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Co-ops Achieved Most of Habitat II Agenda on a Micro Level (1996)

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"Co-ops Achieved Most of Habitat II Agenda
on a Micro Level"

The Habitat Agenda adopted by governments at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlement in Istanbul last month is the most comprehensive statement of recognition of the co-operative contribution to sustainable development yet issued by the UN system. With nearly twenty references to possible partnerships with governments and civil society in all sectors that will lead to healthier, safer and sustainable urban settlements, the document will be a tool for the co-operative movement to use to forge new partnerships and strengthen existing ones.

Rolf Trodin, President of ICA Housing, presented the ICA statement during the Plenary session of Habitat II on 7 June 1996. He noted that the co-operative principles and values address many of the goals of the conference and that the co-operative movement continues to successfully meet the challenges and concerns to which Habitat II was now drawing world attention.

He stressed that, "...in realising the agenda of Habitat II, national governments are more likely to find inspiration in the co-op housing model than in any other housing option. We have achieved most of the agenda already on a micro level. At the international level, the co-op movement has an ongoing history of bringing together the northern and southern co-op sectors for their mutual benefit. Co-op housing has the answer to many of human beings' deepest needs: for shelter, for community, for control over their own lives, for values. We urge those leaders present at Habitat II to work with the co-op housing movement in seeking out development partnerships, which can solve their shelter problem by giving citizens access to the one form of housing that offers more than just a place to live."

Co-operators from around the world joined the ICA in making sure that the governments were aware of the important contribution of the housing co-operative movement. Co-operators from Austria, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Kenya, Germany, India, Norway, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom, Uruguay, USA, Zambia, and Zimbabwe also attended the conference and the parallel events held at the NGO Forum.

ICA Housing Co-operatives held both a Board meeting and General Assembly in Istanbul allowing many of their members

the opportunity to participate in the numerous events and meetings taking place during Habitat II. Many reported having been able to make excellent contacts. A special seminar on movement-to-movement assistance was also held attracting participants from national delegations and the NGO community.

A number of stands showing the successes of the co-operative movement were also put up at the NGO Forum including the ICA Housing photo exhibit on movement-to-movement assistance.

Co-operative Housing Foundation (USA) and a number of Turkish co-operative organizations including Kent-Koop, Turkkent, Taris, Union of Bornova Housing Co-operatives, also had stands.

The Turkish Housing Co-operative Movement also held seminars to present their successes and challenges for the future.

Co-operative Initiatives Receive
Best Practices' Recognition

Launched by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements as part of the preparatory process for Habitat II, 'the City Summit', the Best Practices Initiative aimed to forge a positive vision of the urbanizing world by focusing attention on practical solutions to some of the most pressing social, economic and environmental problems.

Over 600 entries were submitted from 90 countries. The top twelve entries received awards with a further 100 entries put on the 'Best 100 List' and others considered to be 'Good Practices'.

Co-operatives were prominent in the entries. Each initiative was judged on its impact, partnerships, and sustainability. In addition, criteria regarding leadership, transparency, empowerment of people and responsiveness of social and cultural diversity, potential for replaceability, and appropriateness to the local conditions.

SEWA, the Self Employed Women's Bank, established by the co-operative and trade union movements in India was one of the award winners for its success in providing loans at market rates to women who would otherwise not have access to credit.

In the 'Best 100 List', co-operative initiatives in Brazil, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, Germany, Norway, Pakistan and Venezuela were selected. Other co-operative initiatives were considered to be 'Good practices'.

For further information on the initiatives see <http://www.bestpractices.org>.

COPAC Secretariat Transfers to Geneva (1996)

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COPAC Secretariat Transfers to Geneva *****

The Committee for the Pro-motion and Advancement of Co-operatives (COPAC) officially established its office in Geneva on April 1, 1996. Ms. MariaElena Chavez has been appointed COPAC coordinator. Ms. Vittoria Zaffarano, the COPAC office manager will assist the coordinator during 1996 until the full transfer of the COPAC office from Rome is completed.

COPAC was established in Rome in 1971 to improve the coordination of membership activities for the promotion of co-operatives. Its present membership includes the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco, and Allied Workers Associations (IUF), World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU) and the ICA.

The COPAC coordinator can be contacted at the ICA Head Office; telephone: (41-22) 929 88 25; E-mail: ica@coop.org.

Further information about COPAC and its members can be found on the ICA/UWCC Co-operative Gopher (gopher://wiscinfo.wisc.edu:70/11/.info-source/.coop) or on the ICA International Web Site (<http://www.coop.org>).

New ICA Organisation *****

At the June meeting, the ICA Board received a report from the Interim Steering Committee established to finalise plans to create the International Health Co-operative Organisation (IHCO) as an ICA Specialised Organisation.

The Board approved the draft rules of the new Organisation, which plans to hold its founding meeting on 22 November to coincide with the Regional Assembly for the Americas.

The new body will promote health co-ops of three kinds: consumer- and user- owned, and integrated forms. Only members of ICA will be eligible for full membership, although a category of associate membership will also be available for others. ICA Head Office will provide the secretary for the IHCO.

Asia-Pacific Regional Assembly *****

The second ICA Regional Assembly of 1996 was held in Petaling

Jaya, Malaysia, from 13-14 June under the chairmanship of Royal Professor Ungku A. Aziz, President of the National Co-operative Organisation of Malaysia, ANGKASA.

Among the agenda issues dealt with by the 1800 participants were:

- * approval of a new four-year development plan (1997-2000) for the Region}l Office;
- * review of the report of the advisory committee on the policy and direction of the Regional Office, which recommended that efforts be focused in the areas of improving the business efficiency of co-operatives, human resource development, and improvement of co-operatives' image and relations with government;
- * approval of a model constitution for adoption by Specialised Regional Committees;
- * establishment of two working groups to draw up guidelines for the establishment of regional housing and women's committees;
- * reports on national progress in publicising and using the Co-operative Identity Statement;
- * preparations for the next meeting of Co-operative Ministers and leaders, scheduled to be held in Thailand in March 1997;
- * acceptance of the offer by Bangladesh to host the 1998 Regional Assembly.

The participants also decided that the nomination of a candidate for election as ICA Vice-President would be postponed until the March 1997 meeting of the regional Executive Council.

In his opening address to the Assembly, ICA President Graham Melmoth noted that the rapid growth of economies and co-operative movements in the Asia-Pacific region had generated both opportunities and anxieties.

Referring to the wish expressed by some Asian members for greater representation on the ICA Board, and for retaining a larger percentage of subscription payments for use in the region, he said that both issues are being examined within the global ICA context by the Special Board Committee on Rules and Finance, which will present its proposals for change to the 1997 General Assembly.

At the conclusion of the Assembly Mr. Melmoth paid tribute to the retiring Regional Director, G.K. Sharma, for the progress made by ICA in the region during the last nine years, and introduced the newly-appointed Regional Director, Robby Tulus of Indonesia, who will take up his position on 1 October.

Columbia - Recycling co-operative (1996)

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(Source: ICA News, Issue No.3/1996- pp.4-5)

Colombia - Recycling Co-operative Offers New Beginnings
by John Julian

At 16, Nellie was in big trouble. She was pregnant, illiterate, unskilled, and she had two children under the age of two. Her husband, a thief, was failing in his chosen profession, her parents were dead, and the children were hungry. In Buccaramanga, Colombia, Nellie's options were limited.

Desperate, Nellie made her way to the edge of the city, and with her two tiny children, walked down the dusty gravel road to the municipal garbage dump. For Nellie, and others who have passed that way before and since, it is a long, hot walk into hell.

The dump is situated on a relatively flat piece of land surrounded on three sides by hills. Chulos - a type of vulture

-
wheel overhead or cluster on the ground, feeding on the garbage. Scattered on the hills around are little makeshift shelters of sticks and tattered plastic and cardboard - home to as many as 200 people who survive by scavenging in the dump. When garbage trucks rumble in, the people emerge through the billowing clouds of dust to swarm over the piles, pulling out glass or plastic - anything saleable. Most carry knives to cut up plastic and to defend themselves from each other. When the human population at the dump gets too large, civic minded citizens have been known to shoot them. Nor do the authorities pay much heed if the dump dwellers kill each other. There are just two rules to follow at the dump - the law of the jungle, and the code of silence.

"We were desechables," says Nellie, "the disposable ones. No one ever went to jail for killing one of us. I was no better than an animal." Like Nellie, all the people who find their way to the dump teeter precariously on the bottom rung of "society. Many are alcoholic, and others addicted to basuko, a by-product of cocaine that is cheap, highly addictive, damaging to those who use it, and readily available throughout Colombia.

Nellie's immediate concern on her arrival, and during much of the four years she spent in the dump, was food. If she and her children found bottles or plastic, they often traded with others who had found food in the mounds of refuse. Chulos provided extra protein. Enterprising people would kill the birds and roast them - a simple enough matter in a dump. The rotting garbage provided a ready source of fuel. A deep hole would release enough methane gas for a steady fire. Life in the dump was ugly, violent, and very often short.

Salvation for Nellie and many other dump workers came from an unexpected source. The city of Buccaramanga was planning to

close the dump and replace it with a modern landfill. A team of social workers from Santander University were dispatched to look into the problem of the people who lived there. After months of daily visits a co-operative was formed, and for the dump people who joined it was a ticket out of hell. Nellie was among the first to sign up.

Ten years later, little has changed in the dump. But everything has changed for Nellie. Now thirty, and married for the second time to another co-op member, Nellie is a senior member of the co-operative. Her job these days is as a supervisor at the co-ops recycling facility.

There, workers sort and package a wide range of products for resale. And while they may still be working in the same industry as they did during their days in the dump, the recycling facility might as well be on another planet.

The workers wear neat uniforms - green to symbolize hope. To be a member of the co-operative a new recruit must be free of drugs and alcohol. The facility is orderly and businesslike, and at the end of the month there is a steady pay cheque of between 250,000 and 300,000 pesos, approximately \$500 to \$600 Canadian dollars.

The recycling facility is not the only business that the co-operative is involved in. The co-op members, now more than 130 strong, clean buildings throughout the city. They run a restaurant, and have contracts to sweep city streets. Others go door to door, collecting recyclable products in the suburbs. There is a co-op run restaurant at the city's gigantic new bus terminal. And in one of the poorer barrios of the city there is a daycare centre where more than 60 children, dressed in carefully laundered white shorts and T-shirts, spend their days learning and singing and playing. Without the co-operative, their fate would certainly have been that of the hard eyed, dirty children that can still be found growing up in the horror of the dump.

The members of the co-operative are proud and independent. Their co-operative has never received assistance from government. Starting with capital of less than \$100 they have grown, in 10 years, to own the buildings that house the recycling plant and the daycare centre. They own two trucks and a variety of other pieces of equipment, and they have provided themselves with employment and a new life.

The university which was instrumental in establishing the co-operative has maintained its ties, and the co-operative is a member of ASCOOP, the national association of co-operatives in Colombia. Through ASCOOP the co-operative is part of a program, funded by the Canadian Co-operative Association, that provides skilled technical assistance and credit. They have had help from ASCOOP business specialists and auditors, and are about to receive a loan to buy a machine to compress and bale cardboard. Money for the recycling co-op's part of the program was contributed by St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Good Neighbour Fund, of Ottawa, Ontario.

Nellie and her new husband have bought their own house. They now have two more children, and the family owns a shiny new motorbike. After years of attending school on Saturdays, Nellie has completed the first levels of high school. A measure of the respect she has earned in the co-operative is the fact that she has been assigned the duty of working with new recruits. When they arrive fresh from the dump, Nellie helps them to adjust to the discipline of an ordered and regulated working life.

She has never had to refuse a new recruit entry into the

co-operative. By the time they complete their three-month trial, the recruits know for themselves whether they belong or not. Long before the trial period is over, those who cannot conform, who cannot contain their violence, or for whom the pull of basuko or alcohol is still too strong, usually drift back to the dump.

Nellie has another important responsibility with the co-operative. She supervises the co-op members who return to the dump as buyers to purchase products for the recycling facility. For many co-op members, this job would be impossible. They have escaped the fate that awaited them in the dump, and they cannot bear to tempt that fate by once again travelling down that dusty, litter-strewn road.

In a sunny day in March, Nellie makes one of her visits to the dump. The chulos swoop and swirl as she is greeted warmly by a growing crowd of children and adults, caked with dirt and dressed in an odd assortment of cast-off clothes. They press in around her to exchange greetings.

Nellie stops to talk to a tiny, baby-faced 13-year-old. The girl is small because she has lived most of her life in the dump. She has never had adequate nutrition. Already she has two children, and according to Nellie, is passed around from man to man like a piece of communal property. As Nellie turns away a look of terrible sadness comes over her face. She sits rigidly in the van, and as the vehicle begins to move she looks neither left nor right, and certainly not back. Just straight ahead down the narrow road to redemption.

Gender Issues in Co-operatives (1996)

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(Source: ICA News, Issue No.3/1996- pp.6)

Gender Issues in Co-operatives

Congress Adopts New Policies

The UK Co-operative Congress, Harrogate, UK, 1996, endorsed the statement on gender equality adopted by the European Regional Assembly of the ICA. The congress particularly noted the need to encourage societies to commit themselves to the active promotion of equality between men and women; the different priorities of values, strengths and competence between men and women and ensure equality of participation, job opportunities and working conditions as well as equal access to training and education opportunities.

The Congress urged co-ops to set and publicise action plans which include targets for achievement and timescales, in order to achieve the above objectives.

(Source: Co-operative Gazette, Information and Advisory Bulletin 6, March 26, 1996)

Gender Project to Improve Efficiency and Job Satisfaction

Folksam Insurance, Sweden has established a project "Gender Perspectives on Skills and Qualifications in the Claims Adjusters' Work".

In the project, one female and one male group of claims adjusters describe and analyze, together as well as in separate groups, different forms of knowledge, skills and qualifications in their work. One female and one male researcher will also attend meetings and analyze the discussions. Seminars with guest researchers will be held in between the group work. There will be five seminars and five group meetings during 1996.

Issues discussed at the meetings and seminars will be: what is knowledge? What kind of knowledge is valued and not valued? What kind of knowledge is important in the claims adjusters' work? How important is knowledge of human nature? Female and male language - are there any differences in female and male adjusters' contacts with clients and colleagues? Female and male definitions of efficiency, service and quality in the work -do female and male clients have different demands and preferences with regards to the adjuster's sex?

The aim is to improve efficiency, quality and work satisfaction by widening and combining gender perspectives. The results will be used as a basis in forming a gender neutral job evaluation and salary setting system in the company.

Perhaps this example may inspire similar projects in other

co-ops!

(Source: Katarina Apelqvist, Folksam, Chair of ICA Global Women's Committee)

Network on Women in Co-ops

An electronic discussion group on women in co-operatives and credit unions has been launched by the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA), known as `WICEN'. It is open to anyone who has an Internet e-mail address. Upon becoming a member, all conference comments and postings will arrive automatically in your e-mail box.

WICEN will provide a forum for exchange of ideas, experiences and information and a place to pose questions or propose solutions; a place to share `best practices' and case studies and to make new contact. The focus of discussions will be on issues relating to women and co-operatives - issues such as women's involvement on boards of directors and in decision-making within co-operatives and credit unions; family-friendly policies and practices in co-ops; women and co-op development; leadership styles and marketing to women.

WICEN is open to members of co-ops and credit unions and not restricted to women only. It is open to anyone with an interest in the subject of women and co-ops.

To join the conference, one needs to subscribe on line through e-mail to wicen-request@usask.ca. Please mention in your e-mail : `subscribe wicen <your e-mail address>`.

Youth and Co-operatives

Canada to Host Two Events

The Co-operators Insurance Group has launched a youth unity project which will provide a forum for 100 Canadian youths (aged 18-21) to explore, express and listen to diverse views on Canadian unity at Hull, Ottawa, from August 17-23, 1996. Further information, posters and application forms can be obtained from Laura Gregson, The Co-operators, Priory Square, Guelph, Ontario N1H 6P8, or on Internet home page (<http://www.cooperators.ca/cooperators/>).

The Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) is also organizing a Youth Conference in Halifax from June 24-25, 1996, where Canadians, Colombians, Indonesias and Filipinos learnt about co-ops in Canada and provided input on how to increase youth involvement in co-ops. Check the Web site for more information about youth initiatives (<http://www.cca.usask.ca/CCA/CCA.Home.html>).

Sustainable Development (1996)

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(Source: ICA News, Issue No.3/1996- pp.7)

Sustainable Development

Congress Adopts New Policies

The UK Co-operative Congress in Harrogate noted the enthusiasm of the Co-operative Movement for sustainable energy policies and called for co-operative initiatives to assess the feasibility of developing renewable energy schemes in Northern Ireland. The Congress also declared that Co-operation is, by its nature, rooted in community spirit. Therefore, the congress called upon all member societies to publicise their support for their society's community involvement.

(Source: Co-operative Gazette, Information and Advisory Bulletin 6, March 26, 1996)

Bank Opens Ecology Centre

The Co-operative Bank National Centre for Business and Ecology was launched on 22 March. Established in partnership with the four universities of Greater Manchester - the Manchester Metropolitan University, UMIST, the University of Manchester, and the University of Salford - the centre aims to provide environmental advice of the very highest quality at affordable rates by drawing upon the research and resources available in the largest educational precinct in Europe.

(Source: Banknotes, April 1996)
Co-operative Bank's Ecology Mission Statement

"We, the Co-operative Bank, will continue to develop our business taking into account the impact our activities have on the environment and society at large.

The nature of our activities are such that our direct impact, by being selective in terms of the provision of finance and banking arrangements, is more ecologically significant than the direct impact of our trading operations.

However, we undertake to continually assess all our activities and implement a programme of ecological improvement based on the pursuit of the following four scientific principles:

1. Nature cannot withstand a progressive build-up of waste derived from the Earth's crust. Nature cannot withstand a progressive build-up of society's waste, particularly artificial persistent substances which it cannot degrade into harmless materials.

3. The productive area of nature must not be diminished in quality (diversity) or quantity (volume) and must be enabled to grow.

4. Society must utilise energy and resources in a sustainable, equitable and efficient manner.

We consider that the pursuit of these principles constitute a path of ecological excellence and will secure future prosperity for society by sustainable economic activity.

The Co-operative Bank will not only pursue the above path itself, but endeavour to help and encourage all its stakeholders to do likewise."

Co-op Agenda 21

ICA has just released the printed copy of the Co-op Agenda 21 which will be available from MariaElena Chavez at the ICA Head Office. The text is also available on the ICA/UWCC Co-operative Gopher (gopher://wiscinfo.wisc.edu:70/11/.info-source/.coop) or on the ICA Web Site (<http://www.coop.org>).

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Co-op People and Co-op Calendar (1996)

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Co-op People

New Appointments at ICA

During the ICA Board meeting in June, Director-General Bruce Thordarson announced two secondments, one new appointment, and one promotion within the Head Office staff structure, and a change of Regional Director in Asia.

Mats Ahnlund, Director-General of the Co-op Network for Co-operative Development in Eastern and Central Europe, joined ICA as Senior Adviser, Member Services in July. He will also serve as focal point for liaison with the Specialised Organisations.

MariaElena Chavez, currently ICA's UN Liaison Officer, will be promoted to Director of UN/NGO Relations.

Bjorn Genberg, currently head of the Nordic co-operative development programme in Kenya with the Swedish Co-operative Centre, will join ICA as Development Director in January 1997.

Won-Sik Noh, senior agricultural economist with the National Agricultural Co-operative Federation of South Korea, will join the ICA as Agricultural Co-operative Adviser in August 1996.

Bruce Thordarson described these changes as a result of the Board's planning session in December 1995. At that time the Board emphasised the need to diversify and improve services to Member Organisations and the Specialised Bodies, to strengthen the Development Programme with special attention to Africa, and to ensure that the Head Office is sufficiently strong to balance the centrifugal forces resulting from the new regional structure.

At the ICA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Robby Tulus of Indonesia has been appointed Regional Director, effective 1 October 1996. A founder of the credit union movement in Indonesia, he subsequently served as Asia Regional Manager for the Canadian Co-operative Association. During the last three years he has been Senior Policy Adviser in the Regional Office.

The retiring Regional Director, G.K. Sharma, will assume the function of Special Advisor to the Director-General, with particular responsibility for issues dealing with co-op legislation and government policy.

Giancarlo Pasquini has been elected member of the Upper House

of the Italian Senate, and has resigned from the post of Lega Chairman and also from the ICA Board. The new Lega Chairman is Ivano Barberini.

David Allonby OBE, a director of the Co-operative Wholesale Society and member of the CWS Surrey and Berkshire Branch Committee, has been appointed Chairman of the Co-operative Union, the Co-operative Movement's central organising and advisory body in the United Kingdom. He succeeds George Money, who has retired.

Obituary

Dr. Jacobo Laks, President of the ICA Sub-Regional Banking Committee for Latin America and the President of the Instituto Movilizador de Fondos Cooperativos died on May 7th, 1996. Dr.Laks was a great supporter of ICA and was instrumental in the development of co-operatives in Argentina.

ICA Calendar *****

12 August 1996

DSE/ZEL-ICA ROWA UNCAS Seminar
Dakar, Senegal

15-17 August 1996

Regional Assembly Africa
Dakar, Senegal

26-29 September 1996

International Co-op Research Conference
Tartu, Estonia

11-14 October 1996

ICMIF Meetings
Wiesbaden, Germany

22-23 October 1996

ICA-LEGA-Confcoop. Seminar
Imola, Italy

24-25 October 1996

ICBA Exec. & Plenary
Budapest, Hungary

25-26 October 1996

CICOPA-CECOP Exec.
Budapest, Hungary

26-29 October 1996

ICA-IRU Board & Seminar
Budapest, Hungary

28 October 1996

INTER-COOP Meetings
Budapest, Hungary

28 October 1996

Housing Exec.
Budapest, Hungary

27 October 1996

ICA Audit & Control Committee
Budapest, Hungary

27 - 28 October 1996

Research Committee Conference

Budapest, Hungary

28 October 1996
ICA Consumer Co-op Organisation
Budapest, Hungary

28-29 October 1996
ICACC Exec. & Seminar
Budapest, Hungary

29 October 1996
ICA European Council
Budapest, Hungary

30 October 1996
Reg. Assembly for Europe
Budapest, Hungary

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