

# Designing CLARITY Outreach Activities

In most cooperative law reform projects, completing the initial assessment of the cooperative environment and a detailed legal analysis are just the beginning. To bring about change, outreach campaigns seek to build coalitions and awareness that can push a reform effort.

In the outreach projects described below, the CLARITY Principles were used in various ways to reach out to cooperatives and government officials. These activities helped build broader support for law reform objectives, gave cooperatives a sense of ownership over the process and its outcomes, engaged cooperatives with each other and with government leaders, and set the stage for effective advocacy.

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## Mozambique

In Mozambique, the National Cooperative Business Association simultaneously organized several different education campaigns to motivate cooperative members and everyday citizens to support the legal-reform process.

Mozambique does not have a cooperative law. Farmers' cooperatives around the country used a farmer association law to formalize their organizations. However, that law does not envision such associations operating as independent businesses and fails to give them many of the basic powers needed to operate a successful enterprise.

Rather than focusing specifically on the CLARITY Principles, initial education efforts beginning in the fall of 2008 promoted conversations about the inadequacy of the farmer association law for cooperative businesses. Conversations focused on issues such as the lack of legal authority under the association law to attract and build capital or enter into certain contracts. Because this was the only law under which farmers could organize, the initial education efforts focused on generating options for improving the law rather than replacing it.

As interest in the issues grew at the grassroots level, a coalition of national organizations, including the National Organization of Farmers and the Association of Fruit Producers, saw the benefit in improving the association law. These associations joined forces with NCBA to organize workshops about the law for their members, key social leaders and decision makers in the government and parliament.

As the educational workshops continued, the first CLARITY report was introduced as a resource for the burgeoning cooperative movement. The report was translated into Portuguese and used as a tool to demonstrate how cooperatives function around the world. Case studies from the report were discussed as examples of how laws can be written to help or hinder cooperative development.

In subsequent meetings and workshops, participants considered the CLARITY Principles and the possibility of replacing the association law with a modern cooperative law — bringing legal reform in a way that would reflect local cooperative needs. Workshops with cooperatives and other stakeholders were organized to consider key provisions of a draft cooperative law, and comments were compiled to improve the draft. The highly participatory process for drafting and commenting

on a new law helped foster a strong sense of ownership for the process and its eventual product. The educational projects highlighted and began to address related issues, including the need to broaden functional literacy for farmers and to expand the rights of women to participate in the economic process.

As a result of its inclusive approach and the incorporation of various issues into the campaign, the proposed law garnered unprecedented levels of public support and enthusiasm. In 2008, a draft law was transmitted to government officials, who were already aware of the public process and impressed by the broad support for reform proposals.

The breadth and depth of support for the law is encouraging the government to take the suggestions seriously and will be the basis of future advocacy efforts for enacting the law.



## Mongolia

Mobilization through education in Mongolia took place at various levels of the cooperative sector.

CLARITY was first introduced to a meeting of the Working Group on Cooperative Law Reform in March 2007. CHF invited government officials, cooperative union representatives and a small number of grassroots cooperative members to take part. Community representatives had never been included in the Working Group, so the meeting served as a testing ground to verify the interest of all parties in the legal-reform process and whether the CLARITY Principles were a tool the group could use.

To help first-time participants understand the context of law reforms and their relevance to individual cooperative members, as well as the Working Group's objectives, an introductory information session was conducted prior to the larger meeting with government officials. This gave cooperative participants a chance to learn and discuss among their peers in a setting where they felt comfortable raising concerns and issues they might have been reluctant to raise in the larger meeting.

Following the Working Group session, union leaders and grassroots members confirmed their interest in participating in the law-revision process. A prime objective among cooperative members was to inform the legislators about the practical issues involved in running cooperative businesses.

It quickly became apparent that there was no standard practice for conducting consultative meetings between the union representatives and their constituents, particularly when the focus was on legal issues. To help with this process, a train-the-trainers workshop was developed for cooperative leaders. A consultant who specialized in community development and facilitating town hall meetings was engaged to teach techniques and share tips on community mobilization.



The trainers workshop held in August 2007 included sessions on how to interpret the current cooperative law, and how and why the process of legal reform was being undertaken. Discussion of cooperative principles, including application of the CLARITY Principles, was aimed at broadening the understanding of legal provisions and application of the principles to cooperative business operations. The workshop concluded by producing an agenda for guiding the facilitation of future community meetings between unions and cooperative members.

In the four months following the trainers workshop, consultative meetings were organized and conducted by cooperative union representatives around the country. Each daylong session brought together local administrative officials and grassroots cooperative members in the region. After an information session focusing on CLARITY and cooperative principles, participants met in small groups to discuss legal and regulatory issues, identify the authority figures to whom they should address their concerns, and brainstorm potential solutions and ways their union leaders could channel information. Discussions also focused on the evolving relations between the members and their unions, with participants strongly encouraging ongoing dialogue with the cooperative unions.

The more groups in the cooperative sector were educated about CLARITY and legal reform, the better able they were to identify issues and contribute to finding solutions. All comments and input were compiled by the organizers and presented for consideration to the Working Group on Cooperative Law Reform in February 2008, as it continued to work on the draft.

If government officials, cooperative leaders and cooperative members had not been educated about each other's needs and issues, mobilization for legal reform would have been more difficult. The groups would not have been aware of each other's concerns and would not have established the communication lines necessary to organize and mobilize reform efforts.



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### Nicaragua

The Nicaragua CLARITY education activity culminated in a workshop, “Application of the CLARITY Principles to the General Law of Cooperatives.” The August 2008 workshop was the first opportunity for representatives from the two new cooperative institutions — INFOCOOP (responsible for regulating the sector) and CONACOOOP (tasked with promoting the cooperative form of business) — to meet and focus on the details of Nicaraguan cooperative law. It also provided a unique opportunity for the Nicaragua team to present the results of the *CLARITY Scorecard* and *Scorecard Analysis* for discussion among Nicaraguan cooperative leaders.

The workshop had four main parts:

1. An overview of the Nicaraguan cooperative law, including a demonstration of relationships between international cooperative principles and the CLARITY Principles.
2. An introduction to the CLARITY initiative, CLARITY Principles, the *CLARITY Scorecard* and the *Scorecard Analysis*.
3. Presentations on particular issues highlighted by the *CLARITY Scorecard* as applied to Nicaraguan law and the legal analysis based on the *Scorecard*.
4. Group discussions on prioritized issues in an effort to reach consensus about how to address them.

A pre- and post-workshop evaluation showed that the workshop activities led to higher levels of understanding of both the Nicaraguan law and the CLARITY tools. The pre-workshop evaluations completed by participants showed a much greater level of understanding about cooperative law and regulation than the Nicaragua team had been led to believe. This finding was incorporated into a revised agenda for the workshop. Without the pre-workshop evaluation, the organizers would have underestimated the participants' level of understanding, lowering the credibility of the CLARITY initiative and wasting time on material the participants already knew.

The pre- and post-workshop evaluations also showed an increase in participants' understanding of the Nicaraguan cooperative law and in their ability to analyze strengths and weaknesses of laws and regulations. Overall, participants expressed greater confidence in using the CLARITY Principles to analyze cooperative laws and regulations. Cooperative leaders with different political orientations engaged in meaningful communication in a productive environment. The workshop also helped open a dialogue between INFOCOOP and CONACOOOP on how they could capitalize on their respective roles as regulators and promoters to create a better enabling environment for cooperative development in Nicaragua.

A lesson learned from the experience in Nicaragua is that educating cooperative leaders and groups about ways they can work together to bring about positive change can overcome political differences. Though a cooperative legal reform campaign may not emerge quickly, a seed has been planted in Nicaragua for future work. These committees are in a position to make cooperative law more enabling through their oversight of its implementation. A sense of cohesiveness was created that will encourage collaboration in the future.

