

Marilena Lazzarini

Marilena Lazzarini is the President of Consumers International and has been a member of its governing Council since the mid-1990s.

She is the Institutional Coordinator and founding member of the Instituto Brasileiro de Defesa do Consumidor (IDEC: the Brazilian Institute for Consumer Defense) created in 1987.

Ms. Lazzarini also heads the Fórum Nacional das Entidades Civas de Defesa do Consumidor (National Forum of Consumer Defense Groups), a national network of consumer non-governmental organizations (NGOs) created in 1998, with 24 member groups from 13 countries.

Between 1983 and 1987, Ms. Lazzarini was Executive Director of PROCON, the Sao Paulo State governmental consumer protection agency. Previous to that she coordinated food distribution projects within the Sao Paulo State Agriculture Secretary.

Marilena Lazzarini holds a degree as an Agronomist Engineer and post graduate degree in Regional and Urban Economics from São Paulo State University.

ISO Focus: Can you please describe briefly the role and mission of Consumers International?

Marilena Lazzarini: Consumers International (CI) is a global federation of consumer organizations dedicated to promoting a fairer society, through defending the rights of all con-



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sumers, especially the poor, marginalized and disadvantaged, by supporting and strengthening member organizations and the consumer movement in general and campaigning at the international level for policies which respect consumers' concerns. It is an independent, non-profit organization with over 250 member-organizations in 115 countries, and is the voice of the international consumer movement on issues such as product and food standards, health, sustainable consumption, regulation of international trade and public utilities.

ISO Focus: Since the creation in 1978 of the ISO Committee on consumer policy, ISO has published thousands of standards in areas of interest to consumers – for example, in the fields of health, safety, environmental protection and services, just to name a few. How does Consumers International assist consumer organizations in understanding the importance of international standardization?

Marilena Lazzarini: Consumers' organizations in developed countries usually have comparative testing programmes, and so are already aware of the role of standardization. However, most developing country organizations need CI's assistance, which is provided through a list serve and CI's Web site and publications as well as training in different ways. CI participates in collaboration with the ISO Committee on consumer policy (COPOLCO) and the ISO Committee on developing country matters (DEVCO) to provide training to consumer organizations and national standard bodies (NSBs) from developing countries. Sadie Homer, senior standards officer at CI, is part of an international team of experts who have taken part in various COPOLCO activities, with CI participation, in Japan, Thailand, Egypt and Prague. CI has also regional projects to improve the capacity of members from developing countries to participate in international standardization, like the project for Latin American and Caribbean region (consumorma.consumidoresint.cl) which made it possible for the staff of the regional office to be present at this year's COPOLCO train-



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Julian Edwards (top left), Director-General of CI, with representatives from Japanese consumer organizations.



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Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) workshop in Buenos Aires, Argentina in December 2004.

ing event. CI members from developed countries, like Consumers Union of USA and Euroconsumers, shared their experiences with the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) project members, as well as all parties building awareness of why input from all regions is necessary to create International Standards that will protect consumers – regardless of economy, culture or climate. CI also works with other international organizations, providing consumer experts within a number of United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) programmes, and working with both consumer organizations and standards bodies in countries such as Pakistan and Ghana.

ISO Focus: *What specific examples coming out of Consumers International's research and experience help show why consumer representatives need to participate in international standardization?*

Marilena Lazzarini: CI needs to be proactive in identifying priorities for new standards projects from the consumer perspective, particularly where these reflect needs beyond those of the current European and North American focus. To this end, CI values ongoing input from member organizations on the definition of priorities.

The key areas identified for CI involvement clearly illustrate the importance of participation: safety of consumer goods – including second-hand goods – and exclusion clauses; complaints handling and dispute reso-

lution; contraceptives; social responsibility; information (labelling, etc); and services, principally water supply and sewerage. In response to a COPOLCO paper, India, Kenya, Mexico, Fiji and many other developing countries identified utility billing as a concern and supported the need for International Standards in this area. Contraception is another good case. The Brazilian Institute of Consumers Defence (IDEC), the organization I work for, has contributed significantly to increasing the safety of male condoms, both at the national and the international levels.

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After the first comparative test done by IDEC in 1992 – where most condoms were found not to meet the International Standard – the impact was that Brazilian standards were improved to match the same level as the International Standard. Two other tests done in 1996 and 2000 showed the safety evolution of the Brazilian brands, and at the same time, detected a technological problem on some imported brands related to the tropical climate requirements. That aspect was brought to ISO by CI, and is now incorporated within ISO test procedures.



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Consumer Stakeholder group representatives to the CAG of ISO TMB WG SR: CI full members; Villy Dhyr (right), Danish Consumer Council; Eunsook Moon (left), Consumers Korea.

ISO Focus: *ISO has published a brochure that explains why the voice of the consumer matters in standardization work and why they need to participate in standards making. What else do you believe ISO should do to increase and enhance consumer representation in standardization work?*

Marilena Lazzarini: ISO should stimulate national standardization bodies to take positive action to make feasible the participation of consumer representatives in the standard setting process, especially in developing countries. The first key element to achieve this is to find a way to have sustainable funding for consumer representation at national and international levels. It is important to discuss common initiatives to seek funding to support the sustainable participation of consumers (e.g. joint projects,

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governments, international agencies). CI itself needs resources in order to coordinate and provide training and collaboration between its members.

The second is capacity building. It is crucial that ISO make feasible the participation of consumer representatives in training courses explaining basic standards processes, and topics of particular relevance to consumers (e.g. environmental standards, accessibility, quality, certification). The training meetings provide the opportunity for the standardization bodies to get to know the consumer organizations' role and their main work principles.

The third important aspect is the availability of documentation and information. National standards bodies, for example, could provide an annual work plan of their activities to consumer organizations, offering consumers the chance to highlight priority areas for them.

ISO Focus: *Consumers International participated in the first meeting of the ISO working group developing guidelines for social responsibility (cf. ISO 26000). What added value would you expect from the International Standard to be developed by ISO?*

Marilena Lazzarini: CI strongly supported the initiative on social responsibility (SR) standardization by ISO. Internationally agreed SR standards or guidelines can offer a more transparent view of the SR activities and policies of a given company than the many different codes of conduct that lots of companies currently use. An ISO SR guidance standard will have a much broader audience than SR standards and tools developed nationally or by companies, groups of companies, NGOs or others. This means that ISO activities could result in a major increase in the number of companies working seriously on SR issues.

Consumers International welcomes ISO's intended cooperation of developed and developing countries as well as companies, stakeholders and other organizations. However, if ISO cannot find the means to ensure effective participation from under-represented groups, such as consumers, NGOs and

developing countries, the guidelines will not reflect their demands, and CI and its members, who comprise 80% of the consumer stakeholder group, will not be able to recommend the use of guidelines and tools developed by ISO.

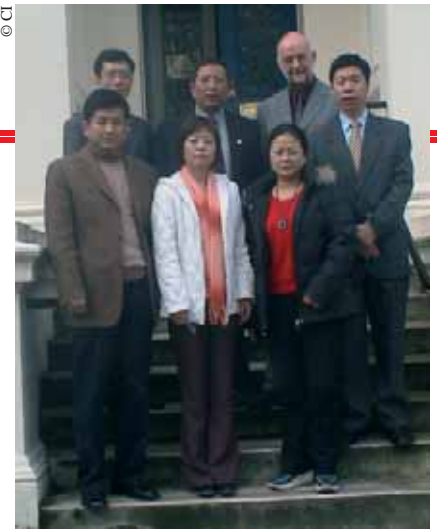
ISO Focus: *With the deregulation of public services and the globalization of trade, services are more and more exposed to international competition. Expectations of consumers on the quality of services are also growing – How do you see (and possibly support) the development of International Standards for services?*

Marilena Lazzarini: When attending COPOLCO last month, I saw for myself how much developing countries need standards for consumer protection – especially where there is no protection offered by legislative means – such as for basic public utilities. But those standards must have consumer input and consider the needs in all economies. Since September 2002, CI has been participating in the development of a standard for service activities relating to drinking water supply and sewerage (ISO/TC 224), that serves not just 'Northern' style integrated networks but also takes into

Anna Fielder, Director, Office for Developed and Transition Economies (bottom centre) and **Julian Edwards** with the Chinese Consumers Association.



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Consumers International Director-General **Julian Edwards** (top right) with Consumers Korea.

account those people who do not have access to a network but have their water provided by other means.

Other COPOLCO initiatives that have recently been accepted by ISO are tourism and financial services – areas where the expectations for quality are really growing. It is vital when developing these standards that the concerns and needs of consumers are answered. When resources for direct consumer participation are limited, it is essential that standards makers apply COPOLCO guides, such as the future ISO/IEC Guide 76, *Preparing standards for services – Recommendations for addressing consumer issues*, so that standards ensure the protection and confidence of the demand side. ■