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## ICA Press Release

### ICA Supports Call for Further Action on AIDS



**Geneva, Switzerland, 27 November 2003, for immediate release** – December 1<sup>st</sup> is United Nations World AIDS Day. The UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called on countries and others to do more to stop the spread of this disease. The ICA supports this call for further urgent action on HIV/AIDS.

Jan-Eirik Imbsen, ICA's Director of Development has been a long time advocate for greater action in this area. "The ICA has known for some time the seriousness and scale of this issue - our involvement goes back to the mid 1990's and a joint World Health Organisation WHO/ICA initiative on HIV/AIDS," he said. More recently, the ICA Gender Equality Committee focused attention on HIV/AIDS in a seminar held during the ICA General Assembly in September where it highlighted how co-operatives are already addressing the issue in Africa and Asia. There, Vanda Giuliano, Chairperson of the Committee urged co-operators to promote training and awareness building for the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS particularly aimed at women who not only are the most affected group but are also in the first line of stopping the disease.

#### **The case for action is compelling**

- > HIV/AIDS has claimed 20 million lives and infected another 42 million people – more than the carnage of the first and second world wars
- > This year alone roughly 10 million children will lose their mothers to AIDS
- > Southern Africa is home to about 30% of people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, yet this region has less than 2% of the world's population
- > 95% of people living with HIV are in low- and middle-income countries

"The member focus and local orientation of co-operatives are in fact ideally suited to play a part in AIDS education and prevention programmes," said Mr. Imbsen. "A good example is women in Kongoussi an arid and marginal northern part of Burkina Faso in Africa. These women brought together through their shared membership of a local horticultural co-operative society knew that they needed to do something about this disease. With a high proportion of women and men suffering from HIV/AIDS, they initiated sensitisation on HIV/AIDS in the local community. Through the mobilisation of resources made possible by the co-operative, these women are able to make a contribution to the building a healthy and sustainable community."



Similar self-help responses are being carried out in many other communities. These efforts deserve support. The ICA and its partners are currently assisting with programmes in a number of African and Asian countries. More is planned for 2004.

"Much has been done but much more needs to be done. We will be working with our partners and lead organisations like UNAIDS to assist in whatever way possible" Mr. Imbsen concluded.

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The International Co-operative Alliance is an independent, non-government association which unities, represents and serves co-operatives worldwide. The ICA was founded in London in 1895. Its members are national and international co-operative organisations in all sectors of activity including, agricultural, banking, fisheries, housing, tourism, and consumer co-operatives. ICA has more than 200 member organisations from over 100 countries, representing more than 760 million individuals worldwide.