



PRESS RELEASE

Workshop on Strengthening Micro-, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) through Shared Services Cooperatives (SSCs)

Mazsons Hotel, Zanzibar, 17-18 November 2008

The ILO's Cooperative Facility for Africa (COOPAfrica) programme is organizing a 2-day regional workshop on strengthening MSMEs through Shared Services Cooperatives from 17 to 18 November 2008 in Zanzibar.

The workshop is part of COOPAfrica's contribution to Joint Programme on Capacity Building Support to Zanzibar of the One UN Programme in Tanzania, and is being organized with a view to strengthen MSME development, notably in the agriculture and tourism sectors.

Chief Minister of Zanzibar, Hon. Shamsi Vuai Nahodha and the Director of the ILO Office for Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda, Mr. Alexio Musindo will preside the opening ceremony.

As a regional event, the workshop will bring together representatives of the Government, employers' and workers' associations, as well as of the MSME and cooperative sector of Zanzibar and selected countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, including mainland Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Botswana, Lesotho and the Republic of South Africa.

For Zanzibar, in addition to participants from the MSME sector, the Ministries of Labour, Youth, Women and Children Development; Agriculture, Livestock and Environment; Trade, Tourism and Investment of Zanzibar, as well as the Zanzibar Employers' Association and the Zanzibar Trade Union Congress have been invited.

United Nations programmes and specialized agencies participating in Joint Programme for Zanzibar, namely FAO, UNIDO, UNIFEM and UNPD, are also expected to attend.

In total, over fifty participants have been invited, and it is a unique event in the sense that in recent decades, no regional conferences of this scale have been organized on the Isles with regard to cooperative and MSME development.

The workshop will introduce the 'Shared Services Cooperative' (SSC) model, analyse the set up and the economic, social and employment benefits of SSCs, enable participants to share their experiences on the SSC model with a view to strengthen capacity among cooperative

stakeholders and MSME support organizations in the region to start implementing the SSC model.

SSCs are composed of private sector businesses or public bodies, who unite in an SSC in order to obtain key services. For micro-, small and medium sized enterprises, SSCs can thus be a means to become and remain competitive, increase their bargaining/ negotiating power when buying inputs or commercializing their produce as well as to exchange knowledge, information and know-how while at the same time as keeping the individual enterprise independent.

The workshop is part of the efforts of the ILO's COOPAfrica programme to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the promotion of decent work in Zanzibar and in Africa by promoting self-help initiatives, mutual assistance in communities and cross border exchanges through the cooperative approach, and a key element of the ILO's contribution to One UN programme.

To ensure that cooperative stakeholder beneficiaries of initiatives such as the SSC Workshop are able to access technical support services, the COOPAfrica operates a Challenge Fund that allocates grants funding through a competitive process, and to which innovative cooperative ventures – such as (potential) SSCs – can apply for funding.

A press conference will take place at 10.15 a.m on 17 November at the Mazsons hotel.

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