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Special edition: Co-ops and Crisis

The past months have seen the world rocked by an unprecedented number of natural and human crises. This edition of the ICA Digest carries reports on the co-operative movement's response to the environmental disasters in Japan and New Zealand and the pro-democracy movement in Egypt. It is also the last time you will receive the ICA Digest in its current form—a new e-newsletter will go live in May and thereafter be published monthly.



Japanese nationals receive aid (US Navy photo by Seaman Armando Gonzales/Released)

'Branding is key' in IYC 2012—Gould

As the United Nations prepares to unveil the new logo for the International Year of Co-operatives 2012, the Director-General of the ICA, Charles Gould, has appeared in a video interview to discuss the plans for a global branding campaign for co-operatives in 2012.

Mr Gould told ICMIF TV the branding awareness campaign being rolled out comprised three key messages. "Co-operatives are an important business model being values based," he said. "They recognise the will of their membership."

"At the centre of this branding campaign is the telling of a different co-operative story each day of the year in 2012," he said. The stories will be bannered on the 2012 website, linked to thousands of other

co-operatives' websites and publicised using social and traditional media networks.

"The real prize here is not just to do something in 2012 but to position the co-operative brand—to re-launch the brand—in a way that we can build on in subsequent years," Gould said.

" - So that 2012 is not the culmination of some series of events, it's the beginning of what will be an ongoing marketing campaign, branding campaign and messaging campaign," he said. "This will ensure people understand what incredible potential this has as a solution for today's challenges."



Watch D-G Gould's interview at www.ica.coop/activities/iyc

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Co-ops & crisis

Co-ops help New Zealand quake victims rebuild



Devastation and rebuilding in New Zealand—Images courtesy of Federated Farmers



The co-operative spirit was very much in evidence in the wake of the 6.3 magnitude earthquake that struck Christchurch, New Zealand on 22 February.

Mike Rhodes, CEO of CDC Pharmaceuticals, a co-operative supplying hospitals and pharmacies affected by the earthquake, thanked members for their

extraordinary support following the worst disaster in New Zealand's history.

“Our operations are in the heart of Christchurch and they were no longer operational,” said Mr Rhodes.

The co-operative's reaction was to get straight back to business: “The earthquake struck on Tuesday, on Wednesday afternoon we'd located a new site and on Thursday we started to shift 10,000 items. Normally an inventory move like the one CDC managed in a day would take 3-6 months in planning,” said Rhodes.

“We actually had great support from our members,” said Mr Rhodes. “They were just so proud of being able to keep the supplies getting through.”

Other co-operative sectors also threw their collective weight behind the recovery effort.

Federated Farmers gave tents, food and cooking equipment to earthquake victims, according to Ramsey Margolis, executive director of ICA's New Zealand member, New Zealand Cooperatives Association.

“They mobilised thousands from the rural sector to come and help clean up,” said Margolis, in a blog he set up to provide rolling news coverage of the Christchurch disaster as it unfolded, following co-operatives, how they were affected and how they responded.

Find the blog at: <http://nz.coop/co-ops-respond-to-the-feb-22nd-christchurch-earthquake/>

Operations, consumer sentiment hit in ‘Papyrus’ revolution



Demonstrators on army truck in Tahrir Square, Cairo, Photographed by Ramy Raaof (Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license)

It took a little less than three weeks for Hosni Mubarak, Egyptian president for three decades, to beat a retreat from Cairo following riots by Egyptians demanding democracy.

But the flow-on of the February regime change and move to proper democratic government has affected the country's strong co-operative movement on several levels. Egypt's co-operative tradition was initially disrupted on an operations level during the weeks of demonstrations and violence leading to Mubarak's departure. “One of our rooms has been destroyed, so we have closed (the offices),” Mounir Shaarawy, Secretary General of the Central Productive Co-operative Union of Egypt, which has its headquarters in central Cairo, told the ICA Digest. Telephone lines to the co-operative union remain non-operational.

Two months since the beginning of the revolution, a national referendum has overwhelmingly approved changes to the constitution in a first step towards democracy, and a semblance of normality is returning to the co-operative movement. “We are running everything normally now,” said Shaarawy. Although some of the co-operatives under its umbrella are operating at reduced capacity. With Egyptians hoarding cash and reluctant to spend until the political changes play out, in a second flow-on effect from the revolution, co-operatives are being hit by lowered demand. “Everyone is cautious overall,” Shaarawy said. “There are also some difficulties with security.”

'Viral' time for International Co-operative Alliance

Director-General Charles Gould is banking on a far-reaching focus on communications to better inform members and reach out to the general public.

"This year we are very focused on aligning our internal communications—our messages—so that we can then go external next year," he said. "2012 is all about raising public awareness of co-operatives. In 2011 we are building the internal systems to ensure that we are ready."

One of the planks of ICA's across-the-board communications strategy is re-launching the ICA Digest. "I hear from our members that they want to hear more from us," Gould said. As

such, a new e-newsletter will go live in May and thereafter be published monthly.

The new electronic newsletter will have a distribution method that is both simpler and faster. It will be at once more informative for members and more approachable. The new monthly format will allow the publication to be more current. Information in the e-newsletter also aims to be presented in a way that will have a greater appeal to the mainstream media, in order to attract more publicity to co-operatives as a whole. Content will cover not only events in the co-operative sector, but general and policy issues, and will progress towards an online forum from which these issues can be debated.

"It is essential," Gould said, "that ICA speak to the next generation through the media most relevant to them. That is social media. We need to demonstrate to them that the same collaborative tendencies that draw them to use social media are inherent in the co-operative enterprise model."

The new format will allow for video messages, interviews and monthly blogs. Meanwhile, the International Cooperative and Mutual Insurance Federation has taken its own fresh approach to communications with the launch of a community-based web site which includes not only live news but also its own television channel, ICMIF TV. (ICA video link: www.ica.coop/activities/lyc)

eNewsletter

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Charles Gould
ICA Director-General

Japan response could pave way for introduction of co-ops

On 11 March, Japan suffered the catastrophic effects of a magnitude 9 earthquake and tsunami. On 16 March, ICA launched its "Japan Disaster Recovery Fund" to collect contributions to benefit the co-operative movement in Japan and to help it rebuild.

"Japanese co-operatives have always been at the forefront in providing assistance to others in need," noted ICA president Pauline Green in her appeal to co-operatives around the world. "We hope that you will now be able to assist our colleagues in Japan who have been so terribly affected by this disaster," she said.

"Co-operative communities need co-operation and the

spirit of solidarity at a time like this *gigantic* time of trying," wrote the Tokyo-based National Federation of Fisheries Co-operative Associations, on its website. The National Federation of Agriculture Co-operatives reported the primary society (JA) of Ohfunato had suffered "catastrophic" damage, and in the Fukushima province, some individuals in the JA Federation hospital, had been affected by radiation.

Co-operative Development Foundation (CDF) in the USA began discussing the launch of an appeal the day of the Japan earthquake. The appeal went live on the first weekend to raise funds towards the recovery of co-operatives there.

CDF said the natural and subsequent nuclear disasters in Japan could pave the way for the introduction of the co-operative model, amid the rebuilding effort.

"We see the possibility of introducing the co-op model where it wasn't found or found much before, as co-operatives are a great economic development tool," said Ellen Quinn, CDF Funds Manager.



Japan appeal

Make a donation

Download the pledge form from:

www.ica.coop/activities/tsunami/japan2011-appeal.html

Scene of devastation, Iwate Prefecture—image courtesy of JCCU International Dept.

IDC 2011

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found on the ICA's
website
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Youth hold key to co-operative future

COPAC—Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Co-operatives—and ICA have announced the theme for the 2011 International Day of Co-operatives: “*Youth, the future of co-operative enterprise*”.

Over a century ago, British politician and author, Benjamin Disraeli said: “We live in an age when to be young and to be indifferent can be no longer synonymous. We must prepare for the coming hour. The claims of the Future are represented by suffering millions; and the Youth of a Nation are the trustees of Posterity.”

Fast forward to the 21st Century and the international co-operative movement has taken a similar view. Jose Antonio Chavez, ICA board member and youth representative said young co-operators were, “working to see if it is possible to use the International Day to start a youth-targeted arts and

music competition celebrating and publicising co-operatives.”

“ICA Americas is also planning a video conference event for July, the third time that young people from different countries will gather to discuss co-operative issues,” said Chavez.

Sadly, many young people are not educated about the co-operative model. Co-operative business studies is not found in school curricula and rarely covered in university programmes, according to the ICA Americas regional office. Yet co-operatives can provide a business model for youth entrepreneurs, it argues.

“[Co-ops] offer opportunities to be employed by enterprises that address young people’s concerns for more democratic, responsible and ethical business operations.”

This year’s theme highlights how the co-operative model can successfully empower youth. It links to the celebration of the United Nations International Year of Youth, which encourages dialogue and understanding across generations.

ICA’s 89 year old International Co-operative Day has been celebrated jointly with the United Nations since 1995. More information www.ica.coop/activities/idc/2011.html

International Day of Cooperatives 2011



ICA Calendar

2011

14-17

April

First International Conference on Co-operative Social, Economic and Cultural Capabilities, organised by Iran Ministry of Co-operatives with ICA, University of Leiden, Netherlands, University of Tehran, Shahid Beheshti University, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Islamic Azad University, Kish Island (Iran). More information: <http://en.ieic2011.com/>



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