

70/30

To all Superiors General  
To their delegates for SEDOS  
To all members of the SEDOS groups

Rome, October 2, 1970

This week:

We are circulating --- earlier than usual, in order to be in time for 688.  
the plenary session of the Do it Yourself Development session of  
Friday, October 2 --- the conclusions and recommendations of the region-  
al study groups of the same session.

The SEDOS Task Force and all of us at the Conference would very much  
like to have each of the SEDOS Generalates well represented at this  
plenary.

The missionaries who pioneered the credit unions movement and who are  
present at this Conference would very much like to have considered views  
of each Generalate on enclosed recommendations. I am sure they will not  
be disappointed.

Enclosed you will also find details about the procedure for the Friday  
Assembly.

Looking forward to a fruitful Plenary on Friday.

I am

Sincerely yours,

Benjamin Tonna  
Executive Secretary

N.B. Very important correction to SEDOS Bulletin Nb. 70/29,  
page 674:- Fr. Albrecht's comments on Indonesia,  
second paragraph.

7011

Action Programme - ASIA Study Group

In line with the Declaration of the Ecumenical Asian Conference for Development held in Tokyo in July 1970:

We believe that the very groundwork of evangelisation is the total humanisation and the integral development of the whole man and all men.

We believe that Christian Churches must be at the service of the total human, social, cultural, spiritual and economic progress of peoples, now.

We believe that the fundamental reason for the presence of personnel engaged in the social action apostolate in the developing countries is to promote the total liberation of individuals and communities.

This is supported by our very Christian faith and recent statements made by Christian Churches on the subject of development. This is proved by the actual involvement of Christian groups and individuals in the development process.

But we realise and feel that whatever Christian churches and individuals or groups are doing or want to do in this field (by providing personnel, funds, plans and organisations) cannot really be fully credible and make the necessary impact with the poor, underprivileged and oppressed people of the world, unless some pre-requisite conditions are fulfilled, namely:

That the Christian churches show clearly their readiness to accept the risks and sacrifices needed to prove that they stand firmly for the just rights of the poor and the oppressed.

That the Christian churches involve themselves in the defense and service of the poor and put themselves at the disposal of the spiritual progress and socio-economic development.

That the Christian churches sustain with all the resources at their command the fundamental value and importance of the integral development of the human being above every other interest.

That the Christian churches are ready to go all the way in exerting the efforts that promote the liberation of people, their legitimate aspirations for freedom and progress that are in harmony with the Christian message.

For the fulfilment of these pre-requisites we believe that some clear, convincing and explicit witness, no matter how painful and costly they be, should be made by the Christian churches, groups and communities concerning:

the ownership, use, management and disposal of Church land, properties, funds, etc.

the building and use of places of worship and the religious expenses connected with them

the changing of the traditional manner of living of Church leaders, groups and religious communities, and the methods of carrying on the church's mission of evangelisation.

We therefore request Church leaders and organisations, religious groups and communities:

- to put more funds and personnel at the disposal of development projects.
- to give proper social and technical training to all their personnel for a more effective involvement in development work.
- to involve themselves in the training of local development promoters and lay leaders, with a view to their ultimately taking full responsibility at the earliest time possible.
- to promote ecumenical seminars along the lines of this "Do It Yourself" development seminar at the regional and national level.

The Asia group accepted as a whole the importance of credit unions as a basic tool in the pursuit of self-help programs of total human development. They saw this as an expression, and today as a necessary expression, a vital and practical expression of the Christian message of man's dignity and brotherly love under the Fatherhood of God.

In regard to the founding of credit unions the Asia group feel that existing cultural values must be respected, but that in so far as they may be an inhibiting factor to fuller and more integral development of the human person, this should be seen as a CHALLENGE. These traditional patterns have evolved, will evolve, and can be guided towards satisfactory integration in the modernisation of many Asian nations, in the creative process of developing a more humane and advanced society in Asia.

The Asia group also feel unanimously that at the earliest stages credit unions should seek specific legal status, and where existing laws restrict their proper function should work for the passage of legislation favorable particularly to credit unions, though lack of laws should not prevent pioneer action. This process of legalisation may take a long time, and we request sponsor groups to solicit government support to expedite it.

As a second point the Asia group considered education towards self-help development. Firstly, they want the main emphasis to be placed on the training of local personnel with a view to their taking full responsibility at the earliest possible stage. For this they state the necessity of giving social development training on an equal and balanced footing with theological training to all missionary personnel.

The second requirement for appropriate education lies in the provision of materials produced in Asia; and therefore the listing, updating of lists, and supply of sample materials in English for translation; this we request CUNA to be good enough to supply.

Education in credit union and cooperative principles must penetrate the educational system, making schools relevant to developing institutions. The group thinks that credit union leaders should volunteer their services for instruction at elementary, secondary, and college level.

Youth must be trained and guided towards total social involvement, towards communication between the classes, educated and uneducated, rural and urban, rich and poor.

We would like literature necessary for organising credit unions in school and college to be made available to participants.

We would like to see greater cooperation between the faiths, between Church and secular agencies, and between local and international organisations.

In predominantly non-Christian countries, we think and recommend that an acceptable common denominator be sought so that there is not the appearance of imposing credit unions as Christian institutions.

We want a real effort to be made to achieve balanced development, to make credit unions counterbalancing forces to the economic exploitation of less privileged communities either by internal or external forces.

There should be a real retrenchment in less developed countries from building excessively expensive churches and church-supported schools. Whenever possible these structures should be built in such a way as to perform social and economic functions.

There should be no seed money, grant money or hand-outs for the establishment or growth of credit unions, but available grants should be accepted for educational and management training programs. This does not exclude the acceptance of loans and we encourage credit unions to seek insurance and bonding services. But the basis remains self-help.

Where credit unions exist, the promoters should work for uniform operational standards, so as to form one movement.

There is evident need for advanced training of local personnel. We advocate courses to be given by CUNA experts and even advanced management courses for experienced field personnel on the lines of those which followed always the CUNA (WCCU) annual meeting.

We, the Asia group, are very earnestly in favour of and recommend serious follow-through on this first world-wide ecumenical seminar.

We would like to see the collation and circulation of updated information between the regions. We would like to see established adequate secretarial services for the preparation of plans and blueprints for development. We ask SEDOS, SODEPAX and other bodies to set up a world ecumenical alliance for socio-economic development that would meet the needs of those regions that require it, as Asia does. Should these bodies accept this proposal, we, the Asia group, would like to be kept informed of progress made in this line.

To the Christian churches, to the World Council of Churches, to the heads of religious congregations we recommend a training for their members that will be balanced on Gospel principles as well in social-economic as in theological sciences. To them we recommend efforts to a maximum inter-cooperation.

To funding agencies we recommend the control of capital and technical assistance in a way that respects the principles of self-determination.

To development personnel we recommend the greatest respect for cultural sensitivities and the regard for uniform plans of action.

To cooperative and credit union organisations we recommend the greatest care in education and motivation towards human dignity and integrity.

To this Assembly we proclaim our faith, we express our hope in the movement, as an instrument of brotherhood.

To all participants, to the organisers, to the sponsors, to all, we express our heartfelt thanks.

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Action Programme of the LATIN AMERICA Study Group

1. The Latin America participants at the World Seminar on Credit Unions held in Rome from September 27 to October 2, 1970, having examined the anxieties and aspirations of individuals, families and society in general of our countries observe that there exists a common and urgent search for structures, forms and programmes which are conducive to and permit the existence of a more human and just development.
2. We consider that:
  - a) Existing social and economic structures are unjust.
  - b) Our people are not accustomed to team work.
  - c) Our society is incapable of managing its resources -- economic, personal and others.
  - d) Our communities lack the habit of saving; they do not know how, nor why, nor for what to save.
3. The cooperative system is ideally suitable for changing the social injustices arising from bad distribution of wealth if we bear in mind the aspects which are peculiar to it by:
  - a) accustoming our communities to work in teams - "One for all and all for one".
  - b) teaching our people to manage their resources, making them "Masters of their own destiny" (Coady).
  - c) instructing our communities how, why and for what to save.
  - d) changing the economic structures in the following manner:
    - 1) creating an awareness and a conviction for service and not profit in the distribution of surplus funds.
    - 2) raising living standards through the provision of credit for housing, agricultural tools, seeds, fertilizers etc.
    - 3) offering credit in a special way which gives priority to the character of the borrower and his need and then considers his economic solvency - all of which is conducive to a democratization of credit.
    - 4) breaking the vicious circle which keeps people in their misery by offering suitable loans in sufficient amounts and at low cost.
4. But in order that credit unions may fulfill this task of socio-economic change we consider the following conditions to be necessary:
  - a) Creation of members' confidence in their cooperative by efficient services.
  - b) Complete support by members with their savings in order to make provision of efficient services possible.
  - c) External financial aid to accelerate the expansion of cooperatives and their services since our people's savings are small in amounts and slowly accumulate. Such aid should be for periods up to three years without interest, from four to six years at a low interest, repayable in the national currency in order to avoid destruction of the cooperative in case of inflation.

- d) Promotion of other types of cooperatives in order to embrace the whole economic problem of production, distribution and consumption.
- e) Advocacy of loans principally for production.

We are aware that human and economic, yes and spiritual, resources exist which should be placed at the service of communities for their development through the cooperative system.

5. In accordance with the conclusions of "Populorum Progressio", the missionary in Latin America must accept as his responsibility the promotion of the integral development of man who has the right "to have more, to do more, that he may be more". Since a cooperative is an instrument for change and for the introduction of new structures in society, providing the necessary economic impulse, the role of the missionary - priest, brother, sister, lay person - is to inspire, motivate, enliven, unite, be a leaven, in today's world. Moreover the missionary can, and sometimes, ought to assume the role of founder, promoter, leader, technician in his cooperative work, always of course being fully respectful of the laws and customs of the country where he is working. In this latter case he assumes a temporary role - one of substitution or supplying - and works at the formation and training of his local replacement.

The missionary must avoid the danger of imposing his culture on the people with whom he works. He must also become aculturated and avoid speaking of "they" but rather speak of "we".

6. Some problems which are obstacles to the complete and effective support of cooperatives by the churches in Latin America are noted:
- a) The principle problem of the missionary in Latin America is to convince ecclesiastical and religious superiors of the importance of credit union work. Savings and credit are the basis of all types of cooperatives. They are also key points for the promotion of social action in Latin America and Caribbean which should be included. (We must not forget the English speaking territories in the islands and on the continent, nor the French speaking and the Dutch speaking.)
  - b) The second problem touches directly the missionary involved in the work of credit unionism. He often feels alone, isolated and not understood by his companions when promoting and organizing credit unions.
  - c) "Cooperatives" is not included as a subject in the curricula of seminaries and houses of study. Neither is it included in curricula of training for missionaries, nor of language schools. There are some exceptions.
  - d) Credit unionism and other types of cooperatives are not included in courses sponsored by CELAM and other bodies in Latin America even when these courses deal with socio-pastoral subjects.
  - e) There is no vehicle which offers the missionary the possibility to express, discuss and deepen his understanding of his role in the credit union movement in his search for solutions to his personal, social and pastoral problems.

7. Some aspects of the development of credit unionism in Latin America make the solution of many credit problems difficult:
  - a) The fact is that credit unionism has been introduced into Latin America according to a North American pattern and almost inflexibly. Even after the early experiences little effort has been made to make adequate modifications which are suitable to the different environments in each country.
  - b) Another fact is that other types of monetary cooperatives suitable for solving medium and long-term credit problems have not been developed. It can be said that credit unionism remains stagnated and continues as an appendage of the international banking system.
8. There also exists the difficulty relating to the acquiring of existing aid, financial and other resources, e.g.
  - a) The missionary experiences difficulty in his contact with external agencies which grant aid - Misereor, Konrad Adenauer Institute, Catholic Relief Services, to mention a few. There is a lapse of time of some months up to more than a year after application before its help if granted is received. Meanwhile the actual situation may have changed.
  - b) The agencies themselves have difficulties how to find the information they require in order to quicken the procedure and arrive at a decision which is feasible, prudent, and to the missionary very important.
  - c) There are differences for programmes which are long-term, short-term, ad hoc. For example, Social Leadership Programmes which include cooperatives are necessary for the missionary even if he begins his work with credit unions only. If these are to be provided by institutes they should form a quasi-permanent part of their program and will thus require subventions for many years and not just two or four.
9. Consequently the following objectives are proposed:
  - a) Since regional and local superiors now possess more authority and assume more responsibility in decision making in their mission areas, it is necessary to make them and the local bishops aware of the importance and role of the credit union movement.
  - b) Bearing in mind the vast differences in the environments in Latin America and the Caribbean it is necessary to contact the missionaries in their area of work. These contacts could be on a local, regional within a country, national, regional embracing many territories, basis. For such contacts the missionaries or their real representatives should meet.

10. Thus we are led to propose the following plan:

- a) Nomination of at least one person to begin the programme - "Secretary - Promotor" for the whole area.
- b) Nomination of others on a part time basis to cooperate with the "Secretary-Promotor" or Coordinator. One (part time) must be responsible for Surinam, Guyana, British Honduras, Dutch Antilles, English speaking islands.
- c) The "Secretary-Promotor" or Coordinator and the part time collaborators for the different areas should:
  - 1) Visit National and Regional Conferences of Bishops and CELAM.
  - 2) Visit the territories and contact the missionaries working in them.
  - 3) Visit the National Conferences of Religious men and women.
  - 4) Visit governmental ministries and departments which deal with cooperatives, and also cooperative federations.

This is the first step.

11. The second step will be planning -- based on the experience gained and according to the necessities of the missionaries in the movement. A plan of action shall be elaborated according to the problems discovered and embracing the following:

Training of missionaries.

Employment of local fieldmen.

Organizing seminars and study groups.

Relation to Governments.

Better cooperation among missionaries.

Methods and techniques for achieving greater cooperation in the whole field of cooperative work, and

Provision of information on available resources.

## 12. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In order to bring about greater awareness of the cooperative movement, it is recommended that the report of the proceedings of this Conference be circulated to International Organizations (UNESCO, FAO, ILO, etc.) to governments and to ecclesiastical and religious superiors for dissemination within their spheres of influence.
2. That those present here exert all efforts to have the subject of cooperatives included in their programmes of formation for missionaries.

## 13. NOTE

It is hoped that regional promotion efforts may eventually give rise to a World Secretariate of the Churches and Cooperatives.

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Action Programme of the AFRICA Study Group

1. --Because credit unions are for people who group themselves for solving their own problems in the area of savings and loans;

--Because a great deal of time is needed for a community to learn to manage completely their own economic affairs;

It seems necessary to affirm once more that it is extremely dangerous for the life and genuine development of a credit union to give, in the beginning, too much outside support.

This assistance may be:

- a) direct financial aid coming from national government bodies;
  - b) direct financial aid coming from foreign governments or private organizations;
  - c) direct technical assistance given by a technician to the point where he is doing the work of the credit union that should be done by the people of that credit union.
- These three kinds of assistance are given to speed up the development of a credit union, but they are clearly anti-educational and run the risk of rapidly destroying the collective will of the members who will no longer feel responsible to properly manage the outside money or to learn the fundamentals of the operation of their own society.

THEREFORE, it is proposed that the Conference advise national governments and foreign assistance organizations to concentrate, at least in the initial stage of credit union development, all of their funding for educational purposes so that the animators of credit unions will be trained and that, finally, local leaders will receive the training to direct and manage their own credit unions.

2. The Conference proposes:

- a) That efforts be made by missionary organizations directed towards the promotion and fostering of an atmosphere within their own organizations and also on an inter-denominational basis, favorable to the development of credit unions at the local level.
- b) That efforts be made to unite the efforts of Christian communities in credit unions with religious leaders of other religions through Christian commissions whose task it is to create cordial relations between Christians and members of other faiths.
- c) That the educational experiment of Lesotho be published in English and French and distributed to all credit union promoters.

3. We note with deep concern that there exist many other problems which seriously undermine the good of all. The fundamental injustices in world market structures give a Western industrial world a far better standard of living and ability to save than farmers in the third world. Inflation is another serious problem. The West and third world gap still grows. We call on those supporting the credit union movement also to be active in promoting other fundamental world relationship changes which will allow credit unions to reap their full benefit.
4. We propose:
  - a) That means be found of informing the missionary before his departure (or during home-leaves) of all the possibilities of development work that he could undertake or to which he could contribute, particularly credit unions which have an educational and formative function.
  - b) That an effort be made to standardize accounting systems, as well as administrative forms, so that they can be purchased in large quantities.
  - c) That it will still be necessary to obtain funds to maintain foreign managerial technicians.
5. We propose:
  - a) That use be made of day or weekend seminars and other courses to train missionaries and local leaders just as missionaries and local catechists are updated in other spheres.
  - b) That credit unions should be developed among missionaries in training, as well as among young educated people. Hence credit unions should be set up in seminaries e.g. Ireland, Ghana, in secondary schools and teacher training colleges.
  - c) That there be an expert in credit unions available to each local ecclesiastical area which needs him.
  - d) That ACOSCA promotes regional workshops for production of visual aids for use in credit union training programmes.
6. Since credit unions bring real human development to people and since we are in key positions in parishes, schools, hospitals etc. throughout the world to promote this development, this congress recommends:
  - a) That all religious superiors and Church leaders encourage their members to explore all possible ways to promote the credit union movement in whatever way they can throughout the world.
  - b) That since credit union promotion can be a part time activity which takes only two or three hours a week it need not interfere with other duties.

7. Because the credit union movement is based on an association of people who wish to save together and help each other, it can in Africa, as in other lands be the fertile field in which even the simplest people can grow in stature to their own benefit, as well as to the benefit of the nation to which they belong.

The philosophy and principles underlying the movement may be summed up in the following five points:

- a) The credit union is concerned more about people than about money. It provides the means of bringing people together and making themselves aware of each other in community.
  - b) The credit union is a tried and tested means of developing in people the capacity to make their own decisions and to control their own resources.
  - c) The credit union movement unites all sections of the communities at both local and national level, seeking always to find ways and means of solving the problems of their country.
  - d) The credit union movement is a force in the total development process, in so far as it seeks to liberate man from the burden of debt and persistent poverty. Its purpose is to create responsible communities that live in mutual trust.
  - e) The service arm of the credit union movement in Africa is ACOSCA, which is a service group prepared to answer the need of the movement whenever, or wherever called upon to do so.
8. This Conference recommends to the Commission for Justice and Peace, the World Council of Churches and the other non-aligned Christian Churches, that they accept the task of explaining, promoting and providing personnel for the establishment of credit unions as a part of their programme of development.

And that they accept this responsibility on the international, continental, national and local levels.

And that the credit union be presented as a total effort involving all elements in the community.

9. We are very conscious of the fact that only a small percentage of the African peoples enjoy the benefits of the credit union movement. For example such countries as Madagascar, Burundi, Rwanda, Congo Kinshasa, Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Togo, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Upper Volta are not yet blessed with an "apostle" in this field.

We appeal to churches and missionary bodies to provide personnel either on a full or part time basis to promote credit unions in these countries.

We also appeal to funding agencies to help promote, develop and strengthen the credit union movement in Nigeria.

10. We propose:

- a) That all cooperative organizations in the developed countries be encouraged to give more aid to credit unions and other potentially effective cooperative activities;
- b) That all cooperative organizations in the developed countries also be asked to exert pressure on their respective governments
  - (i) to increase their assistance to developing countries
  - (ii) to obtain just terms of trade between the rich and poor countries

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Recommendation to ACOSCA

The techniques of adult education have developed greatly in recent years. Specialists belonging to various organizations such as the International Labour Organization have done excellent work in this area notably in the domain of visual aids for basic education and formation.

These visual aids, if well used, are a powerful aid to basic education since they permit better communication with people who are poorly instructed or illiterate. With the help of pictures, knowledge can be transmitted which by word alone is difficult or sometimes impossible to transmit because of differences in the level of instruction or of culture between the promoter and the village population.

But at the same time these visual aids are difficult to produce and require much time if made by non-specialists. Moreover they are expensive if only a small number are made.

For these reasons we propose that ACOSCA, in collaboration with the institutes of formation and promotion of general experimental programs, meet with specialized organizations and experts in order to establish regional workshops for the production of basic instructional material and for the training of credit union promoters in the operation of this material.

Africa Group

DO IT YOURSELF DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR

CORRECTION to be made in SEDOS BULLETIN, No. 70/29, page 674:

In the second paragraph of the comments from Fr. Albrecht (Indonesia) the sentence beginning: The government has set up . . . should be corrected to read:

The government has set up agricultural and village loan banks to enable farmers to take up credit for the purchase of fertilizers and insecticides, at the same time trying to prevent self-interested groups and organizations using as a camouflage the name of cooperatives or development banks from cashing in on the new situation - a more impersonal and modern looking form of the money lenders of olden times.