BANGKOK (ILO NEWS) – According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) report “Working out of Poverty”¹, the largest number of the poorest of the poor (those earning less than US$ 1 per day) lives in Asia and the Pacific (about 800 million). Most live in rural areas where jobs are scarce and basic social services are weak. In these areas the nearest institutions for the poor are local cooperatives.

“Participation and inclusion are central to a new approach to poverty reduction. Cooperatives are an ideal instrument in such a strategy, and the ILO has long drawn on the strength of the movement,” according to the report by the ILO’s Director-General, Juan Somavia. “Cooperatives have proven to be a key organizational form in building new models to combat social exclusion and poverty, for example through local development initiatives.”

The ILO, in tandem with the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), has organized a regional workshop on the Role of Cooperatives in Poverty Reduction, with a particular emphasis on Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). The workshop will take place during 10-12 November 2003 at the Siam City Hotel².

PRSPs describe a country’s macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programmes to promote growth and reduce poverty, as well as external financing needs, including debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC).

The ILO has been actively engaged in supporting the PRSP process in a number of countries in the region, including Cambodia and Nepal. More recently, the ILO has been offering similar support in Indonesia, Pakistan and Viet Nam. In all cases, the objective has been to:

- empower social partners to influence the drafting and implementation of poverty-reduction strategies through social dialogue
- to incorporate employment and other aspects of decent work into PRSPs, and;
- to influence development organizations and governments involved in designing and implementing poverty-reduction strategies to embrace fundamental principles and rights at work and social protection and to listen to the voices of the social partners and like-minded stakeholders


² Siam City Hotel, 477 Si Ayuthaya Road, Bangkok
The workshop will aim to sensitize government representatives and national cooperative organizations about the concept of decent work and the PRSP process, provide a forum for discussion on the role of cooperatives in poverty reduction, and discover how they can be included in the PRSP process.

The ICA estimates that there are 442 million members of cooperatives in Asia, and 700 million members worldwide in 100 countries. Representatives from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos PDR, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste and Viet Nam will be attending the workshop. These countries are working on their PRSPs, and one representative from government and one representative from a national cooperative apex will be participating. In countries where there is no cooperative apex organization, including Cambodia, Lao PDR and Timor Leste, a relevant NGO working in rural areas may attend.

**Interview slots may be pre-arranged with the following:**

Husseyn Polat, Cooperative Branch, ILO  
Graeme Buckley, Policy Integration Department, ILO  
Shill Kwan Lee, Regional Director, International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) New Delhi.

**The program is attached for your information**

**Please note:** Media representatives may access all sessions

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