

Tsunami update provide to recent ICA Board meeting

Jan-Eirik Imbsen, ICA Director of Development, presented a detailed report on co-operative reconstruction programmes following the Tsunami disaster to the Board at the meeting in Brussels, 6-7 March.

Information on projects in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and India was made

available.

ICA's main focus has been on longer term reconstruction projects based on a comprehensive needs assessment. A report detailing this approach has been prepared and pilot reconstruction identified.

The report was circulated to Board members. This report will be sent to all

ICA members for information and possible funding opportunities.

Jan-Erik also outlined in his report to the Board lessons learnt in the co-operative response to the disaster. These included the need for greater coordination of effort among international co-operative agencies and the need to fully engage with local affected communities

Tsunami update

Development

How can co-operatives contribute to development?

Mervyn Wilson, Principal of the UK's Co-operative College seeks to answer this question.



"The majority of workers in the world today are in the informal economy. They have no choice in the matter. They get whatever work they can. It may be hazardous; it may mean they cannot spend time with their families; it may not match their skills and it almost certainly will not provide earnings much above subsistence level.

Informal economy workers rarely benefit from labour inspectorates or

social security safety nets. And because they do not have an organisation, they have no representation in the decisions that impact on their lives.

Co-operatives and trade unions offer an alternative. A joint project of the International Labour Organisation, the International Co-operative Alliance and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions has been promoting this approach.

So far, SYNDICOOP has been operating in Africa, but a new publication has distilled the SYNDICOOP model for global use. Published by the Co-operative College, UK, on behalf of the SYNDICOOP coalition, it is a tool for co-opera-

tives and trade unions to help them organise informal economy workers.

The manual, called *Let's organize!*, has been written by Stirling Smith of the Co-operative College. He explains the philosophy behind SYNDICOOP: "Both trade unions and cooperatives are membership based organisations for workers. And because they are membership organisations, they can be accountable.

This is a crucial difference for many NGOs. All the development plans to achieve the Millennium Development Goals will come to nothing unless people are empowered - and the major organisational forms available to the working poor are co-operatives and trade unions."



Mervyn Wilson,
Principal of the UK Co-operative College

A PDF version of *Let's Organize!* will be available on the Co-operative College website from the end of March www.co-op.ac.uk