



*International Issues*

**Agenda 2011**

**Consultation Paper**

The impact of Co-operatives, and co-operative ideas is world-wide, and long established. Where communities own the land they work and the food it produces, and are able to trade surplus with other similarly structured communities sustainable relationships of trust and respect are developed, and the good of the many takes precedence over the profit of the few. It is noticeable that after famine, after natural disasters, after devastation by war, after financial crisis, it is co-operatives which emerge as robust organisations which deliver clean water, food and fuel for the people, health care, education, and decent wages.

Everyone is empowered by being involved in a Co-operative, but there are particular benefits for women. In California in the US, Women's Action to gain Economic Security has funded worker co-operatives to help low income women increase their earning potential. Women involved in these Co-operatives have increased their household incomes by 40 – 50%, have had access to health care for the first time, and have learned skills in running and managing a business.

People trust Co-operatives when they no longer trust governments. The 7 principles of co-operation ensure that they are rooted in the community, that everyone can be involved, and that all are equal.

At a time when individuals, communities, nations and continents are increasingly aware that global problems need global solutions, it is more urgent than ever that the Co-operative model be recognised and applied than ever before.

Fair Trade has been of tremendous benefit to farming communities in the developing world. It must however, be developed further, so that the co-operatives which produce luxury items for our consumption are also able to produce staples for their own. Similarly, the farmers who produce crops such as cocoa and coffee and sugar should be assisted to develop the plants to process them.

Countries in the Southern hemisphere have developed ways of coping with extreme heat, and now are pioneers of the mass use of solar technology. We should co-operate to learn from their experience, rather than merely seeing them as a market to exploit.

**A few questions for consideration**

What can be done to ensure that Fair Trade continues to benefit producer communities and to help them to develop further?

Should we have greater links with and input to DEFRA?

Should we be working more closely with NGOs such as OXFAM and War on Want?

### **Making Submissions**

The Scottish Policy Committee is extremely keen to ensure that all views expressed at branches should be included in written submissions to the Scottish Policy Forum. We would ask branches to invite the Scottish Policy Committee to the meeting which considers this paper so that views can be recorded.

Submissions should be made by **19 February 2010** at the latest to Mary Lockhart, Secretary, Scottish Policy Committee, at [m.lockhart@party.coop](mailto:m.lockhart@party.coop).