



General Assembly
22-23 Sept 2005
Cartagena de Indias
Colombia

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN CARTAGENA

Young people under the age of 25 represent half the world's population, and this proportion is growing. Young people are extremely important for the co-operative movement in terms of spending power, employment and its long term future. To enable the next generation of co-operators to build upon the traditions and successes of the co-operative movement they must be encouraged to engage with the movement whilst they are still young. The membership of co-operatives must represent the communities in which they serve, so they can reflect and respond to the needs of their customers.

The Youth Network was established to address the following issues:

1. To help young co-operators from different countries to connect, share experiences and ideas.
2. To provide an environment where young co-operators can learn more about the wider co-operative movement.
3. To involve young people from outside the movement through education and support.
4. To empower young co-operators to engage with the rest of the movement to both raise the profile of youth issues and to ensure the youth perspective is presented during wider discussions.

The Youth Network has grown over the last couple of years and now has over 100 members from about 20 countries. The network is represented on the ICA main board by Jo Bibby-Scullion and discussions are underway to increase youth representation throughout the ICA democratic structures. Several positive developments have resulted from the network, for instance members have collaborated with the CCA and ILO to write a book entitled 'Youth and Co-operatives' due for publication this year.

You will be aware, that this year the ICA General Assembly is to be held in Colombia. As a part of this, there will be a two day youth conference which all young people (under 35) are invited to attend. Youth participants will also be looking forward to sharing ideas with General Assembly delegates. You will receive the agenda for the conference in a subsequent pack.

Two years ago, at the last General Assembly, all delegates undertook the 'Oslo Pledge' which said they would commit to bring a young person to the next General Assembly. Our youth conference cannot be a success unless the movement honours this pledge. The need for youth involvement has been discussed for years, and it would be disappointing if the energy and time invested by so many young people came to nothing. We look forward to the time when the network has developed sufficiently to be able to serve ICA members by sharing best practice from different countries to help with youth engagement and

involvement in the democratic process and can help member organisations reach out to young people in their communities.

We respectfully request you to fund a young person to attend the youth conference and General Assembly in Colombia. The ICA will waive the registration fee for youth delegates.

We welcome young employees, but also young members or people with an active interest in the co-operative movement. Furthermore, we would be grateful if you could forward this letter to other member organisations who may be interested in helping a young person attend the youth conference. If you would like more information about the youth network, or would like to meet with active members in your region, we would be very happy to hear from you.

We look forward to seeing you in Cartagena.

Jo Bibby-Scullion
ICA Board representative, on behalf of the ICA Youth Network