

# DECLARATION

## "TOWARDS A GENDER EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AND THROUGH CO-OPERATIVES IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION"

### PREAMBLE

We, women and men leaders, staff and members of co-operative organizations, and co-op promoters and gender advocates of other organizations from Asia (specifically Indonesia, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam), Papua New Guinea, Denmark, Canada and United States of America who participated in the Regional Conference on "Gender Impact of Globalization of the Economy: Challenges to Co-operatives in the New Millennium" organized by the Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum (AWCF) held in Bangkok, Thailand, on 6-8 March 2000,

have reviewed the gender impact of globalization on co-operatives in Asia in the areas of political and economic participation, specifically in enterprise development and micro finance, and family life;

have identified mechanisms and best practices of co-operatives to address the adverse impact of globalization on women and on achieving gender equity;

reiterate the key role of co-operatives in responding to the challenges of globalization, particularly in responding to the concerns of women who are among the most vulnerable groups negatively affected by globalization.

We hereby adopt and commit ourselves as leaders, staff and members, co-op promoters and gender advocates to this Declaration. We call on the International Co-operative Alliance and its members, other co-operative movements, the Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum and other networks of gender and co-operatives, non-government organizations and women's organizations promoting co-operatives to fully commit themselves to the implementation of this Declaration. We hereby raise the following concerns and make the following recommendations in.

### **Political Participation**

We recognize that women are under-represented in the leadership and decision-making processes at all levels of co-operatives-primary, national, regional and global-and in society at large, and this leads to the marginalization of women's concerns in the allocation of resources;

We believe that the involvement of women leaders and decision-makers will harness their knowledge and skills that will help increase the overall efficiency of the co-operatives and society in coping with the changes brought about by globalization;

**In co-operatives and in society, we call for the continuation and institution of affirmative action programs, creation of quota systems, formation of women's committees or structures, and the provision of other opportunities to grant both women and men equal leadership and participation in all areas of activities in co-ops and in society.**

### **Enterprise Development**

We recognize that many women in co-operatives are either homeworkers or micro-

entrepreneurs. Homeworkers' concerns revolve around their need for skills development and protection from unscrupulous traders, middle persons, and employers as well as safety nets for their children's education and health, such as insurance system for such needs.

We further recognize that micro-entrepreneurs' concerns include their need for working capital, access to technology to increase their productivity and to improve their product quality and price competitiveness, broadening of their markets, and building up of their leadership and management capacities especially in cash flow management for their enterprises as well as for their households.

We believe that co-operatives should continue to pursue their social and economic goals and we fully recognize that long-term economic sustainability of co-operative enterprises lays the ground for the co-operatives to meet their social objectives of sharing the benefits of economic growth among their members.

**We call upon co-operatives to assist and represent homeworkers in negotiating for better terms and conditions of work; to build the capacities of women entrepreneurs, especially those in micro-enterprises, through various modalities, such as exposure to different types of micro-enterprises and best practices in the start up, development and management of micro-enterprises; to provide micro-finance, marketing linkages, education and skills upgrading, and access to appropriate low-cost technology.**

### **Micro-finance**

We recognize that a large portion of our populations, most notably the women and the poor, do not have access to financial institutions and services, and this is a major constraint to economic growth and social equity in an era of rapid economic, social and technological change.

We believe that the poor are "bankable" and that the provision of financial services to marginalized households is both a significant market opportunity for co-operatives as well as a tangible expression of their social mission.

**We call on regional and national co-operatives to provide the necessary leadership and resources in support of initiatives by primary-level co-operatives to develop, test and offer new financial products, services and technologies that will benefit the underserved, most particularly the women and the poor;**

**We resolve that co-operatives should make available quality financial services to women and men who need them and to monitor the differential outreach and impact of these services on them.**

### **Family Life**

We are concerned with the effects of globalization on family life that includes increasing uncertainty to earn income for the family brought about by the growing competition in the workplace, the emerging culture of consumerism and materialism among family members reinforced by the electronic media, and the shifts in work patterns where women join the workplace but with no corresponding redistribution between men and women of household work and childcare.

We believe that family education on gender is necessary to bring about gender equality and equity. We further believe that gender awareness facilitates the equal sharing of household tasks between men and women. The equal sharing shall free women from their double burden of working both at home and the workplace, and enable them to fully engage in co-operative programs and activities that can help in their economic empowerment, such as home-worker businesses and micro-enterprises.

**We call upon co-operatives to get involved in family life education and in gender sensitization of families. We also encourage co-operatives at all levels to provide services to the family, as may be appropriate to their roles, such as values education sessions, daycare centers, advocacy for childcare and skills training and upgrading to enhance family life and empower both men and women to participate in economic development.**

**This Declaration is a call to action issued by the participants of the "Gender Impact of Globalization of the Economy: Challenges to Co-operatives in the New Millennium" held 6-8 March 2000 in Bangkok, Thailand.**