co-operatives all over the world varies a lot and that’s how it should be.

But to be respected and taken seriously, we need to show that we also have big, powerful and well-known co-operatives. Through the **Global 300**, we can show the world one of the powerful sides of the co-operative movement.

We also need, within the co-operative movement, the inspiration and recognition that flow from listing as a **Global 300** business.

I also think that those companies listed in the **Global 300** can benefit through sharing of knowledge.



“The co-operative way of organising and doing business builds a more homogeneous community ...” Steinar Dvergsdal

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2007 Calendar of ICA events and related co-operative activities

- 4-5 May** ICA Board meeting, Mexico. Contact: Iain Macdonald macdonald@ica.coop
- 11-12 May** ICBA meeting, ICA Americas Congress. Puerto Rico.
- 14-15 May** Mutual Insurance Trade Association Meeting (MITAM), Paris, France Hosted by FFSAM, ROAM, GEMA, FNMF.
- 22-24 May** International Health Co-operative Organisation (IHCO) Board meeting, Stockholm, Sweden. Contact: direccion@fundacionespriu.coop
- 28 May - 1 June** ICA Research meeting, Saskatoon, Canada. Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences. See www.usaskstudies.coop
- 6-7 June** Cooperatives Europe/FNCUMA Partnerships, Bourg-en-Bresse, France
- 27 June** Cooperatives Europe Board meeting - Prague, Czech Republic. Contact Rainer Schluter, r.schluter@coopseurope.coop
- 28-29 June** 3rd Co-operative Convention on European Social Dialogue. Prague, Czech Republic. Details will be posted on website at www.coopseurope.coop/rubrique.php?id_rubrique=51
- 12-15 July** International Co-operative Trade Fair organised by the Indonesian Co-operative Movement in collaboration with the ICA-AP. Bali, Indonesia. For further information contact: Sethumadhavansethu@icaroap.coop and Rajiv Mehta rajivmehta@icaroap.coop
- 29 July - 1 Aug** World Credit Union Conference, Calgary (Canada). More information : www.woccu.org/calgary07
- 24-29 Sept** ICMIF World Congress, Brussels, Belgium. Contact: Shaun Tarbuck, shaun@ICMIF.org
- 25 Sep** ICMIF Board Meeting, Brussels, Belgium. Hosted by P&V Contact: Shaun Tarbuck, shaun@ICMIF.org
- 9 Oct** Simposio Internacional: Cooperativismo en Alemania y Venezuela. Reflexiones en Ahorro y Crédito, Vivienda y Agricultura. Auditorio Naranja de la Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Sociales – FaCES de la UCV. [See program \(only in Spanish\)](#)
- 13-14 Oct** Series of pre General Assembly ICA meetings, Singapore.
- 15 Oct** Meeting of ICA Sectoral Organisations Chair, Singapore Contact Dr Kim kim@ica.coop
- 16-17 Oct** Meeting of sectoral organisations and thematic committees. ICA General Assembly, Singapore.
- 18-19 Oct** ICA General Assembly, Singapore. See www.icasingapore.coop/
- 22-24 Oct** 1st World CIRIEC research conference on the Social Economy, Victoria, British Columbia.
- 8 Nov** Meeting for co-operative development agencies, UK Co-operative College. Contact: Mervyn Wilson, Mervyn@co-op.ac.uk

This year's theme for International Day of Co-operatives which will be celebrated on Saturday 7 July is:

“Co-operative Values and Principles for Corporate Social Responsibility”.

The next issue of the Digest will carry full details but in the meantime visit COPAC's website for more information

www.copac.coop/

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