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Issue 8 - September 2000



Message from the ICA Director General

It is now just over three weeks since I took over as Director-General of the ICA.

I have worked all my professional life in the co-operative sphere in various capacities. ICA is not new to me. I worked in ICA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific for three years in the early nineties.

My belief is that the co-operative mode of working together for a common aim is as relevant today as it was in the early days.

There is a need and a place for organisations that stand for a higher aim than just to maximise the return on capital. This is true universally, in developing countries as well as in industrialised countries with mature economies. Co-operatives are inherently value-based organisations - they are different from investment-led organisations. This difference should be made clear and visible. This difference is more and more asked for and appreciated by customers and consumers. My vision is that the co-operative mode of operation, "the difference," shall be increasingly visible, appreciated and recognised. And that the ICA, and the whole network of ICA affiliated organisations, will be perceived and identified as value-based organisations contributing to society's good.

In the developing countries economic and social co-operation in democratic forms - the very essence of the co-operative idea - is a powerful and efficient way for poor and disadvantaged people to improve their living conditions, to get a voice and to speak for themselves. My vision is that the ICA and its network of affiliated organisations shall make a decisive contribution in supporting co-operative development in the developing countries for the good of all mankind.

Finally, I have a vision of the ICA being a globally recognised and leading body for the co-operative mode of operation.

I know my new assignment is a major challenge. I will do my best to contribute to the fulfilment of these visions.

[Karl-Johan Fogelström](#)

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Brazilian President Cardoso to RioCooperativo 2000

It is now confirmed that the President of Brazil, Dr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, will also come to RioCooperativo 2000. He will speak at the opening ceremony, in the afternoon of December 4.

That is another good catch for the organisers of the event, with the Organisation of Brazilian Co-operatives as host. Other prominent speakers already confirmed are Oscar Arias, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate, and Rubens Ricupero, Director-General of UNCTAD.

The main focus of the three integrated events - The 2nd ICA Global Forum, The Ibero American Conference, and the Congress of Brazilian Co-operatives - will however be the so-called Best Practices. "That is the form and content of the ICA meeting our members have asked for," says the ICA President, Roberto Rodrigues. "Some 30 co-operators from successful co-operatives around the world are asked to share their experience with us others. And Rio itself...need I say more? Even we Brazilians enjoy coming here."

It is still possible to register. Forms and programme details are on this web site under www.coop.org/rio

[Mats Ahnlund](#)

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Research Conference Points to Need for Interaction with Practitioners

The ICA European Research Conference brought together 60 researchers and practitioners from Europe, Asia and the Americas in Oslo 11-14 August. The theme was "The Co-operative Impulse: Past, Present and Future." Participants explored external influences that might affect the development of co-operatives, such as legislation, new concepts of management, the rapid change of technology and the new economy.

Rita Rhodes in her paper on "Historic Co-operative Network" cited the achievements of Plunkett whose network crossed the border of Ireland and reached, among other important figures in England, Canada and the Americas, the President of the USA, Theodore Roosevelt. Plunkett influenced Roosevelt's rural policy and gained a good and influential friend for the American co-operatives.

Zofia Chyra-Rolicz presented "Forgotten Lessons: Relations Between Polish Co-operative Movement and State in the II Republic (1918-1939) and in the III Republic (from 1989/1990)." She reminded us that good collaboration between co-operatives and the state in the past should continue to ensure "the future possibility of acting in national economy and social welfare."

Malcolm Corbett in his paper "Innovation in Co-operation" explained how Poptel, a worker co-operative Internet company in the UK, had raised venture capital financing while retaining its co-operative status. Many issues were raised in his presentation, not least the problem of financing the growth of co-operatives in fast-changing technology industries. Submitted to the British Co-operative Commission, "Innovation in Co-operation" calls for the establishment of co-operative venture funds to ensure that co-ops can thrive in the 'new economy.' Malcolm argued that it would be particularly ironic if in an industry in which employee ownership is common, co-operative businesses could not have access to capital necessary to succeed.

Meeting members' needs is a key factor for JCCU (the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union). Akira Kurimoto in his paper "Innovating Joint Buying System through IT" showcased the way JCCU has improved its Joint Buying System by using electronic devices. IT is used to build upon an already successful strategy: a consumers' collective buying of daily necessities set up in the '70s. His paper also demonstrated that businesses are facing a shift in customers' behaviour and have to adapt in order to be successful. Akira Kurimoto is confident that despite these constant changes, co-operatives have the ethics that retain customers' trust and this trust is the key factor to success online and in the new economy.

Tomorrow, co-operative will continue to face fierce competition and will need more and more to focus on its members, establish and strengthen alliance with fellow co-operators, governments and other international, regional and national communities. Co-operatives have also to look into new theories on

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Addressing the Role of Co-operatives in Development: Challenges facing Africa

A bilingual seminar on the role of co-operatives in addressing the major development challenges facing Africa in the 21st Century was held in Cotonou, Benin, 21-24 August, right before the 4th Meeting of the ICA Regional Assembly for Africa at the same venue on 25 August.

Participation in the seminar was distinguished as well as diverse. It included women and men co-operative leaders, representatives of international organisations and NGOs, co-operative HRD institutions and governments. In all, nearly 200 participants came from 34 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, West Africa, Europe and the Americas.

Topics covered included globalisation; management of risks associated with commodity price instability; food self-sufficiency and security; the natural environment; job creation, poverty alleviation and social exclusion; co-operatives and literacy; legislation and institutional frameworks; women integration and; co-operatives and health. No fewer than 16 well-researched-and-written papers were presented to the seminar. These papers formed a solid basis for highly focused and refreshingly participatory deliberations, as well as high-quality conclusions and recommendations.

Specialized forums were organised to advance farther the deliberations of the seminar. The specialized events included the African Women Forum, the Round Table on Health Co-operatives and Mutuals, CICOPA, ATTAC, and the Round Table on ILO Recommendation 127.

During the Regional Assembly meeting, members resolved to take up the recommendations of the seminar and to work on implementing them in their respective countries. They further undertook to report on progress at the next Regional Assembly.

Addressing the Regional Assembly, ICA President Roberto Rodrigues commended the participants and the organisers for the high quality of the seminar. He particularly pointed out that the issues addressed and views expressed during the seminar were not unique to Africa. Co-operatives all over the world are grappling with similar challenges. He concluded by encouraging co-operative leaders and professionals to face up to the sacrifices they have to make in the understanding that they are building a better future for humanity.

A report on the seminar is being prepared.. Meanwhile, copies of the papers presented at the seminar can be requested from A.S. Kibora at acibrao@fasonet.bf

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management, new trends of the socio-economy, innovative way in raising capital, innovative way in the use of new technology to take advantage of our existing network and foster co-operation among co-operatives.

The conference pointed to some main conclusions, including:

- To maintain the co-operative impulse, researchers need to help practitioners redefine co-operative ingredients for success from past lessons and present trends and practitioners need to convey to researchers what works and what doesn't.
- Globalisation, rapid change of technology, and tough competition with transnational companies are changing the scope of co-operation and co-op membership. Co-operation needs to be more and more established across borders and strengthened within co-operative organisations and even with other organisations which that used to be considered the "enemy."
- Forces driving co-operatives - in the past, present or future - are the same, involving people's interests and needs. Co-operation needs to continue to be fostered not only among members but also with other influential persons or entities such as government, that may share the same interest: to build a better place for people.

[Fanja Rasolomanana](#)

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Mauritius Recognizes Role of Its 600 Co-operatives

Financial grants to 10 cooperatives and meritorious awards to 20 cooperators marked a government function focusing on the role of the movement in the social and economic development of Mauritius.

Attended by senior officials, several ministers, an ambassador (of South Africa), and presidents, managers and members of various cooperative federations, the function marked the International Cooperative Day.

A highlight was the award of financial grants to 10 co-operative societies in connection with the Computerisation Project run by the Ministry of Co-operatives. The societies received Rs 20,000 each for acquisition of computer hardware. In addition, a special tribute was paid to 20 individuals for their outstanding contribution to the cooperative movement.

Mauritius can boast one of the oldest co-operative movements in the southern hemisphere. The first co-operatives were registered as far back as 1913 in the agricultural sector. Since then, the Mauritian co-operative movement has expanded and diversified. Today there are more than 30 different socio-economic activities serviced by around 600 single and multipurpose co-operatives, with a membership exceeding 140,000.

Aside from the function organised by the Ministry of Cooperatives, a seminar bringing together participants from the cooperative movement and the labour/employment market focused on the movement's role in employment promotion. Resolutions were adopted on:

- New opportunities and avenues for co-operatives.
- Management of co-operatives in the face of globalisation and privatisation.
- Co-operatives and information technology.
- Co-operatives and education/training.
- Co-operative legislation.
- Promoting co-operatives among Youth and Women

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ICA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Moves to a New Premises

In mid-July the ICA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific moved to a new but temporary rental premises in New Delhi, India. The move was made subsequent to the sale of Bonow House (43, Friends Colony) in New Delhi. The ICA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) has been functioning from Bonow House since 1968, initially as an Education and Training Centre for South-East Asia, and subsequently as a full-fledged Regional Office. The late Dr. Moritz Bonow inaugurated the office in 1968. Hence the name "Bonow House." At the time he was the President of ICA.

The new office address is as follows:

*E-4, Defence Colony
3rd floor
New Delhi 110 065, India*

The telephone and fax connections are yet to be installed. But temporary arrangements have been made to receive fax messages at (91)11-464-6800. Should you wish to send a fax, please mention on the message "Please forward to ICA." Meanwhile, we can be reached through our mobile phone at (91) 98-100-600-95.

There is no change in the E-mail address (icaroap@vsnl.com).

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Regional Workshop on Employment Generation, Poverty Alleviation and Human Resource Development - the Perspectives of Co-operative and Trade Union Movements

The ICA, in collaboration with the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) and with the support of the ILO, will be organizing a regional workshop on "Employment Generation, Poverty Alleviation and Human Resource Development - the Perspectives of Co-operative and Trade Union Movements" from 18 to 20 October 2000.

The venue of the workshop will be the Bay View Park Hotel, 1118, Roxas Boulevard Corner, U.N. Avenue, Manila, Philippines.

The ICA and ICFTU considered the Workshop both timely and important on account of the adverse impact on workers arising from the recent financial crisis. The Asian turn-around, while being treated as a spectacular phenomenon and success story by the financial institutions and governments, including the International Monetary Fund, can be misleading. The positive changes in terms of GDP, international trade, inflation, could lead to complacency, and there is a danger that over-buoyancy will return again to the region. However, the gray areas going beyond the gaps found in addressing the issues of governance, regulations and standards, have left out social consequences from the Asian meltdown. Millions of people who have lost their jobs during the crisis are still unemployed, and social safety nets, or the lack thereof, are yet insufficient to secure their livelihood.

It is within this context that the ICA and ICFTU felt the mutual need to collaborate by organizing a workshop that will hopefully give rise to meaningful discussions towards practical solutions to these issues.

Forty delegates from co-operative and trade union movements in the Asia-Pacific Region will be participating in this very important workshop.

The objectives of the workshop are:

- To share the experiences and programmes of trade unions and co-operatives in addressing employment, poverty, social security and human resource development;
- To contribute to the International Labour Organisation's revision of Recommendation 127 and Convention on HRD and Training;
- To identify partnerships especially between trade unions and co-operatives in addressing human resource development and utilization (HRDU) issues, including initiating joint pilot project; and
- To prepare action plans for trade unions and co-operatives for effecting improvements in human resource development and utilization.

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JCCU's Plea to Support Appeal for Peace

The Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU) has been organizing a Co-op Peace Gathering in August every year, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where the atomic bombs were dropped. Consumer co-op members participate in this event to learn about the importance of peace and strengthen their will to build a peaceful society.

As the last year of the 20th Century and the new Millennium is fast approaching, consumer co-op members in Japan have resolved to appeal to people in Japan and the world for building a peaceful world where there are no wars and no nuclear weapons in the 21st Century.

The Appeal has been declared at the "Co-op Rainbow Gathering," the plenary session of Peace Gathering in Hiroshima and Nagasaki this year. JCCU would like to call for co-operatives friends all over the world to join us to approve this appeal and make every effort to realize the 21st Century of peace.

Toward Peace in the 21st Century: Co-ops Appeal from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, 2000

In this year, 2000, as the last year of the 20th Century, consumer co-op members throughout Japan, who participated in the Co-op Rainbow Gathering, organized by the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union, send an appeal to people in Japan and world to abolish nuclear weapons immediately and realize a war-free world.

In August 1945, the first nuclear weapons in human history were used to attack Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Several hundred thousand people were killed in a split second by just two bombs. Three hundred thousand *Hibakusha* (atomic-bomb victims) are still suffering from the pain. At the same time, tens of million people were killed in the devastation during the Second World War.

For the last half of the century, *Hibakusha* and people all over the world have appealed for peace every chance they had. Until now, however, wars have been broken out in every part of the world, and numerous citizens have been victimized by the war. And humankind is still exposed to the threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Since our establishment, we, consumer co-ops in Japan, have been convinced that in order to secure a better life, the world must first be at peace. We have been working hard to promote peace by publicizing *Hibakusha's* appeals and hopes and disseminating the reality of being nuclear weapon victims. Around the world, we are advocating to people to have atomic-bomb exhibitions at over 100 cities. We believe that co-ops played a great role to lead the International Court of Justice to rule in its advisory opinion that "the threats or use of nuclear weapons shall in general be a violation of the rule of international law." At the ICA (International Co-operative Alliance) Congress held in 1999, the resolution of peace was adopted .

Toward a peaceful 21st century, as individual citizens, each of us must take action with a strong resolution for abolition of nuclear weapons and a war-free world, in order to realize the essential principle of the Charter of the United Nations: "to save the next future generation from the catastrophe of the war." For nuclear weapons specifically, it is important for people and nations all over the world to realize the horror of the use of the nuclear weapons, and to abandon nuclear deterrence at the United Nations' Millennium Summit. And the nuclear-weapon states should cut through the route to "accomplish the promise to abolish nuclear weapons" that was confirmed at the Review Conference of Parties to Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Thus, we strongly request holding the 4th U.N. Special Assembly on Disarmament and enacting the treaty to abolish the nuclear weapons.

Let us appeal to all citizens on earth to have a strong will for peace and make the world take action by communicating what happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki to each other, so that we can abolish nuclear weapons immediately, and that our children can succeed to the peace and better world without war.

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New Head of Swedish Co-operative Centre

Lennart Hjalmarson, deputy CEO of Kooperativa Förbundet, is the new managing director of the Swedish Cooperative Centre. He took up his new assignment on September 1, replacing Karl Johan Fogelström, who was appointed director-general of the ICA. Mr. Hjalmarson was director of education and head of the Cooperative College Vår Gård between 1979 and 1983, and CEO of the Sormland consumer co-operative society between 1983 and 1989. Since 1990 he has been deputy CEO and a member of the Management Group at KF. The Swedish Cooperative Centre (SCC) is a development assistance organisation representing the Swedish cooperative movement. The SCC collaborates with organisations in 15 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America in order to improve the living conditions of poor families.

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ICA Gender Strategy Translated Into Various Languages

The ICA Gender Strategy, adopted by the ICA Board in April 2000, is already being distributed to cooperatives worldwide in a variety of languages. In addition to the original English version, French, Russian, and Italian versions have now been prepared.

Both Centrosoyuz of Russia and LEGACOOOP of Italy translated the Strategy and have circulated it among their member societies.

The ICA Head Office translated the Strategy into French for distribution at the ICA Regional Assembly for Africa, and the ICA Regional Office for the Americas will have the Spanish version ready for distribution at its Regional Assembly in Rio later this year.

The various language versions will shortly be available on the ICA web site.

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Making Web Sites Appealing to Women

To capture the female share of the internet market, organizations need to improve on-line customer service and ease of navigation, simplify their web pages, and forget gimmicks. In short, provide solution-driven, not product-driven, web sites.

This is a suggestion from NetSmart America (USA) quoted in the Credit Union Magazine. NetSmart, a New York City consumer psychology consulting firm, predicts that by 2002 women will outnumber men on the internet by a 3 to 2 margin. Accounting for 80% of all household spending and paying 70% of household bills, women are paving the way for virtual financial services, it says.

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