

## Report of the ICA-EU Project Consultative Meeting

**Date: 28 October 2016**

**Venue: Lemigo Hotel, Kigali, Rwanda**

**Project Title: Co-operatives in Development – People-Centred Businesses in Action**

### Present (Attendance list is attached to this report):

1. Affiliate Applicants from Africa:
  - i). Co-operative University College of Kenya (CUCK), now Co-operative University of Kenya (CUK).
  - ii). Moshi Co-operative University (MoCU)
  - iii). Zimbabwe National Association of Housing Cooperatives (ZINAHCO)
  - iv). Tanzania Federation of Co-operatives (TFC)
  - v). National Co-operative Confederation of Rwanda (NCCR)
  - vi). Uganda Co-operative Alliance (UCA)
2. Members of the Alliance Africa Gender and Research Committee
3. Members of the Alliance Africa Legal Committee
4. Members of the Alliance Africa Youth Network Committee
5. Alliance Africa Focal Point Persons
6. Other interested stakeholders

This consultative meeting sought to formally introduce the EU-ICA project to stakeholders from the Africa region, and have an in-depth discussion on the region's priorities, implementation modalities and workplan for the next 4 years.

The meeting drew participants from affiliated entities specifically mentioned in the project document who are specifically called upon to provide specialized services, members of the Alliance Africa Gender and Research Committee who will take lead in ensuring that all research activities implemented are quality assured, and also ensure that all activities are engendered, members of the Alliance Africa Legal Committee who will take lead in looking at legal frameworks around the co-operative movement in Africa and providing support to lobby and advocacy efforts to push for an enabling legal environment for co-operative strengthening, members of Alliance Africa Youth Network Committee to ensure that the youth are included in the co-operative movement, Alliance Africa Focal Point persons charged with ensuring that agreements are followed up with national governments and information effectively disseminated within the national co-operative movements in Africa. Other interested stakeholders also participated.

### **Introduction and opening**

The Regional Director for the Alliance Africa opened the consultative meeting with introductions based on countries of origin, and she followed this by urging all to fully engage in the consultative process in order to come up with an Africa-specific work plan for this project that will contribute to strengthening the co-operative movement in Africa.

### **Project Overview:**

The Project Manager gave a brief overview of the project, stating that planned activities were all meant to lead to a strengthened International Cooperative Alliance which gives increased visibility and a stronger voice to co-operatives at global, regional, national and local level, increased engagement in dialogue and strategic partnerships with international institutions and stakeholders and recognition as far as sustainable co-operative development and growth is concerned.

Targeted activities are groups along 7 activity streams as follows:

1. Institutional strengthening and development – strengthening capacities of ICA staff at both the global and regional office levels in order to enable them serve the members better.
2. Enabling environment – This result area focuses on research, within which the mapping of co-operative actors will fall – here the focus will be on finding a means to collect and collate accurate data on a regular basis in order for the movement, as well as stakeholders in the public and private sector to be able to make decisions to support the movement. It

is important that co-operatives continue to think about how they can use data to create value. Also under this activity stream, a legal framework analysis will be undertaken whereby supportive legal frames will be analyzed through a comparative analysis, and promoted by supporting policy dialogue. Thematic research on topical research on topical issues that will bring new knowledge to the co-operative movement.

3. Capacity building for members – here the focus is on capacity building on establishing and strengthening federations, capacity building on policy dialogue and co-operative related thematics, capacity building on functioning and advocacy towards EU delegations as well as on knowledge and experience sharing between members. Co-operatives’ skills and outreach will be reinforced through institutional strengthening and capacity building initiatives, which include in particular the development of trainings, tools, seminars, knowledge sharing, and networking activities.
4. Co-op networking through regional co-operative development meetings
5. Advocacy and political dialogue – where ICA and members monitor policy processes at the global and regional levels, following and participating in the Policy Forum on Development, following policy events at global and regional levels (EU public consultations and roadmaps), as well as bilateral dialogue meetings and conference engagements with the aim of enhancing the role of co-operatives in the development agenda.
6. Alliance building with CSOs – targeting new CSO networks at global and regional levels
7. Visibility and communication – ensuring that the EU’s contribution is acknowledged and visible across the region. Visibility is enhanced by initiatives such as the mapping of cooperative actors, the development of cooperative tools based on quantitative and qualitative research, the organization of visibility events, and the implementation of multiple communication tools - using for instance social media

### **Reflections:**

The University Of Lay Adventists of Kigali (UNILAK), the Co-operative Federation of Nigeria (CFN) and Fair Trade Africa wish to be part of this project even though they are not specifically mentioned in the project document. This can happen because most project activities will fall within the Alliance Africa Calendar of events, and participation to these events is open.

### **Review of Resolutions made since 2014**

A Review of the resolutions made during Alliance Africa events since 2014 was presented with the aim of building on these resolutions with specific research, dialogue and collaboration of co-operative actors within the Alliance Africa networks, and to build consensus on the topics and issues to priorities for the same.

It was noted that the resolutions presented were first presented in 2009 and refined in 2014 where some of the resolutions are policy related, needing concerted advocacy actions to be realized, and others were research related and could be handled in the EU project. It is important to locate where each of the resolutions fit.

## **Emerging and Future Global Trends and how African Co-operatives should Position Themselves**

Prof. Faustine Bee facilitated discussions around emerging and future global trends, and how African co-operatives should position themselves to take advantage of these in order to improve the socio-economic well-being of their members.

### **Reflections:**

Given that with globalization brings with it increased competition, changing dynamics in value chains and consumer dynamics where people prefer to purchase from big supermarkets and chain stores that sell products at much cheaper prices than co-operative-run stores, consumer co-operatives in Africa are challenged to seek inspiration from Finland where co-operatives are the main service providers in the hotel industry, water supply, groceries, etc meaning that consumer co-operatives have a bright future everywhere, however in Africa, there is need for good leadership, professional management and committed membership

Further reflection around globalization was on using globalization to leverage on co-operatives rather than avoid it as a problem. Five members of a family can set up a co-operative from shoe vending, bus ownership, street vending, etc and make a success of it and so we must encourage people to form co-operative enterprises at all levels and increase co-operative visibility in both the formal and informal sectors.

Since youth are a majority in Africa, existing co-operatives must do more sensitization and advocacy to change the mindset of the youth so that they can create jobs and be employers rather than just look for white collar jobs as employees. Indeed the evolution of co-operatives in Africa will be brought about by the youth if they are encouraged to set up new forms of co-operatives rather than forcing them into the existing co-operatives. Some new ventures could be in the oil and gas industry as this would be a virgin area for further exploration.

### **Research:**

The project provides for three streams of research, namely thematic research where the Alliance Africa is expected to produce 5 pieces of thematic research coming from the region's priorities and contribute to 2 pieces of global research, providing the African perspective. The other streams are the mapping of co-operative actors and a legal framework analysis.

Thematic research topics proposed included:

- a) Gender inclusion in co-operatives – must take into consideration that different countries are at different levels when it comes to gender inclusion and gender parity in leadership
- b) New forms of co-operatives considering the future and emerging trends
- c) Cross cutting issues to include HIV and AIDS
- d) Inclusion of persons with disabilities
- e) Co-operatives in Africa's take on climate change
- f) Distribution of consumer co-operatives and how we could work at increasing their number
- g) Youth in co-operatives – how can we work at making co-operatives more attractive to the youth in Africa
- h) Look at co-operative principles and how these have facilitated or hindered growth of co-operatives
- i) Value addition for agricultural co-operatives

These suggestions would be included in the resolution matrix for further ranking and prioritization.

Following the presentation on the legal framework analysis, it was agreed that countries need to lobby governments to reduce or eliminate taxation of co-operatives using the case of Nigeria as a point of departure.

The legal framework analysis would take the form of a comparative study of different legal frames with concrete recommendations for change so that these legal frames facilitate rather than impede co-operative development in Africa.

A presentation on the spatial distribution of co-operatives was done by Prof Gicheru outlining intentions to carry out a study on how many co-operatives there were in Kenya. Support (financial and technical) is currently being sought from various partners, including the Statistics department of the Ministry of Finance so that outcomes can be included in national statistics. This could be replicated across other countries, and also take into consideration that other mapping and data collection systems already exist and are in use in other countries in Africa.

The consultative meeting ended with all participants committing to further populate the resolution matrix when it is sent out so that concrete actions can be undertaken following this consultative process.