REPORT OF THE CO-OPERATIVE WORKSHOP
ON
“The New Imperatives for Effective Co-operative Management”

Facilitated by Imonitie Christopher Imoisili
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International Labour Organisation (ILO)
Caribbean Multidisciplinary Advisory Team (CAMAT)

July 22 –23, 2002
The Jamaica Grand Hotel, Ocho Rios, Jamaica

1. INTRODUCTION:

During the 45th Annual International Convention and 31st Annual General Meeting of the Caribbean Confederation of Credit Unions (CCCU), July 20-26, 2002, a two-day workshop was held for Non-Financial Co-operatives with the theme, “The New Imperatives for Effective Co-operative Management.”

2. OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this workshop were to:

- Improve the management capability, efficiency and competitiveness of producer and service co-operatives through lessons and experiences from best practices.
- Equip participants with insights about new trends and developments in Co-operative management.
- Provide a forum for participants to discuss issues and challenges currently facing co-operatives in the Caribbean, and
- Develop an action plan for the future developmental needs of non-financial Co-operatives.

3. FACILITATORS:

Dr. Imonitie Christopher Imoisili, Senior Specialist, Entrepreneurship and Management Development of the International Labour Organisation, facilitated this workshop. Ms. Deborah Payne, Administrative Assistant, CCCU, served as the Rapporteur.

4. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS:

1 Prepared by the Caribbean Confederation of Credit Unions, CCCU
Twenty participants from nine (9) countries within the Caribbean sub-region attended this workshop. (See Appendix 1)

5. METHODOLOGY:

The methods of instruction employed during this workshop included:
- A Presentation
- A Case Study (Northern Fishermen Co-operative, Belize)
- Group Exercises, Discussions

6. THE NEW IMPERATIVE FOR EFFECTIVE CO-OPERATIVE MANAGEMENT

6.1. In his opening address, Dr. Imoisili drew attention to a new international instrument recently adopted at the June 2002 International Labour Conference of the ILO. The new Recommendation replaces Recommendation 127, and it is applicable for co-operative development in all countries of the world. Dr. Imoisili explained to participants that there was thus a changing paradigm in the approach to the management of co-operatives. The rapidly changing economic environment is driving this changing approach and co-operatives must accept and prepare for these changes, if they are to remain viable entities.

6.2. This changing paradigm of Co-operative management is characterized by:

- A change from a traditional co-operative management approach; characterized by small/fragmented cooperatives providing low value-added products to one of a co-operative strategic management approach characterized by larger/merged co-operatives with strong management teams; which are entrepreneurial-driven.

- This new approach will focus on adding new value-added products and services and being result-oriented, involving the main stakeholders in the co-operative sector (employees, management, government).

6.3. Dr. Imoisili also outlined the pivotal role co-operatives play in societies around the world, such as:

- Income generating activities
- Human Resource Development
- Promotion of Social Equity

He stressed that in the Caribbean, if non-financial co-operatives are resistant to this new paradigm, they will be stymied in their efforts to perform these roles in societies of income generation, human resources development and social equity.
6.4. Finally, one of the other main highlights of the presentation focused on the role of Government in providing the policy framework and enabling environment for Co-operative development. (Dr. Imoisili’s power point presentation is attached)

7. **CASE STUDY: (National Fisherman’s Co-operative Society Ltd.)**

Mr. Robert Usher, the Executive Secretary/Manager of the Northern Fisherman’s Co-operative Society Ltd., one of the participants in the workshop, presented a case study to the group. In the case study, he drew on some of his experiences encountered in the operation of the Co-operative.

He narrated how the cooperative grew out of a small group of fishermen in one part of Belize, but now has members from all over the country. The cooperative now has a profitable seafood processing plant, which exports to mainly American markets. For example, it supplies shrimps and lobsters to Red Lobsters, a major American restaurant chain. Mr. Usher reported that the cooperative has had its ups and downs. However, it has remained competitive because of supportive membership, an effective board and investment in staff development.

8. **GROUP WORK AND PRESENTATION:**

8.1. **Assignment:**

Following this case study, the participants were then divided into three groups, and were asked to prepare a report on the Theme “Transition to Co-operative Entrepreneurship in Non-Financial Co-operatives: Challenges and Prospects.”

In examining these challenges and prospects, participants were asked to pay special attention to the following areas in their reports.

1. The Human and Social Aspects
2. Financial and Economic Aspects
3. Co-operative Principles and Governance
4. Legal, Policy and Institutional Environment

**DAY 2**

On Tuesday, July 23, the groups reported and the general consensus of the groups can be highlighted as follows:

8.2. **CHALLENGES:**

8.2.1. **Human and Social Aspects:**

- Perceived public image of these institutions
- The need for professional management, staffing and leadership personnel.
• Communication.

8.2.2. **Financial and Economic Aspects:**
• Lack of up-to-date accounts
• Inadequate Reporting to members
• Greater co-operation among members.

8.2.3. **Co-operative Principles:**
• To remove apathy from members in order to build a committed membership
• Weak leadership

8.2.4. **Legal Policy and Institutional Environment**
• Inappropriate and Outdated Legal framework
• Non-existent written policies

8.3. **PROSPECTS**

8.3.1. **Human and Social Aspect:**
• Structured information programmes
• Co-operatives should be more involved in community development
• Employment of qualified personnel
• Management and staff should be trained in order to upgrade their level of skills
• There should be opportunities for upward mobility and social advancement of members and staff (provision of small loans, scholarships, etc).

8.3.2. **Financial and Economic Aspect:**
• They should exercise vigilance and ensure accounts are current and external audits are conducted.
• There should be advance planning
• Co-operatives should be able to operate on their own and not depend on grants to operate the business.
• Co-operatives should get involved in other aspects of the business, which in return will bring revenue and incentives to their members.

8.3.3. **Co-operative Principles:**
• Co-operatives should hold Annual General Meetings, as the law requires
• Member appreciation Day
• Employment of Field Officers and Customer Relations Personnel
• Training and Education of members and Staff
• Reinforcement of the Co-operative Principles and values
• Networking among Co-operatives
• Involvement of General Membership in Sub-committees.

8.3.4. **Legal Policy and Institutional Environment:**
• Revision of Co-operative Legislation
• There should be one common and updated framework adopted across the region.
• All legal and policy reforms should have input from the Co-op movement before they are implemented.
• Members must be educated on the conservation of the environment in which their co-operatives operate.

9. **CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD:**

*Generally, it was felt by the participants that education and training not only of Directors, but staff as well as the wider membership/community would assist greatly in coping with these challenges.*

It was also felt that more workshops for the non-financial co-operative sector should be held to assist them in improving internal policies and organizational structures, as well as the reorganization and upgrading of management systems and procedures.

*Some of the areas in which they indicated further training are:*

1. **Financial Management**
2. **Record Keeping**
3. **Business Planning**
4. **Project Development and Marketing**.

*The CCCU as the apex body for all cooperatives will be required to develop a goal/action plan based on this report, to inform of the way forward for development of Industrial Co-operatives in the Region.*

10. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The participants thanked the ILO for facilitating the workshop and the CCCU for hosting it. Thanks were also expressed to The World Solidarity Movement (WSM) and Oxfam International. They believed that the forum was a good beginning in the promotion of the desirable collaboration between the credit unions and the industrial cooperatives in the Caribbean.
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<th>NAME OF PARTICIPANT</th>
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<tr>
<td>ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA</td>
<td>Bee Keepers Co-operative</td>
<td>1. Mr. Alister Jacobs</td>
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<tr>
<td>BELIZE</td>
<td>Northern Fishermen Co-operatives</td>
<td>2. Mr. Robert Usher</td>
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<td>DOMINICA</td>
<td>Home Industries Co-operative</td>
<td>3. Ms. Neva Cuffy</td>
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<td>MONTSERRAT</td>
<td>Montserrat Farmers Association Co-op.</td>
<td>14. Mr. Claude Browne</td>
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<td>ST. KITTS AND NEVIS</td>
<td>Bee Keepers Co-operative, Bee Keepers Co-operative</td>
<td>15. Mr. Jeffrey Berry, 16. Ms. Cavelle Jeffers</td>
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<td>ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADES</td>
<td>Hairoun Chalk Markers Co-operative</td>
<td>17. Mr. Cecil Jack</td>
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List of Participants