



Kigayaza Youth Co-operative, Uganda

## July 2010 Newsletter

### Young Co-operators in Uganda

*Sally Hartley is undertaking a PhD jointly with the Open University and the Co-operative College. Her research focuses on youth engagement with co-operatives in Africa, specifically in Lesotho and Uganda. She has just returned from three months of fieldwork in Uganda, and has written some thoughts on what she found.*

The trip was fascinating. I researched three co-operatives, all youth focused and all in rural areas – two farmer co-operatives and one savings and credit co-operative. I was trying to understand the nature of young people's membership in a co-operative and what impact this has had on their lives – why they joined, what benefits they get through being in a co-operative and what skills and knowledge they gain.

There are a growing number of youth focused co-operatives in Uganda – a result of the Uganda Cooperative Alliance's (the Apex body in Uganda) work to engage youth with the co-operative movement. This is against a back drop of a revival of co-operatives more generally, particularly primary co-operatives. This emphasis on youth is not only crucial for the future of the co-operative movement but also for improving the situation for youth, who now constitute a majority of the population in Uganda. They represent an opportunity for Uganda's development; a productive potential workforce and also a potential threat. Today the reality for youth is that they face high unemployment rates and are at risk of issues such as HIV, thus presenting a potential drain on Uganda's already limited resources. Youth co-operatives are an opportunity for these young people to get a job or create an income for themselves and this is what makes

co-operatives such an important area of research and policy in Uganda.

I found the members of the co-operatives very open and willing to be part of the research. This enabled me to undertake interviews, focus group discussions, observe their meetings and also ask some members to keep a diary of their activities as well as take photos of what their co-operative meant to them. Through this, I found these youth were able to increase their income by being in the co-operative through marketing produce together, such as maize. But what was also important and perhaps more significant was the knowledge and skills that they were able to acquire. This was knowledge of new and improved farming skills and also business skills such as record keeping.

But interestingly it was also the personal development that occurred as a result of their membership that made the difference – this included increased confidence, ability to speak publicly and planning for the future. New skills and knowledge were acquired through a mixture of training from Uganda Co-operative Alliance and also from each other, visiting one another's farms and gaining 'experience', such as attending co-operative meetings and holding positions on the board.

I came back from Uganda with a clear conclusion that 'co-operatives are a site of learning for young people'.

*If you would like to read more about the co-operatives in Uganda that Sally researched please go to <http://salhartley.blogspot.com/>*

## Working with Co-operatives Conference

Co-operatives for Development and Oxfam are co-hosting a "Working with Co-operatives" forum on **1 December** at the Co-operative Bank on Prescot Street in London. The event is aimed at organisations that are already working with, or are considering working with, a variety of different co-operative models in the developing world.

The seminar will help participants to improve their knowledge of co-operatives, such as information on the global movement, the legal, governance and policy context, as well as the key challenges and opportunities of working with co-operatives. Through the event, participants will also be able to share experience and access further information and resources to help them be more effective in

their work with co-operatives.

There will be speakers from developing country co-operative movements, as well as a selection of thematic workshops covering a number of topics relating to co-operatives, including;

- Agricultural co-operatives.
- Financial co-operatives.
- Organisational Development.
- Governance.
- Youth and co-operatives.
- Alternative co-operative models.

If you would like more information or to book a free place at the seminar please email [cfd@co-op.ac.uk](mailto:cfd@co-op.ac.uk) or phone us on 0161 246 2971

## Endangered Archives

Co-operatives have a long history in East Africa with some over 75 years old. Their records are certainly in a precarious state as many are lying forgotten in basements or in one case a tearoom! We are very pleased to have been successful in a bid for funding from the British Library for a scoping mission to locate archival materials from co-operatives in Tanzania. The pilot study will identify the extent, availability, location and preservation needs of the co-operative archives and investigate the potential for relocating them to a safer environment in order to prevent their loss and deterioration.

Currently there is no systematic preservation of historical records and cohesive documentary evidence. Records that could be of use to generations of students and researchers in helping to understand their co-operative history are accumulating in basements or in offices with no protection from environmental conditions and insects.

The project is being run in partnership with Moshi University College of Co-operative and Business Studies (MUCCOBS). Plans include a pilot study to identify the extent, availability, location and preservation needs of co-operative archives in Tanzania. Staff from the UK College will help to locate relevant material which will eventually be transferred to the new co-operative archive which is being set up by MUCCoBS.

The UK college team visiting Tanzania will be led by Margaret Crockett and Rebecca Forecast of Co-operatives for Development. They will be working closely with Dr F K Bee, Principal of MUCCOBS and the Acting Director for the Library, Rose Maro.

Margaret Crockett is a qualified records manager and archivist with nearly 20 years' practical experience and has experience of working in the UK National Co-operative Archive.



*Coffee farmers on the slopes of Kilimanjaro bring their crop to the Kilimanjaro Native Co-operative Union, of which they are members (1964). The Union at the time was composed of 28 primary coffee societies with 30,000 members. This picture (Crown Copyright) is currently in the National Co-operative Archive of the UK Co-operative College, and gives us a glimpse into the East African co-operative heritage which the project hopes to discover.*

## Supporting Women in Smallholder Supply Chains

The FRICH project, in which the Co-operative College is a partner, was chosen as a case study for a workshop hosted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation reviewing programmes that engage women smallholders in international supply chains. Linda Shaw attended the two-day workshop in Seattle to showcase the FRICH or “Kibagenge” project (meaning “coming together as one” in the local language), which aims to help 8,000 smallholders form into co-operatives, achieve Fairtrade certification and to diversify into other products. Specific measures and activities have been undertaken by the FRICH project to help ensure women benefit fully from the project’s services and activities, such as encouraging women’s membership and active participation in the new co-operatives, ensuring women are represented in co-operative governance structures, and training and supporting women in their out grower communities.

The aim of the workshop was to develop good practice guidance on how companies can best support women in smallholder supply chains. This

is an important discussion; women in Africa often provide the majority of labour on smallholder farms supplying global food companies, yet they typically receive little of the income and benefits from crop sales. Several leading global food companies have started to recognise that re-dressing this imbalance would not only help women and their families, but could also deliver commercial benefits by improving productivity, quality and the future viability of key smallholder crops.

Delegates included multinational corporations such as Wal-Mart, Cargill, Mars, Kraft/Cadbury and Eastern Produce, as well as Twin Trading, Lorna Young, Kuapa Kokoo, Oxfam, Care and the World Bank. During the workshop, Linda presented the case for considering alternative business models, such as co-operatives, when addressing women’s issues in supply chains. As an outcome of the workshop, The Gates Agricultural Programme is producing a guidance document for international food companies who source agricultural products from smallholders.

## Building co-operatives in the Middle East

The growing global reach of the Co-operative College has been confirmed by a deal to provide a package of co-operative support to the Gulf state of Bahrain. Paul Sommerfeld, Chair of the College Board of Governors travelled to Bahrain to sign a contract with the Minister of Social Development on 23 June.

“This shows how the reputation of the College has spread to regions where we have never worked before,” said Mr Sommerfeld. “Bahrain is a small country, with a population of just over a million. The government wishes to look afresh at co-operatives as part of a plan to modernise the economy by 2030.”

Links between Bahrain and the UK were first forged by Dame Pauline Green, the Chief Executive of Co-operatives UK, who travelled there in 2008 thanks to the British Embassy.

Mervyn Wilson, College Principal, added: “This new agreement with the Kingdom of Bahrain is yet another addition to the College’s growing portfolio of work. We are now working in nearly 20 countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. It is particularly heartening to have received support for this work from the British Embassy in Bahrain,

as parts of government did not always recognise the importance of co-operatives.”

To coordinate the College’s growing global work, a new position of International Programmes Manager has been created. Stirling Smith, who took up the post on 1 June, said “Between my visit to Bahrain in April and signing the deal has taken less than two months, which shows the level of interest in co-operatives in the region. This contract is worth over £50,000, and we will be helping Bahrain to review its co-operative law, set up a system of co-operative education and introduce them to youth co-operatives.”



Paul Sommerfeld signs the deal in Bahrain

## Campaigning for Change

Co-operative members have a long history of campaigning, and we have recently been researching the radical history of these campaigns. Rebecca Forecast has led a number of workshops using a timeline activity to demonstrate how ahead of its time the co-operative movement has been in fighting for causes in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain, such as workers rights, women's rights, unadulterated food and old age pensions. This campaigning history underpins campaigns by members in the current co-operative movement, such as

campaigns for Fair Trade, international human rights, animal rights, environmental protection and other development concerns. If you would like us to run a workshop for your organisation, please get in touch.



## Publications

Co-operatives for Development is pleased to present the first six of a series of briefing papers. These are aimed at decision-makers within organisations that work in development and discuss a variety of issues relating to the role of co-operatives in poverty reduction. We hope that you find them useful and would welcome any comments or questions that you might have.

Briefing Paper No 1: *Beyond a Fair Price: The Co-operative Movement and Fair Trade*

Briefing Paper No 2: *Co-operatives and International Development*

Briefing Paper No 3: *Financial Co-operatives and Development*

Briefing Paper No 4: *How Fair Trade can Better Support Producer Co-operatives*

Briefing Paper No 5: *Working with Co-operatives: The Legal and Policy Environment*

Briefing Paper No 6: *Working with Co-operatives: A View from Kenya*

We have also produced two discussion papers which are aimed at a more general audience:

Discussion Paper No 1: *Fair Trade: An Overview*

Discussion Paper No 2: *A Role for Co-operatives in Community Natural Resource Management*

The above papers can all be downloaded from our website in the Publications and Resources section. If you would like to receive hard copies of these, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

## DFID Paper

Co-operatives for Development recently carried out a piece of research with DFID, summarising the ways in which they work with co-operatives in the developing world. The paper, *Working with Co-operatives for Poverty Reduction*, demonstrates how co-operatives can help to tackle rural poverty, create more equitable growth and expand poor people's access to financial services. It also makes some recommendations as to how donors can work well with co-operatives and the role they can play in strengthening co-operative networks. If you would like a copy, please visit the COOPAfrica website <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/ent/coop/africa/index.htm> or get in touch.

The Co-operatives for Development programme is based at the Co-operative College and is funded by UKaid from the Department for International Development. It works to promote co-operative solutions to poverty through research, training and policy advice.

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