

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT DIGEST

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CANADIAN CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATION



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EL SALVADOR: CO-OP FARMERS REBUILD THEIR LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS AFTER DEVASTATING QUAKES

On February 13, 2001, under bright blue skies, Andrés Melgar was tending to his morning chores amid the rows of cashew trees which blanket the hillsides of San Ramón Cashew Growers Co-operative, in eastern El Salvador. Overhead, the shade from scraggly branches offered scant relief from the mounting heat of the late morning sun. Wiping the sweat from his brow, Andrés would soon break for lunch.

“Suddenly, everything began to move and shake,” recalls Andrés. “I struggled not to fall down. I knew instantly what was happening and I feared for my family.”

The vibrations Andrés felt through the soles of his boots were the tremors of yet another earthquake, even more deadly than the one that had struck just one month earlier. It was the beginning of a day Salvadorans would later call *The Deadly 13th*. Within minutes,

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LOOKING AHEAD: CO-OPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN THE WORKS

In this issue, beginning on **page 8**, we bring you up-to-date on many of CCA's new co-operative development projects unfolding in Africa, Asia and the Americas.





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EL SALVADOR: CO-OP FARMERS (FROM PAGE 1)

registering 7.6 on the Richter Scale, the earthquake carved a 100-kilometre trough of destruction along El Salvador's Pacific coast. Massive mud slides erased whole villages, blanketed sections of cities, including parts of San Salvador, the capital. When the rumbling ceased, 1,000 Salvadorans lay dead and over a quarter of a million homes were gone.

Andrés struggled amidst the debris and chaos to reach his family in the village of Bananera Conchagua. His prayers had been answered. His wife and three children were safe. Surveying the damage to his home and listening to his neighbours' stories, Andrés began to fathom the scope of upheaval, and his family's brush with death.

At higher ground, entire coffee groves lay flattened under layers of mud and rock. Lower down the slopes, cashew trees were upended, their roots exposed to the blue sky. Still further down, in the village houses, clay roofs had let go of walls and now lay scattered like so many playing cards. Neighbours were tending to the injured and searching for missing loved ones. Ruined roads and broken water systems left many villages isolated and without water.

Throughout the stricken countryside, El Salvador's rural co-operatives were among the first to respond with aid and comfort, among them, three CCA partner co-operatives: the Federación Salvadoreña de Cooperativas de la Reforma Agraria (FESACORA), a federation of nearly 200 agricultural co-operatives; Sociedad Cooperativa Productos de Marañón (SCPM), a cashew grower's co-operative; and, Federación de Asociaciones Cooperativas de

Ahorro y Crédito de El Salvador (FEDECACES), the national association of credit unions. As the three co-operatives assessed the damage, co-op leaders were stunned by the destructive force of the disaster. FESACORA suffered the loss of 34 members, some 1,800 member's homes were destroyed and equipment and processing facilities were severely damaged. SCPM members escaped death but many lost their homes. The earthquake had harmed all of SCPM's cashew trees and drastically lowered the water table. There would be poor harvests — if any — ahead.

With over six million people sharing 20,000 square kilometres, El Salvador is the smallest and most densely populated country in Central America. Agriculture employs two of every five workers, many of whom are members of agricultural co-operatives formed by the government as part of its agrarian reform 20 years earlier. Agricultural co-ops account for 71% of the nearly 2,000 co-operatives in El Salvador. In mere moments, the earthquake had rendered thousands of co-op members homeless and jobless. It was a devastating blow to people already trying to rebuild their homes and their lives from the first quake.

Co-op leaders assessed the damage and members set to work rebuilding, once again. The three co-operatives conducted house-to-house assessments in the most severely affected areas to ensure that aid and assistance would be distributed equitably and impartially — a move that earned high praise from members and aid agencies alike in the days and weeks following the earthquake.

Calls for emergency supplies went out and aid agencies around the globe responded, turning to the country's extensive network of co-operatives to distribute local aid.

Canadians also answered calls for aid from the Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada (CDF), the international fundraising arm of the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA). Within weeks of the quake CDF had raised over \$40,000.

With the productive capacity of CCA's partners in El Salvador destroyed, and the very real danger of further earthquakes looming over the



CDF PRESIDENT WAYNE MCLEOD (LEFT) TOURS THE SAN RAMÓN CASHEW GROWERS CO-OPERATIVE WITH MANAGER VICTOR BALLESTERO (THIRD FROM LEFT). THE CO-OPERATIVE OBTAINED A PROJECT LOAN TO REPAIR ITS FIELDS AND RE-ESTABLISH CASHEW PRODUCTION.

country's co-op sector, CCA and its partners set to work designing a unique program to respond to both the immediate and long-term needs of co-op members.

“We wanted to answer the immediate needs for food and medicine and temporary housing materials, but we also wanted to assist our co-op partners to establish systems and mechanisms that would better safeguard their members against future natural disasters,” explains CDF Manager Angela Splinter. Dubbed COPES — Co-operative Natural Disaster Preparedness El Salvador — the project provided for immediate emergency relief — food, clothing and temporary shelter for co-op members. It then helped farmers rebuild their homes and co-op buildings, and re-establish their productive capacity. It went further, establishing a plan for reducing vulnerability and responding to future disasters. Funded through contributions from CDF, FESACORA and the Canadian International Development Agency, the project was a first for CCA, combining emergency relief with long-term recovery systems.

Though his family escaped physical injury, Andrés' home sustained serious structural damage. Worse still, he was now without work since the fields of upended cashew trees would need to be replanted and would not produce for a further two or three years.

To lend immediate emergency relief to their members, just three days following the earthquake FESACORA, SCPM and FEDECACES began distributing \$60,000 worth of temporary shelter and supplies to those in greatest need. Over 3,200 people (617 families) from 29 co-ops received supplies of blankets and mattresses, potable water and essential foods, corrugated metal roofing, clothing and medical supplies. Priority went to families who lost everything, to those who lost goods, to the homeless, and to large families with ten or more children.

Andrés and his family received emergency supplies of blankets, plastic sheeting to cover doors and windows, and food supplies from San Ramón Co-operative.

Two loan funds were established to help families rebuild their homes and for the co-ops to become productive again. To rebuild housing, a professional construction supervisor was



ANDRÉS MELGAR AND HIS FAMILY RECEIVED EMERGENCY SUPPLIES FROM SAN RAMÓN CASHEW GROWERS CO-OPERATIVE THEN REBUILT THEIR HOME WITH A CO-OP LOAN. ANDRÉS AND THE MEMBERS OF THE CO-OP ARE BACK AT WORK, AT LEAST PART TIME.

contracted and FIDECOOP, a co-operative bank, managed a fund of \$187,000 from which 30-month loans were issued to 90 individuals and five co-ops. Since Andrés' house was beyond repair, he obtained a loan from the co-operative to rebuild. With his sweat equity and \$1,200, a new home was constructed. At 42 square meters it is a modest improvement over his previous house, it is closer to electricity and water, has separate bedrooms and is better able to withstand future earthquakes.

To re-establish productive capacity and enable members like Andrés to repay their housing loans, a 30-month revolving agricultural and micro-enterprise loan fund was set up and managed by FIDECOOP. The co-op issued 25 loans to co-operatives for buildings or on-lending, and 75 loans to individual co-op members.

Andrés' co-operative obtained a loan to repair its fields and re-establish cashew production. The loan has now been repaid and Andrés and the members of the co-op are back at work, at least part time.

The loan repayments made by Andrés and the co-operative are helping to create a permanent disaster relief fund, held in the credit union FEDECASES. The next time disaster strikes El Salvador, members of all three co-operatives will be able to immediately access their own funds to assist members.

Andrés' co-operative obtained a loan to repair its fields and re-establish cashew production.

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...the road to recovery is long and hard and life continues to be difficult in El Salvador.

To a person, co-op leaders say that without the assistance of COPEs their co-operatives would have collapsed. Co-ops planted new trees and staked up old trees where possible. Since many of the cashew trees had outgrown their productive years, replacement was ultimately a good thing.

To judge the impact of the project two years after the earthquakes, CCA recently conducted a survey of households that received COPEs assistance and a sampling of those that did not. CDF President Wayne McLeod, and CCA Senior Development Director Jo-Anne Ferguson recently joined other project partners to visit one of the hardest hit regions and to review the findings.

Ms. Ferguson says that the situation for those without access to such mechanisms as COPEs remains grave. “Meaningful recovery has not occurred and their housing situation remains dire,” she says. “Their income and productivity are below pre-earthquake levels. While some did receive assistance from other agencies, it was short term and did not meet their medium and long-term needs. Poor housing has left them more vulnerable to future natural disaster.”

CDF donations made it possible for Andrés and other members of San Ramón Cashew Growers Co-operative, FESACORA, SCPM, and FEDECASES to survive and recover from this disaster. In total 102 loans were provided to rebuild or repair houses, and 22 loans were provided to re-establish productive capacity through the purchase of such items as new trees, fertilizer and seeds.

Ms. Ferguson says the road to recovery is long and hard and life continues to be difficult in El Salvador. Like most farmers, Andrés is able to work regularly on co-op-owned land for six months of the year. He tries to pick up casual labour jobs during the off months. His children, aged 13, 15 and 18, have grade six education (the average in El Salvador). There are no affordable schools beyond grade six nearby.

“Andrés is the real face of the poor,” says CDF President Wayne McLeod. “He is a hard worker, proud of what he has accomplished. His house is clean and orderly and his children are obviously secure in their community. But life is a struggle and progress is slow.”

Through on-going projects in El Salvador, CDF/CCA is helping Andrés on the slow and steady path toward improved economic stability. The crop of cashews he helps to produce are processed by the co-operative and sold internationally.

El Salvador has had more than its fair share of crises, both natural and man-made. Médicins Sans Frontières spokesperson German Casas says that while some people believe a country learns how to cope with disasters from previous experience, the reverse is true. “Natural disasters tend to occur regularly here, and people are unable to recover fully from one before another comes along,” he says. “Their resilience gets worn down and they tend to react far more dramatically to each successive crisis.”

Like many of his fellow cashew farmers working the plantations of the San Ramón Cashew Growers Co-operative, life will never be quite the same for Andrés. However, his co-operative community is now better prepared than ever to respond to disaster when it does strike again. The co-operative sector in El Salvador is back in production. ■



CCA PARTNER CO-OPERATIVES IN EL SALVADOR WERE DEEPLY AFFECTED BY THE TWO EARTHQUAKES, AND WERE AMONG THE FIRST TO RESPOND, PROVIDING AID AND COMFORT TO THEIR MEMBERS. THE RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT DEVISED BY CCA'S PARTNER CO-OPERATIVES ALSO ADDRESSES THEIR LONGER TERM HOUSING AND INCOME NEEDS.



SASKATCHEWAN CO-OPERATORS SCORE A HOLE-IN-ONE WITH ANNUAL FUNDRAISING CLASSIC

Most people come to play golf. Some come for the prizes. All come for the camaraderie and the fun. And best of all, everyone who comes is helping support the Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada (CDF).

It is called the Saskatchewan Co-op Golf Classic, and for eight years running it has been the biggest special event fundraiser for CDF — both in terms of dollars raised and the profile it gives to the work of the Canadian Co-operative Association's (CCA's) international program. Judging from participant feedback, it is also one of the most anticipated social and networking events on the Saskatchewan co-op calendar.

The goal of the tournament is to raise funds for CDF and, in turn, the funds raised in this tournament are helping to fuel CCA's international development program. CCA's funding agreement with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) requires a cash contribution, and through the generous support of CDF donors, the Foundation is able to meet this requirement. For every dollar CDF contributes to the international program, CIDA matches with three dollars, tripling the impact of each donation.

Organizers and golfers alike have every right to be proud of the contribution they are making to overseas co-operative development. Over eight years, the Saskatchewan Co-op Golf Classic has raised close to \$70,000 for CDF. This in turn has leveraged \$210,000 in support of CCA's international development program.

The work CDF supports is also profiled at each Classic. Participants learn more about CDF and its international co-operative development work from a staffed display and silent auction featuring many products from overseas co-operatives. One year, a fellow co-operator from the Credit Union Association of Ghana was able to join in the fun and speak to golfers about CCA's credit union work in that country. In addition, numerous volunteers and CDF champions attend this event each and every year. Many of these champions have traveled overseas to provide



GOLFERS AT THE SASKATCHEWAN CO-OP GOLF CLASSIC FUNDRAISING EVENT PAUSE FROM THEIR GAME TO MUG FOR THE CAMERA. (L-R) LYNN ANDERSON, CREDIT UNION CENTRAL OF SASKATCHEWAN; STUART MOSKALUKE, PRAIRIE DIAMOND CREDIT UNION; CELESTE BUNDAS, CREDIT UNION CENTRAL OF SASKATCHEWAN; MIKE LEE, MIDALE CREDIT UNION.

technical assistance and can offer first hand accounts of the impact of CCA's work.

“Having worked with credit unions in Africa, I fully appreciate the work that is done by CCA in other countries,” says Barry Mohr, a senior account manager with the Credit Union Insurance Services (CUIS) and a Saskatchewan Co-op Golf Classic volunteer. “That experience draws me back to the organizing committee each year.”

Another tradition linked with this tournament is the ever popular “quiz” contest. Participants read questions at several tee-off boxes, with the answers provided at the greens. After a full round of golf, teams are then challenged with an on-the-spot test and those with the correct answers become eligible for yet another prize.

And speaking of prizes — no one has ever left the Saskatchewan tournament empty handed! Since its inception, over 2,000 prizes have been awarded — that's approximately \$30,000 worth of prizes that are donated by various sponsors and those attending the event.

Organizers and golfers alike have every right to be proud of the contribution they are making to overseas co-operative development.

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Our management, staff and board take great pride in the company's support of such initiatives.

Many participants view this tournament as a premiere business networking opportunity. "The tournament is a valuable opportunity to network with representatives of other co-operatives and like-minded organizations," says Karen Rust, Vice-President of Finance, Co-operators Life Insurance Company. "Most of the participants are current or potential clients. The Co-operators 'brand' is promoted through advertising and sponsorship of prizes. Our management, staff and board take great pride in the company's support of such initiatives, which leads to improved morale. Also, it is a perk for our managers to have the company sponsor their attendance at such an event."

"The benefits reach beyond our own co-operatives and communities to help poor people in developing countries," says CDF Manager Angela Splinter. "Aided by CDF funds, the programming of the CCA is helping

in our quest to overcome world poverty, promote civil society and empower people to improve their lives in sustainable ways."

"I know that the people who help organize the event, who participate in it, and who support it do so because they are committed to reducing poverty in the developing world," says Ms. Splinter. "They deserve a special vote of thanks on behalf of the thousands of people in the developing world that are benefiting from this tournament. In particular I want to thank Warren Crossman and his team at the Saskatchewan Co-operative Association. They have provided a home base from which to organize the tournament, as well as countless hours of support and assistance. They do a fantastic job, and we are truly grateful." ■

THAT SWEET SWING OF SUCCESS!

The stats on the annual Saskatchewan Co-op Golf Classic...

- 1 The Co-op Classic has been running for eight years and has raised nearly \$70,000 for CDF.
- 2 The Saskatchewan Co-op Golf Classic has given away more than 2,000 prizes.
- 3 The success of the Saskatchewan tournament inspired people in Ottawa, Ontario and Brandon, Manitoba to organize similar events.
- 4 Each year, over 150 hours are donated to the co-ordination and implementation of the Saskatchewan event (this excludes golfing!).
- 5 An average of 104 golfers participate in the annual event.
- 6 Each year, 300 golf balls bearing the CDF logo are given away.
- 7 In eight years running only one tournament (in 1997) was "rained out" although some golfers did manage to golf later that same day, proving that the weather is only a minor inconvenience for hardy, dedicated golfers.
- 8 Less than five golf clubs have been reported altered, bent, or otherwise destroyed.
- 9 There has been no report of any golf carts driven into nearby Lake Diefenbaker. However, there have been countless reports of golfers seen wading in water traps with the excuse that they were just cooling their heels.
- 10 Since its inception, there have been approximately 1,359 mulligans purchased, raising \$4,350 at the Co-op Classic. We thank golfers for their wisdom and purchasing power. ■



INTERNS BRING FRESH APPROACH TO THEIR ICA POSTINGS IN KENYA

It is 11:00 o'clock on a Tuesday night in Nairobi, Kenya and Bernard Kadasia is at the Nairobi National Airport awaiting the arrival of two eager, yet jet-legged young Canadians. It is becoming a familiar routine for Mr. Kadasia, Executive Director of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) Regional Office for East, Central and Southern Africa. This is the fourth year that his organization has hosted interns from the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA), and the fourth time he has made the journey to the airport to offer a personal welcome to exhausted young travelers. Mr. Kadasia will deliver the new interns to the accommodations he has arranged, and after they have had a few days of recovery time, he will sit down with them to talk about their assignments for the next six months.

CCA calls its internship program "Youth Experience International" and it is undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canadian International Development Agency. Since 1997, CCA has been placing young interns in such countries as Costa Rica, Chile, Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Nepal, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, China, Mongolia and Korea.

The program has two goals: to provide a professional international work experience for young Canadian graduates; and to provide relevant and useful human resources to CCA's partner organizations in developing countries.

It takes a deft touch to balance those two priorities, but Mr. Kadasia has shown an ability to harness the creativity and energy of the interns for the benefit of the ICA, while ensuring that the interns benefit from his mentorship. Interns, he says, offer ICA the luxury of "frontier input." In other words, they are available to explore new activities and areas of interest outside of the organization's core activities that the ICA does not have the resources to pursue.

Mr. Kadasia summed it up with these words: "The interns help the ICA office to explore new areas which will normally not get the required attention due to everyone having a

traditional docket. The interns always bring to us a great freshness in ideas, approach and culture."

For example, for the past two years interns have been researching the impact of HIV/AIDS on co-operatives in the region, and investigating the potential for co-operatives to assist in combating the effects and the spread of the disease. This year an intern will work with a primary co-operative to test some of this research on a pilot basis. Previous interns have assisted ICA with its website, a technical and time-consuming activity that busy staff have difficulty finding time for. The ICA has long had an interest in offering assistance to member co-operatives in dealing with gender issues. This year, for the first time, an intern will deliver a pilot gender program with a primary co-operative.

"Interns are not staff," Mr. Kadasia said. "They are treated in a unique way. I don't see myself as a supervisor but as a benchmark or a guide. I treat them as professionals and ensure that the work is what they are interested in and not just busy work." ■



CCA INTERN ROBIN WHITING DECIDED TO EXTEND HER POSTING WITH ICA IN NAIROBI, KENYA FOR AN ADDITIONAL FOUR MONTHS LAST YEAR BEFORE RETURNING HOME TO FORT QU'APPELLE, SASKATCHEWAN.



THIS YEAR'S INTERNS POSE FOR A GROUP PHOTO IN OTTAWA BEFORE TAKING UP THEIR SIX-MONTH POSTINGS WITH CCA PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS IN GHANA, KENYA, UGANDA, AND INDIA.

LOOKING AHEAD: CO-OPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN THE WORKS

In this section of *International Development Digest* we preview some of the initiatives CCA and its overseas partners are gearing up to deliver in the months ahead. You can see these and more project profiles by logging on to CCA's website at www.coopscanada.coop and following the international links.

MICRO-INSURANCE FOR AFFORDABLE PROTECTION

Place: Philippines

Project: Co-operative Insurance

Partners: National Confederation of Co-operatives (NATCCO Network); Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development — Mutual Benefits Association; Co-op Life Insurance Mutual Benefits Society; Micro-Finance Council; Institute for Public Health Management

An interruption in earnings due to illness or accident can spell disaster for poor families struggling to make ends meet. Traditionally viewed as high risks by insurers, they lack

even the most basic of insurance safety nets. CCA partners in the Philippines are creating affordable micro-insurance products and services that provide thousands of poor families with the protection they need.

Developing affordable premiums, sustainable insurance programs, and workable re-insurance schemes, and getting past perceptions that the poor are not insurable, are just some of the challenges this long-term initiative is responding to. This fall, CCA is convening a meeting of co-operative insurance experts in Ottawa to establish a plan for enabling other co-op partners in Asia to provide insurance products to their members, including the poor.



HELPING HIGHLAND FARMERS

Place: Ecuador

Project: Development of Agricultural Co-operatives in the North Ecuadorian Sierra

Partner: Union Cooperativa del Norte (UCAN)

After a decade's work with agricultural co-operatives in Central America, CCA is returning to South America with this new partnership in Ecuador. UCAN is a regional federation of farmers' co-operatives serving remote, highland and indigenous communities. The CCA project will focus on improving co-operative services to farmers so that local producers can move from subsistence agriculture to a more market driven and responsive approach.

REBUILDING TRUST FROM THE GROUND UP

Place: Cambodia

Project: Credit Union Development in Cambodia

Partner: To be determined

Despite years of political instability and the genocide inflicted by the Khmer Rouge, Cambodians created a wide range of community-based financial institutions (CFIs). However, little has been done to mobilize member savings, due in part to mistrust arising from failed past attempts, and from persisting views that the poor cannot save. Over the next three years, CCA will provide technical assistance to a number of CFIs in a program aimed at strengthening their capacity to mobilize member savings, and formalizing the network. CCA technical co-operants will manage a program of credit union promotion and outreach work, delivered through existing organizations, and establish a credit union resource, training and consulting centre.





TRAINING FOR LOCAL HEALTH CARE CO-OPERATIVES

Place: India

Project: Capacity Building of Health and Child Care Co-ops

Partner: Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)

Self-Employed Women's Association is an internationally renowned Indian organization of 200,000 women members who have established their own union, co-operative bank, research centre and more in a sustained effort to improve their lives.

In years past, CCA had supported SEWA in establishing a federation of producer's co-operatives to provide marketing and production support to various women's groups. This new project works with six service co-operatives that provide health and child care services in local communities. This CCA project focuses on building member's technical skills, such as midwifery and nursing, and management skills so that outreach and impact of the co-operative are maximized.



TACKLING OBSTACLES TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Places: Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Kenya

Project: Finance Models — Community Based and Co-operative Housing

Partners: Housing People of Zimbabwe; Women Advancement Trust of Tanzania; National Co-operative Housing Union of Kenya

Securing financing is a major obstacle to expanding the pool of affordable housing in most countries. In this regional project, CCA will work with co-operative housing development agencies in Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Kenya to develop new financial products and systems that will enable low income households to upgrade their housing. This three-year project is in partnership with the Rooftops Canada Foundation, the international arm of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada.

CCA AND GAY LEA FOODS CO-OPERATIVE SUPPORT DAIRY FARMERS IN NEPAL

Place: Nepal

Projects: Dairy Co-operative Development in Nepal

Partner: Gay Lea Foods Co-operative (Canada); Central Milk Producers Co-operative Union (Nepal)

Although many development agencies speak highly of the "green revolution" in which crop farmers gain access to improved inputs and technologies, in south Asia a similar process among dairy farmers, referred to as the "white revolution," has had an even greater impact on rural households. In Nepal, CCA is supporting three initiatives in partnership with Gay Lea Foods Co-operative.

In the remote far west of the country, a new network of local dairy co-operatives is being promoted. Closer to the capital, one co-operative is helping to expand a school for local children, while another is learning more about modern dairy management. Gay Lea is providing both technical and financial support to all of these initiatives.





CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR CO-OP DEVELOPMENT

Place: Uganda

Project: Participatory Development of a National Co-operative Development Policy in Uganda

Partner: Uganda Co-operative Alliance (UCA)

Over the past ten years, Uganda has undergone a major political and economic transformation. In that process, the government abandoned its old top-down approach to co-operatives but failed to define its vision for co-operatives in the new reality. CCA is supporting the Uganda Co-operative Alliance in its efforts to draft a new Co-operative Development Policy. This year, UCA is undertaking a national consultation process with its member co-operatives, government and other stakeholders to prepare a policy framework that will affirm the continued importance of co-operatives in the national economy, and the vital role co-ops play in reducing poverty in rural areas.

CREDIT UNIONS REBUILD AFTER FLOODING SUBSIDES

Place: Sri Lanka

Project: Post-disaster Reconstruction of Sri Lanka Credit Unions

Partner: Federation of Thrift and Credit Co-operative Societies (SANASA)

A series of flash floods and landslides struck south-western Sri Lanka this May killing over 200 people and leaving 85,000 families homeless. Over 100,000 credit union members of SANASA — the national apex organization of credit unions in Sri Lanka, and long-time CCA partner — were affected by the floods which destroyed 90 credit union buildings and damaged a further 285. Co-operatives and credit unions across Canada have answered a special appeal by the Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada for donations to finance the reconstruction and repair of 150 credit unions in the affected regions. SANASA is providing additional support in the form of basic furniture and equipment, as well as technical support to reconstruct accounts and other financial documents.



GIVING FISHERS A GREATER SAY IN FISHERY POLICY

Place: Nicaragua

Project: Responsible Fisheries Policy — Nicaragua

Partner: Belize Fishermen Co-operative Association

The absence of an effective policy and regulatory environment is a critical obstacle to the sustainability of Nicaragua's Atlantic coast fishery. CCA is partnering with a long-standing advocate of sustainable fisheries, the Belize Fishermen

Co-operative Association, to engage Nicaraguan fisher folk in the development, implementation and monitoring of fishery management plans, and to build the capacity of local co-operatives to influence fishery policy in that country. The project builds on another CCA initiative that is improving the health and income prospects of current and former lobster divers in the region.





CAMBODIA: CREDIT UNIONS MAKE HISTORY

Credit unionist in Cambodia made history this June with the inaugural annual general meeting of the Cambodian Community Savings Federation (CCSF), that country's first credit union trade association. The Federation represents 48 credit unions and nearly 10,000 members in the eastern and central areas of Battambang province, in the northwest of Cambodia. Over 50 representatives from member credit unions met in Battambang for the day-long meeting. "The mission of CCSF is to provide diversified financial services to the community, particularly low-income families, to improve the living standard of the members," said Cambodian credit union leader and CCSF chief executive officer Phal Pisey in her address to the members.

CCA Asia program manager and representative to the meeting, Bohdan Kozy, calls the meeting a great step forward for Cambodians. "This is the founding of a grassroots credit union movement in Cambodia, and a model of participatory democracy in action."

It was also a special day for Bangkok-based CCA partner the Asian Confederation of Credit Unions (ACCU). They, along with the Canadian Co-operative Association and the Canadian International Development Agency, have provided support and technical assistance to CCSF since 1997. ■



CCSF'S FOUNDING FIVE-MEMBER BOARD OF DIRECTORS SWEAR AN OATH OF OFFICE TO THE MEMBERSHIP FOLLOWING A SPIRITED ELECTION AT THE FEDERATION'S INAUGURAL MEETING IN BATTAMBANG.

IT'S TIME FOR A CO-OP FAIR TRADE *BUYCOTT!* (FROM PAGE 12)

three call for democratic control and member economic participation. Number seven mandates a concern for community. Co-ops are all about fair trade! Not only should we be buying fair trade products from co-ops we should be promoting co-ops as the fair trade alternative. The anti-globalization movement is growing daily because the disparity between the rich and poor countries is being aggravated by so-called free trade

and its World Trade Organization proponents. The free trade mantra seems to be "Globalization when it works for us, self-interest when it doesn't." The co-op movement should be doing everything it can to let people and governments know that by following a co-op model everyone wins! Put your values into action! *Buycott* today for social and economic justice. ■

For more information:
www.transfair.ca
www.planetbeancoffee.com
www.lasiembra.com
www.justuscoffee.com

Peter Cameron is Executive Director of the Ontario Worker Co-op Federation and a member of Planet Bean Coffee Worker Co-op in Guelph, Ontario.



IT'S TIME FOR A CO-OP FAIR TRADE **BUYCOTT!**

BY PETER CAMERON

Many times in our lives we feel helpless to make positive social change. We are always fighting in the midst of the injustice of a destructive economic system. Sure we can try to avoid or boycott a product, a store, a country, etc., but unless it is very well organized and high profile it feels so powerless and ineffective. Well I think it's time we started a *buycott*. It's time we started to put our dollars where our values are. We can become conscious consumers and purchase fairly traded products like coffee, tea, and chocolate and make a difference. We hear so much about free trade these days but the question always needs to be asked: free for whom? Intuitively we all know someone pays, the environment pays, or our children's future is compromised.

As co-op members, we should be particularly supportive of fair trade practices. Producers of fair

trade products have to be democratically organized, and most of the time that means as co-ops. They get a fair return for their product. They have to meet minimum health and safety standards, and follow minimum environmental requirements. For example, over 300 co-operatives in 23 countries, representing over half a million small farm families sell fairly traded coffee. For the 2,300 families in the Mexican co-op UCIRI that means enough surplus to build schools, medical clinics and a decent transportation system. Fair trade means a fair deal for farmers.

However, there is something that bothers me about the fair trade movement in Canada. Here we are telling the producers of the developing world that they have to be democratically organized to be considered fair trade and yet anyone can process and sell in Canada and call themselves a fair trade business. Isn't there something a little hypocritical about this position? Why do we expect them to be democratic but not demand the



THE POWER OF A **BUYCOTT**: THE GROWTH OF SALES VOLUMES OF FAIR-TRADE ROASTED COFFEE IN CANADA (METRIC TONNES)

same of our businesses in the "North?" For example, many high-profile "traditional" business corporations are jumping on the fair trade bandwagon only as an ethical marketing technique. Worse yet, they are using their non-fair-trade coffee to subsidize their fair trade product thus allowing them to undercut sellers solely committed to fair trade.

Co-ops should be the leading advocates of fair trade. As members of co-ops we follow the seven co-op principles. Numbers two and

continued on page 11



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