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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCDC releases two ground-breaking reports for cooperatives

Washington, D.C. (November 11, 2009) – The Overseas Cooperative Development Council and its members have released two ground-breaking reports that focus on measuring the success of cooperatives and creating the legal environment they require to flourish.

These two reports, funded by USAID and written in conjunction with experts in international cooperative development, provide hands-on tools for cooperatives, governmental and non-governmental agencies committed to the long-term sustainability of cooperatives and their role in international development.

Measuring cooperative success

The first report, *Measuring Cooperative Success: New Challenges and Opportunities in Low- and Middle-Income Countries*, is the result of a joint project launched by OCDC members in 2007 called Measurements for Tracking Indicators of Cooperative Success or METRICS. The lead author, Dr. John Mellor, identified the following four essential indicators: sound business practices, strong membership participation, the support of cooperative apex organizations and a facilitating economic environment.

The METRICS report creates the case for cooperatives as an effective approach to economic development in low- and middle-income countries. It also describes new forces affecting the people of these countries — from supermarkets to globalization — and how cooperatives can help them adapt to and benefit from these forces.

Key to the report is a survey process to measure the indicators of success. The process includes an extensive questionnaire developed by OCDC members and a focus group of renowned cooperative development experts from low- and middle-income countries. To begin with, the questionnaires will be administered to cooperatives from different economic sectors and countries selected by OCDC members. The results will be tabulated, analyzed and shared with participating cooperatives as well as other interested organizations.

“Cooperatives can play a vital role in international development,” says Rob Nooter, executive director of OCDC. “Measuring their success not only benefits their members and contributes to their sustainability, it also provides donor agencies, funding entities and NGOs with key information on how best to support cooperatives and provide the programs and services they need most.

“Because the work of building and strengthening cooperatives is essentially a long-term endeavor, it’s important to have reliable measures of future success that can be collected and analyzed early in the life cycle of the cooperative enterprise.”

Electronic versions of the METRICS report can be found at www.ocdc.coop.

(cont. on page 2)

(page 2)

A toolkit for advancing cooperative for legal and regulatory reform

The second report, *Creating CLARITY: Assessment, Analysis and Outreach for Cooperative Legal Reform*, is a sequel to *Enabling Cooperative Development: Principles for Legal Reform*, published in 2006 by OCDC.

In addition to profiling legal reform projects in several countries, the report provides two unique tools for addressing legal reform: the Rapid Cooperative Assessment Tool, which gauges current cooperative activity in a country, and the CLARITY Scorecard Process, a blueprint for analyzing laws and regulations affecting cooperatives. The CLARITY Scorecard Process includes questions, worksheets and a scorecard that assesses laws and regulations according to the nine CLARITY Principles and helps users establish priorities and determine a starting point for legal reform.

The report also provides guidelines for designing and implementing educational outreach and training programs to address legal reform.

Creating CLARITY, the analytical tools and much more can be found on the new Web site, www.clarity.coop. The site is the home of OCDC's Cooperative Law and Regulation Initiative, whose main goal is to help developing countries create a legal and regulatory environment that enables cooperative businesses to flourish. The Web site is a one-stop resource for anyone involved with cooperative legal reform. Not only does it include electronic versions of the CLARITY reports, it also provides a wealth of references, background and tools.

"Our first CLARITY report described the need for cooperative legal reform and spelled out the nine CLARITY Principles for cooperative strength," says Nooter. "*Creating CLARITY* takes it to the next level, providing the tools necessary for assessing cooperative laws and beginning the challenging task of creating or changing laws so that cooperatives can flourish.

"The members of OCDC are very proud to present these two cutting-edge reports, and we thank all those involved in putting them together, as well as our funder, USAID. We will continue to develop new material and apply what we've learned to our efforts of improving the effectiveness of cooperative development."

OCDC brings together eight organizations committed to building a more prosperous world through cooperative development. OCDC's mission is to champion, advocate and promote effective international cooperative development. Its members are: ACDI/VOCA, the Americas Association of Cooperative/Mutual Insurance Companies, CHF International, Communications Cooperative International, Land O'Lakes International Development, National Cooperative Business Association, NRECA International and the World Council of Credit Unions.

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