



International
Labour
Organization

ILO and Cooperatives

COOPERATIVE PROGRAMME (EMP/COOP)

Table of Contents

Editorial	01
International Day of Cooperatives 2010	02
Cooperative issues @ the ILC	03
More visibility!	06
News from COOP ^{AFRICA}	06
Formalization of informal economy	07
Social and Solidarity Economy	08
L'expérience cooperative chez les Mbororos	09
Cooperative policy and law	10
Historical notes	11
To be read	12

Editorial

Preparations for the International Year of Cooperatives 2012 (IYC) are gaining impetus and will dominate activities until 2012. Together with our main partners in the interagency Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives, we are about to define and design the activities leading up to and during the Year. Joint actions are to give cooperatives the visibility which matches their economic, social, societal and political impact. Individual actions are to create synergies. A common communication strategy is to convey customized messages to identified groups. Review and further development of concepts are to induce long-term changes. First political changes seem to occur. We report on a number of political party programs which seem to prove us right (cf. "Cooperative policy and law"). The Newsletter is supplemented by the first of regular bulletins on the IYC.

Before 2012 two "International Days of Cooperatives" will be celebrated. This year's theme is "Cooperative Enterprise Empowers Women". This newsletter accounts of changes that have taken place since the 4th World Conference on Women 15 years ago. The article on domestic workers relates mainly to women as well, as the large majority of domestic workers are women. It reflects on one of the themes of the current International Labor Conference. The preparatory report to the Conference includes a number of examples of how domestic workers can improve

Also in this issue:

First of our regular briefs on the activities in preparation of the International Year of Cooperatives 2012

their working and living conditions by forming cooperatives. "L'expérience chez les Mbororos" is still another account of the benefits women may have by forming cooperatives. The article entitled "Les coopératives contribuent à la lutte contre le VIH/sida au Cameroun" describes an example of how the cooperative approach can help dealing with one of the most plagues of our time.

Under "More visibility..." you will find a report on one of the four core work areas of EMP/COOP, namely the production of reliable, nationally and internationally comparable data and statistics on cooperatives. You will also find summaries of our involvement at country, regional and global level in cooperative law reforms. Cooperative policy and law is another core area of activity of EMP/COOP.

Our decentralized COOP^{Africa} Program announces a training tour to Japan for cooperative leaders.

The article on "Cooperative enterprises as a practical option for the formalization of informal economy" is the condensed version of a paper a colleague presented to a recent conference on the subject of informal economy in Cape Town. ILO Recommendation 193 on the Promotion of Cooperatives suggests that the cooperative approach be used for the transition of informal economy actors to formality. This is in recognition of the relatively easy access to this enterprise type.

Following the Conference in Johannesburg on the social economy in October 2009, EMP/COOP is coordinating a respective task force. The concept is still evolving. We suggest defining social and solidarity economy enterprises as those whose primary, audited objective is not that of maximizing the return on the financial investment. The intention is to join the ongoing debate in view of putting the theme on the agenda of the ILO and of further strengthening the position of cooperatives among these enterprise types by further sharpening their distinctiveness.

Under "Historical notes" we report on the Comité international des relations intercoopératives, an expression of the importance the ILO has been attaching to cooperatives.

The Newsletter concludes on suggestions for reading.

Hagen Henry (Manager EMP/COOP)

International Day of Cooperatives 2010: “Cooperative Enterprise Empowers Women”

Fifteen years after the 4th World Conference on Women held in Beijing, this year's International Day of Cooperatives theme, 'Cooperative enterprise empower women', is an adequate reflection of the changes that cooperatives continue to bring to the lives of women within their membership and beyond.

In developed and developing countries alike, cooperatives can be and are in many cases powerful vehicles of economic, social and political empowerment for women:

- In terms of economic empowerment, the opportunities for employment and income generation provided by cooperatives make the difference between poverty and a decent life for women and their dependent family members. As an example, cooperatives enable women to pool their resources, to acquire inputs or production services jointly and to sell to markets that they would not individually be able to access.
- Similarly, in terms of social protection, the access to finance provided by financial cooperatives helps members protect themselves against adversity and enables them to invest in social needs. The growth of various types of social services cooperatives – such as for instance elderly or child-care cooperatives – are also a promising develop-

ment for women as providers and recipients of these much-needed services, enabling them to shift, in what is largely a female-dominated sector, from carrying out vulnerable work to decent jobs, and freeing them of care burdens.

- In terms of political empowerment, cooperatives – regardless of their type or sector of work - are uniquely positioned to strengthen participation by virtue of their values and principles. Cooperative membership brings with it not only economic benefits, but also voice. Women are being supported via member education to acquire confidence and skills for meaningful participation and being able to influence the cooperatives' affairs due to the democratic governance principle.

While the advantages of the cooperative model are clear, challenges persist. The rate of women's membership in cooperatives is still comparatively low in many regions in the world, as well as, virtually everywhere, their representation in leadership structures. The reasons for the persisting gender inequality are numerous and complex, but include, among other factors, basic structural and socio-cultural issues beyond the control of the cooperative movement – such as inequalities in access to resources, education and training, unequal division of labour and use of time between women and men as well as stereotyped conceptions of the roles of women and men.

Furthermore, in some countries, there are still legal constraints stemming from cooperative law/bylaws or, more frequently, from related legislation (property, land and inheritance rights).

Recognizing that ensuring gender equality is not just the right thing to do but is also good business sense, responses to address these challenges are being formulated at different levels. Internationally, ILO Recommendation No. 193 (2002) on the Promotion of Cooperatives explicitly states that “special consideration should be given to increasing women's participation in the cooperative movement at all levels, particularly at management and leadership levels”. At the regional level, e.g. the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA)-Africa formulated a Gender Strategy Framework for Africa adopted by the ICA Africa Regional Assembly in 2008. And at the national level, a number of apex organizations as well as primary and secondary level cooperative organizations are designing and implementing policies to ensure women's equitable participation in cooperatives.

The 2010 International Day of Cooperatives theme offers the movement the opportunity to reflect on ways to ensure that efforts such as the above are able to make gender-equitable cooperative development a reality. For support organizations such as ILO and its partners, it is an occasion to ensure that their activities – whether at the policy, cooperative support institution or grassroots cooperative level – are adequately geared towards advancing this objective.

International Day of Co-operatives
Journée Internationale des Coopératives
Día Internacional de las Cooperativas
2010



- Cooperative issues @ the International Labour Conference 99th session
2 – 18 June 2010 -



Decent work for domestic workers

Domestic work is hard, “invisible” and disregarded. And working conditions are often abusive.

Domestic work is hard work – not only physically, but also psychologically. It is one of the most precarious, low-paid, insecure and unprotected forms of employment. Abuse and exploitation are common, especially when the domestic workers are children or migrants who live in the employers’ household. As they are normally “invisible”, working inside the private household and out of public sight, they are often isolated as they have no peer workers. The serious decent work deficits domestic workers face are consequences of their legal and social vulnerability. According to a new ILO report prepared for the 2010 International Labour Conference, domestic workers are excluded either de jure or de facto from the effective protection of modern national labour law and social security regimes (Report IV(1). Decent work for domestic workers. 2010, para. 39, p. 11).

Cooperatives have proved one way of organizing domestic workers, in particular migrant domestic workers. If given the chance to organize, domestic workers are generally keen to represent themselves and to take control of their working lives. Therefore, many organizers of domestic workers believe that a

more effective way of organizing domestic workers is through cooperatives (Ibid., para. 292, p. 85). Cooperatives, as reflected in the ILO’s Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation, 2002 (No. 193), could create structures that provide services to domestic worker members in areas such as improving work conditions.

The ILO report highlights various examples of cooperatives formed by domestic workers from around the globe (Ibid., para. 293, p. 85f.). Two basic structures can be distinguished – firstly, when domestic workers form a service cooperative to offer their domestic work services in order to strengthen the position of the individual, and secondly, when cooperatives serve as a way out of abusive working conditions (inter alia, by providing affordable housing alternatives for domestic workers):

- In the United States, the United Women of Maryland form workplace cooperatives to push for improved conditions for all workers, by, inter alia, informing Spanish-speaking domestic workers of their rights in Spanish. The cooperatives seek to ensure decent work conditions prevail for their members through day-time cleaning services; 10 per cent of their proceeds go to social justice organizations.
- The La Mesa Cooperative in New Mexico, run by immigrant domestic workers, provides full- and part-time cleaning jobs

in homes, offices and yards. It charges customers an hourly rate and is able to set standards and provide a degree of protection for the working conditions of their cooperators. The wish for economic development as one of the most pressing needs of immigrants and the exposure to the cooperative business model in their home countries have been among the factors for choosing this enterprise type.

- In India, Nirmala Niketan is a cooperative founded by tribal women from Jharkhand in 1998 who worked as full-time inhouse domestic workers. The cooperative organizes girls and women in order to fight for their rights and to prevent further abuse. Since domestic work was not considered an acceptable vocation for registration as a cooperative society, it became part of a registered cooperative of construction workers, and an active partner of the National Campaign Committee for Unorganized Sector Workers (NCC-USW). Besides lobbying for coverage of domestic workers by the social security legislation for unorganized sector workers, the cooperative has started reaching out to other organizations working in Jharkhand and Delhi to protect domestic workers, a large number of whom are child workers – most of them tribal girls who are threatened by being trafficked to metropolis in order to provide domestic work.
- Another example for India, not taken of the report, is SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association) which organizes

women workers in the informal economy in India amongst which domestic workers are one category. They advocate for an integrated approach which includes, inter alia, the setting up of cooperatives to provide domestic workers to private families, negotiating with government bodies, and self-reliance training for domestic workers.

- The Kalayaan Centre in British Columbia provides emergency housing for domestic workers seeking a safe home in form of a housing cooperative. The emergency shelter includes a rotating schedule for cooking dinner and for the cleaning of common spaces. Expenses are shared. In addition to that, residents are encouraged to share their problems and breakthroughs in their personal and professional lives as a means of creating a support network and overcoming isolation (ibid., Box VI.1, p. 68).

All examples show that cooperatives have proven to be a viable means of organizing domestic workers who are often marginalized by society, ignored by the laws that govern workplaces and denied the social protection and working conditions other workers have come to rightly expect. Cooperatives may present in some countries the only alternative for domestic workers, besides associations, to exchange information, develop strategies and strengthen the solidarity (cf. World of Work, The Magazine of the ILO. Decent work for domestic workers, No. 68; April 2010, p. 12f).

Les coopératives contribuent à la lutte contre le VIH/Sida au Cameroun

Le VIH/Sida est un problème majeur de santé publique et de développement au Cameroun (prévalence 5,4%). L'épidémie frappe surtout la couche de la population active, dont la grande majorité travaille dans l'économie informelle, et où les travailleurs éprouvent des difficultés à accéder à un système de protection sociale et d'assurance maladie. Des efforts notables ont été déployés ces dernières années en vue de faire face à la pandémie. La décentralisation des interventions, encore insuffisante, n'a pas permis un accès universel des populations (surtout celles des zones rurales) à la prévention, aux soins et soutiens.

Avec l'appui du projet OIT/SIDA-COOP, financé par l'Agence Internationale de Coopération Suédoise, les coopératives sont mobilisées depuis 2008 dans la lutte contre le VIH/Sida au Cameroun. Grâce à la stratégie de renforcement des capacités (Encadré 1), 22 coopératives et organisations de l'économie sociale opérant au niveau national et/ou régional (Sud, Centre, Est, Ouest, Sud-Ouest et Nord-Ouest) ont élaboré leur politique de lutte contre le VIH/Sida basée sur le Recueil des directives pratiques du BIT sur le VIH/Sida et le monde du travail et ont intégré la lutte contre le VIH/Sida dans leur programme. Les résultats des activités réalisées à ce jour indiquent que les coopératives, jusque là peu impliquées dans la riposte nationale, sont des leviers importants de mise en œuvre des interventions intégrées de lutte contre le VIH/Sida en faveur

notamment, des populations rurales et des travailleurs de l'économie informelle.

Les coopératives contribuent dans trois domaines prioritaires: la prévention, l'accès aux soins et le soutien.

1. Prévention: Promotion du changement des comportements

Les causeries éducatives sur le lieu de travail, les campagnes de sensibilisation au sein des communautés, les réunions de l'Assemblée Générale comptent parmi les opportunités exploitées par les coopératives pour véhiculer l'information sur le VIH/Sida et adresser les préoccupations relatives aux facteurs de risque, aux Infections Sexuellement Transmissibles, à la stigmatisation et à la discrimination... Ces activités ont permis de sensibiliser au moins 18,000 coopérateurs, travailleurs de l'économie informelle et leurs familles.

Le Président de l'Association Nationale des travailleurs du secteur informel donne son opinion sur l'impact positif de ces activités avec beaucoup d'enthousiasme : «Le feedback des travailleurs de l'économie informelle montre qu'ils sont sensibles à la communication pour le changement des comportements, car beaucoup acceptent déjà de se faire dépister et même de se confier aux Educateurs-Conseillers VIH».

Stratégie d'appui technique du projet OIT/ SIDA -COOP aux coopératives

1. Analyse des capacités des coopératives et évaluation des besoins
2. Sensibilisation de la direction des coopératives cibles
3. Atelier participatif de mainstreaming du VIH/Sida
4. Renforcement des capacités des Points Focaux et Pairs Conseils de lutte contre le VIH/Sida
5. Mise en place de l'équipe en charge du VIH/Sida
6. Appui-accompagnement, suivi-évaluation des activités VIH/Sida réalisés

2. Soins: renforcement de l'accès au dépistage VIH et à la prise en charge du Sida

Les coopératives ont accru l'accès de leurs membres et des acteurs de l'économie informelle aux services de dépistage et de prise en charge à travers le développement des synergies d'action avec les unités opérationnelles du Comité National de Lutte contre le VIH/Sida (CNLS), les Associations des personnes vivant avec le VIH (PVVIH) et les Unités de prise en charge médicale du VIH/Sida. 30 campagnes de mobilisation et de dépistage volontaire-anonyme du VIH ont été réalisées.

Elles ont permis à plus de 3,000 coopérateurs, travailleurs et leurs familles de connaître leur statut sérologique. Les personnes séropositives, au nombre de 107, ont été orientées vers les services appropriés pour bénéficier du continuum soins-soutien. Grâce aux coopératives, de telles activités ont pu être réalisées dans des localités qui n'avaient jamais bénéficié d'actions spécifiques de lutte contre le VIH/Sida.

3. Soutien: réduction de la vulnérabilité au VIH et mitigation de l'impact du Sida

Le projet OIT/SIDA-COOP a appuyé la mise en œuvre d'une approche de développement de l'entrepreneuriat des femmes infectées/affectées et/ou vulnérables, basée sur le micro-crédit. Le renforcement des capacités des coopératives et des femmes a non seulement pris en compte les aspects économiques (analyse de l'idée d'entreprise, conditions d'octroi des prêts, gestion, développement de la micro-entreprise...), mais également les préoccupations spécifiques au Sida (stigmatisation et discrimination, confidentialité, conseils sur l'adhérence au traitement). Par ailleurs, des changements significatifs chez les femmes ont été rapportés et concernent notamment: l'acquisition d'une plus grande autonomie financière; la fierté d'être occupée, la

capacité en gestion et la tenue de la comptabilité, la renaissance de la joie de vivre, la réduction de la stigmatisation...

Devenues toutes membres de la coopérative, elles ont accès à tous les services sociaux et financiers disponibles y compris les crédits plus importants pour développer leur entreprise. L'évaluation de l'intervention a relevé que toutes les femmes ayant bénéficié du crédit, sont en activité. Les taux de remboursement sont très élevés (environ 98%), et plus de 65% des femmes ont ouvert un compte d'épargne.

Il apparaît au regard de ces résultats que les coopératives peuvent jouer un rôle déterminant dans la réduction de l'incidence de la maladie, l'amélioration de l'accès aux soins des populations démunies ainsi que dans la mitigation des souffrances causées par la maladie. L'implication des coopératives à une plus large échelle contribuera certainement à accroître significativement la couverture et à renforcer la consolidation des offres de service de lutte contre le VIH/Sida.



>> Séance de causerie éducative sur le VIH/Sida et distribution des préservatifs aux membres du Conseil d'Administration de la NWCA (North-West Cooperative AssociationNetwork)

More visibility! ILO starts gathering statistics on cooperatives after having stopped in 1988

Since 1921, the ILO Cooperative Branch has regularly published an international directory of cooperative organizations based on a world-wide inquiry. The last edition (the thirteenth) was published in 1988. Since then, the publication has been interrupted because of financial and organizational constraints.

The ILO hailed the proclamation by the United Nations General Assembly of 2012 of the International Year of Cooperatives as an acknowledgement of the fundamental role of cooperatives in promoting the socio-economic development of hundreds of millions of people worldwide, especially in times of economic crisis. But we lack reliable data. The launch of the International Co-operative Alliance's (ICA) **Global 300** listing in 2006 was the first serious attempt to quantify and rank the largest cooperative and mutual businesses in the world. The almost universal support for this business oriented programme indicates that there is a real demand for such research and it has brought forward requests for a similar approach to be applied to regions and countries.

As part of the General Survey concerning employment instruments in light of the 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (Articles 19, 22 and 35 of the ILO Constitution), ILO member states were asked to inform the Office also on the legal situation concerning cooperatives. In order to better assist ILO constituents and cooperative organisations in further improving this situation, EMP/COOP is currently collecting data, also in collaboration with the Statistics Department, on the following issues;

- Global cooperatives' turnover per country
- Population active in cooperatives
- Number of cooperatives per country
- Number of cooperative members per country

These figures, based on audited accounts, shall increase the visibility of the cooperative business model, provide evidence to help argue the cooperative case and be a powerful communications tool to advance the cause of cooperatives. The data will also help us to have a more detailed macro economic analysis on the role cooperatives play in their respective economies, sectors and countries. At present, such statistics are regularly collected and published just in very few countries.

Stemming from the above, the world of work in cooperatives, in general, and the economic value of cooperatives in terms of employment, turnover, etc. as a source of productive labour in particular, remains inadequately measured and insufficiently studied. Currently, not a single international organization collects socio-economic data characterizing the world's cooperatives in their pure sense. The existence of this problem through the entire 20th century is being deplored by those trying to understand and fathom the cooperative movement in its entirety.

Indeed, the ILO 2002 Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation No. 193 mentions that national policies should "seek to improve national statistics on cooperatives with a view to the formulation and implementation of development policies". United Nations General Assembly Resolution (A/RES/64/136), which proclaims the International Year of Cooperatives 2012, also emphasizes the importance of promoting statistical data gathering on cooperatives and of harmonizing statistical methodologies (operational paragraph 6 (d)).

For some time, EMP/COOP has been requested to assist Governments in setting up a reliable cooperative statistics system geared towards the measurement of employment, wages and hours of work. This demonstrates that the demand is really global in this important and challenging area.

News from

The ILO Cooperative Facility for Africa — COOP^{AFRICA} (www.ilo.org/coopafrica) — is a technical cooperation programme for the promotion of cooperative development in Africa (2007-2010). From the ILO Office in Dar-es-Salaam, COOP^{AFRICA} covers 9 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa with support by the Cooperative Programme of the ILO in Geneva.

African Cooperative Leaders' Training Programme in Japan (1st July to 8th August 2010)

The ILO, its COOP^{AFRICA} programme and the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU) will organize a training/study tour in Japan in July - August 2010 for a selected number of high level cooperators in Africa.

>> For further information: ILO Regional Office for Africa website <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/afpro/addisababa/>

Cooperative enterprises as a practical option for the formalization of informal economy



Workers in the informal economy (IE) are mostly involved in micro and small enterprises. In the majority of cases they are unprotected and have no formal recognition. They operate as individuals or in small groups, have no access to financial services, nor do they have representation or voice. Among other things they lack adequate technical and entrepreneurial skills, collective bargaining, social protection, legal recognition and market access.

The cooperative model is ideal for self employed people, micro and small enterprises – including those operated by IE workers.

Solidarity: IE workers in the same business often work individually or in small groups and often compete with each other. By forming and using the services of a cooperative they forge solidarity, have voice and can defend their rights, consolidate and strengthen their businesses - for example through bulk purchases of the commodities they deal in, and generally achieve economies of scale.

Legal status: The great majority of informal enterprises have no legal status. By transforming into cooperatives and, therefore, acquiring such a status, entering into (legal business) contracts, accessing loans, owning or disposing of immovable assets is facilitated.

Voluntary and open membership: It is not always easy for small scale entrepreneurs to be accepted in a group of informal

entrepreneurs. Groups are sometimes too “protective” or inward looking to accept new members, even if this could have helped strengthening the group enterprise. The cooperative formula could be a way to avoid discrimination.

Democratic control: Sometimes IE workers organized in groups break up for lack of proper democratic practices. Some members become more domineering than others; at times major decisions are made by a small clique within the group without any consultations with the wider group members. In cooperatives all major decisions are made by members democratically.

There are numerous other merits for cooperatives as a practical option for the transition from informality to formal enterprises. These include the principles of autonomy and independence (self sustenance and an insulation from external interference); and the principle of education, training and information which encourages enlightenment of members and development of leadership and managerial skills among the elected leaders and employees.

Although cooperatives are found in almost every kind of economic activity, some are more suited to IE workers than others. Among the types rather suited, one would include Shared Services Cooperatives (also known as entrepreneurs’ cooperatives) which are formed by several enterprises (as distinct from individuals). For example one or several businesses run by IE workers trading in secondhand clothes can come together and form a cooperative which provides them with common services such as bulk importation of clothes, laundry, storage facilities, accounting services, insurance cover and member education. A Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO) is one that provides financial services to its members – one where members can save their money and borrow when in need. Thus the owners of SACCOs (the members) are at the same time the customers. In forming a SACCO and using its services, they stand a good chance of developing to a level where they can formalize their enterprises, for prosperity in the informal sector has the potential of being a turning point towards formalization. SACCOs can also help unemployed young people access funds for starting small informal enterprises, thus creating jobs for themselves. A Workers’ Cooperative is one where the members (owners of the enterprise) are at the same time the employees. People form this type of a cooperative as a way of generating employment for themselves, e.g. in catering, tourism, manufacturing, construction and farming. This might be a way of creating decent jobs that offer more security than working individually.

The ILO has been working to improve the working conditions and livelihoods of unprotected IE workers through cooperatives. Initiatives such as the SYNDICOOP (Poverty Reduction among Unprotected Informal Economy Workers through Trade Union-Coop Join Action) Project in East Africa have shown the potential role of cooperatives in formalizing the informal sector. These initiatives, combined with similar ones by like-minded organizations and institutions, might be one way to address the hopes for a formalization of the informal sector.

Forthcoming ILO activities on the Social and Solidarity Economy

“The social economy is a concept designating enterprises and organizations, in particular cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations, foundations and social enterprises, which have the specific feature of producing goods, services and knowledge while pursuing both economic and social aims and fostering solidarity”
Plan of Action as decided by the Conference, Preamble, §1

The ILO organized a Regional conference “The social economy – Africa’s reponse to the crisis” (Johannesburg, 19-21 October 2009) where conference participants adopted the “Plan of Action for the promotion of social economy enterprises and organizations in Africa”. This Plan of Action defines four interrelated, inseparable and complementary strategic objectives for the promotion of social and solidarity economy enterprises and organizations at the global, regional, national and subnational level.

In order to maintain the momentum initiated by the adoption of this Plan of Action, a task force on social and solidarity economy was set-up. This task force brings together various ILO departments, technical units and programmes at headquarters and in the field across the four sectors, along with ILO social partners and ILO key partners in the field of social and solidarity economy.

In order to further implement this Plan of Action and respond to participants’ expectations, EMP/COOP and the ILO International Training Centre (ITCILO) organized with the support of the ILO Regional Office for Africa the ILO Task Force workshop on social and solidarity economy entitled “Responses to the crisis through the social economy” (Turin, 24-26 February 2010).

As outcome of the workshop, a detailed work plan was designed for all levels defined by the Plan of Action adopted in Jo-

hannesburg. This work plan is specifying complementary strategies, responsible units and a time frame for the implementation of the Plan of Action. At the regional level, the task force is building the foundations for a future ILO regional programme on social and solidarity economy in Africa. At the global level, the ITCILO, with the technical support of the task force, commits itself to develop a social and solidarity economy specific capacity building programme.

For institutional and historical reasons, EMP/COOP developed over the years expertise that legitimates its work on the social and solidarity economy, and its different components. The notion of “social economy enterprises” is an involving, not yet universally defined, concept. In its form of “social and solidarity enterprises” it covers those enterprises whose primary, audited objective is not that of maximizing the return on the investment. Among these enterprises, cooperatives stand out, both in number and in economic and social impact.

The task force decided to undertake activities in view of suggesting the social and solidarity economy for discussion among ILO constituents at the International Labour Conference, probably in 2014.

>> For further information and full version reports related to ILO social and solidarity economy activities, please visit the ILO Regional Office for Africa website: www.ilo.org/public/english/region/afpro/addisababa

Follow-Up on Conference “The Social Economy: Africa’s Response to the Global Crisis” (October 2009)

Overview Timeframe for Social and Solidarity Economy Activities

2010: There is a need to better define the concept of the social and solidarity economy at the global level, as well as to elaborate more reliable and accurate statistics worldwide. This should be done by producing an ILO position paper to be eventually submitted to the Employment and Social Policy Committee of the ILO Governing Body.

2011: In line with the Plan of Action adopted in Johannesburg, the regional offices might consider organizing other regional conferences.

2012: The UN International Year of Cooperatives will offer a unique opportunity to organize side events on the occasion of major international conferences and meetings in order to reemphasize the important position of cooperatives among the social and solidarity enterprises.

L'expérience coopérative chez les Mbororos



De la dynamique associative à l'intégration socio-économique des femmes

Bali et Wum sont deux villes de la région du Nord-Ouest Cameroun fortement touchées par la pauvreté, le travail des enfants, le VIH/Sida, les inégalités de genre et la marginalisation des Mbororos. Peuple de pasteurs, les Mbororos vivent des produits de leur bétail, principalement du lait produit par les vaches de leurs troupeaux.

A la faveur de la mise en œuvre du Projet N°: CMR/06/50NET « Promotion du travail décent pour la réduction de la pauvreté dans les communautés vulnérables à la traite des enfants », deux coopératives de transformation ont vu le jour : Sura Barka Indigenous Dairy Co-operative (SBIDC) à Bali et Tummude Risku Indigenous Dairy Co-operative (TRIDC) à Wum. En fululbé, langue parlée par les Mbororos, « Sura Barka » veut dire « Maison du Bonheur, des Bienfaits » tandis que « Tummude Risku » traduit « la calebasse de la richesse ». Ces appellations, choisies par les femmes Mbororos sont évocatrices d'un état d'esprit en relation avec leur processus d'intégration économique. L'on a observé une adhésion massive au projet sur les deux sites : 130 femmes à Wum et 158 femmes à Bali.

La mise en place de ces structures n'a pas été aisée. Souffrant de l'absence de moyens financiers conséquents, le projet a dû s'appuyer sur une démarche simplifiée mettant l'accent sur la dynamique associative. Le partage des expériences d'une coopérative voisine préexistante (promue et gérée par les femmes Mbororos) a permis d'éviter de nombreux écueils. La coopérative laitière de Sagba, puisqu'il s'agit d'elle, a bénéficié de l'appui de la FAO pour sa mise en place et le résultat, en faisant tâche d'huile dans la région, a pu sortir les femmes Mbororos de Bali et Wum de leur léthargie qui est en réalité la résultante d'un analfabétisme latent et des inégalités de genre. Cette initiative, qui est le fruit d'une combinaison d'efforts entre BIT-Communes-Communautés Mbororos a surpris tant par l'engouement des femmes à y participer, que par l'appui accordé par les élus locaux. Après une formation de

deux semaines sur les processus de transformation du lait, les femmes parlent aujourd'hui avec ferveur des perspectives d'amélioration du niveau de vie que leur offre la coopérative. Le chiffre d'affaire cumulé de CFA 325.000 (\$US 669), enregistré au terme du premier mois d'activités permet d'augurer de bonnes perspectives de croissance et de viabilité.

Avant le projet, l'essentiel du travail dans la chaîne de transformation du lait se faisait manuellement et ouvrait la voie aux contaminations de toutes sortes affectant le produit final. Maintenant, dotées de techniques de test de la qualité du lait, de matériels et d'équipements performants pour la transformation (écrèmeuse, thermomètre, etc.), les coopératives ont les moyens de fabriquer des produits laitiers d'excellente qualité pouvant concurrencer sur ce marché les produits importés au-réolés de prestige.

Notons que ce projet s'inscrit dans un contexte social marqué par une profonde discrimination des femmes dans l'accès aux ressources de l'élevage, aux droits et aux services, bien qu'elles s'occupent entièrement de l'élevage de la volaille et des petits ruminants ainsi que de certaines « activités d'hommes » en période de pénurie de main d'œuvre dans l'élevage du bétail. Pour surmonter ce lourd présumé héritage culturel, les actions de sensibilisation ont permis aux hommes de prendre la mesure de la nécessaire combinaison d'efforts pour la survie du ménage.

Si, sur le plan économique, les coopératives de Wum et Bali sont venues redynamiser la filière lait dans la région du Nord-Ouest Cameroun, leurs impacts ne sauraient se mesurer uniquement à ce niveau d'analyse. En effet, le volet économique n'est que la partie visible d'un iceberg dont les ramifications sociales sont énormes. Ces coopératives sont des espaces de socialisation politique, d'alphabétisation fonctionnelle, d'initiation aux techniques de transformation et de commercialisation du lait et de ses dérivés et d'apprentissage de gestion de la chose commune.

- Cooperative policy and law - Politique et droit coopératifs -
- Política y derecho cooperativo -

L'élaboration d'un nouveau programme du Parti Socialiste Suisse – Un appel de développer le secteur coopératif pour démocratiser l'économie !

Le parti socialiste suisse est en train d'élaborer un nouveau programme du parti. Le Comité directeur du parti a établi la version provisoire du nouveau programme du parti le 26 mars 2010 et l'a soumis aux partis cantonaux, sections et autres organes pour consultation. Les interventions seront possible jusqu'au 31 juillet 2010.

Selon l'ébauche, les coopératives sont vues comme moyens pour démocratiser l'économie – l'objectif du programme politique dans le domaine économique du PS: « Le secteur coopératif de l'économie devrait ainsi être développé; de par sa nature même, il peut contribuer à la démocratisation de l'économie » (p. 21). Le texte prévoit que « la maximisation du profit en tant qu'objectif de toute activité économique doit être supplantée

par des buts visant le bien commun, les intérêts des employés, la qualité de vie en général et le développement durable».

Le programme se réfère à la longue tradition des coopératives en Suisse, non seulement dans le secteur agricole mais aussi dans les secteurs de la consommation et de la construction. Mais on constate aussi que « l'élément coopératif s'est considérablement affaibli au profit du pouvoir des managers ». La volonté déclarée du PS de développer le secteur coopératif est d'autant plus importante, maintenant que le monde entier est en proie à une crise profonde.

>> Le texte peut être consulté sur : http://www.sp-ps.ch/fileadmin/downloads/Medienkonferenzen/2010/100407_mk_parteiprogramm/100407_Entwurf_SP_Partieprogramm_f.pdf

Did you know ?

Cooperatives in all Party Programmes in the UK

In Great Britain cooperative values and community empowerment were at the heart of the general election manifestos from the three major political parties. All Manifestos focused on big cooperative ideas.

Bringing power to the people through cooperation has been proposed by the three parties. Labour with its "A Future for All" manifesto, the Conservative's "Big Society" and "Change that works for you" from the Liberal Democrats.

While the major parties were backing the idea of cooperation for the future of Britain, it was only Labour which had official Coop candidates on the ballot paper through its relationship with Cooperative Party.

... and in the German Federal State of Baden Württemberg

The Liberal Democratic Party (FDP) has included cooperatives in its party programme, and, reportedly, succeeded in including them also in the economic policy of this State.

Energy cooperatives in the South of Germany – "Fiat lux!"

Everyone is talking nowadays about climate change. In the South of Germany, or more precisely in the Federal State of Baden-Württemberg, the concerns for the way energy is produced and priced has given rise to so-called energy cooperatives. According to the "Landesanstalt für Umwelt" there are now 38 of these cooperatives, the majority of them founded within the last two years. Some of them have been established to raise the percentage and reduce the price of "green electricity", especially by installing photovoltaic cells on privately owned houses as well as on gymnasia or schools. Others invest cooperatively in existing enterprises which produce power. The energy cooperative "Energie in Bürgerhand eG" in Freiburg has chosen this way. Within a short period of time, it has reached a membership now totaling over 4000 members and having pooled 22 Mio. € in order to buy shares of the Thüga AG, formerly a subsidiary company of E.ON, which had been sold to municipal energy supplying enterprises. The cooperative aims to buy 3 to 10 % of the overall shares with the aim to help restructuring the energy enterprise in a more ecological and more socially responsible way. The local cooperative banks (Raiffeisen and Volksbank alike) are reported to play a pivotal role in this recent development by being members themselves or providing advise during the founding stage.

Our activities

Global

The ILO course on Cooperative policy and legislation was held at the ILO International Training Centre in Turin/Italy at the beginning of March. It brought together 23 high level representatives from governments, cooperative organisations and cooperative development projects. The course was held in English. The next course - in French - will take place in December.

Regional

EU: As already reported in the previous newsletter, EMP/COOP is participating in the review of the implementation of the 2003 EU Council Regulation on the Statute for a European Cooperative Society in the EU Member states, as well as in the EEA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The review is done by a consortium composed of Euricse (the European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprise, Trento), EZAI (Mondragon) and Cooperatives Europe (ICA Regional Office for Europe). It submitted its interim report to the EU Commission and is now working on its finalization. Not the least in the light of the preliminary findings, the group is also discussing the desirability and feasibility of a model cooperative law for the EU.

National

Cambodia: EMP/COOP started to assist the Cambodian Government to elaborate a cooperative policy, law and action plan for the development of agricultural cooperatives.

Croatia: EMP/COOP participated in the second of a series of regional meetings, this time in Croatia with a presentation on cooperative laws and public international cooperative law.

Turkey: EMP/COOP participated in an ILO supported international conference organised by the Government and the German Cooperative and Raiffeisen Confederation (DGRV) on the reform of cooperatives. The conference took place against the finalisation of a cooperative policy document and it also launched thinking about activities for the International Year of Cooperatives. Turkey is therefore one of the first countries, if not the first country, to prepare itself for that Year. It is noteworthy that the first ILO technical cooperation mission ever, related to cooperative law, took place to Turkey in 1950.

South Africa: EMP/COOP provided an input to the government led discussions on the adequate taxation of cooperatives.

Zanzibar: EMP/COOP is participating in the revision of the cooperative law in Zanzibar.

- **Historical notes** - **Notes historiques** -
- **Notas históricas** -

Comité international des relations intercoopératives

La Conférence économique internationale de 1927 avait émis le vœu que les efforts convergents des organisations coopératives agricoles et des organisations coopératives de consommation fussent « suivis, encouragés et propulsés par la constitution d'un comité de représentation des organisations coopératives, nationales et internationales, des agriculteurs et des consommateurs... ».

Comme réponse à ce vœu, le Comité international des relations intercoopératives a tenu ses premières réunions les 9 et 10 février 1930, dans une salle du Bureau international du travail à Genève. Ce Comité comprenait, en nombre égal, des représentants de l'Alliance coopérative internationale (ACI) et de la Commission internationale d'Agriculture. Il avait pour but de promouvoir le développement des relations

morales et économiques entre les coopératives agricoles et les coopératives de consommateurs et entre autres d'assurer la liaison entre le mouvement coopératif pris dans son ensemble et les institutions internationales, notamment l'Organisation économique de la Société des Nations, le Bureau international du travail et l'Institut international d'agriculture ». Le Comité a choisi à l'unanimité M. Albert Thomas comme président indépendant. Les résultats des travaux ont mis en évidence la contribution que les coopératives agricoles et les coopératives de consommateurs peuvent apporter dans l'œuvre de reconstruction économique par un meilleur ajustement de l'offre à la demande et une organisation plus efficace d'un marché plus stable et plus équilibré au niveau de la distribution des produits agricoles.

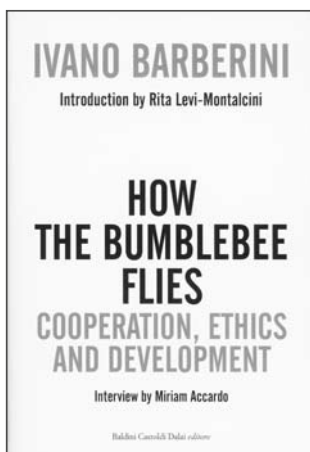




La photo représente les participants à cette mémorable première session.

>> De gauche à droite, premier rang: M. Baumont, Mme Freundlich, MM. Thomas, Gautier, Poisson, Klindera, Colombain; deuxième rang: MM. Lustig, Klepzig, May, de Voguë, Schandl, Gausse, Hermes, Dr. Georges Fauquet; troisième rang: MM. Vimeux, Gennes, Borel.

- To be read... - A lire absolument... - Lectura importante... -



Barberini, Ivano: How the Bumblebee Flies. Cooperation, Ethics and Development (Baldini Castoldi Dalai: Trebaseleghe 2009)

The cooperative movement described in the words of someone who has spent most of his life inside it. "How the Bumblebee Flies" is a book-length interview intended to provide a reconstruction of the history of the cooperative movement from its origins, which dates back all the way to primitive men, through its earliest achievements, in mid-nineteenth-century England, and up to the present day with a outlook into the future. The author of this essay is Ivano Barberini, the ICA president who passed away last year.

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