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International
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Asia and Pacific

ICA-AP Committee on Women

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ICA-ASIA AND PACIFIC COMMITTEE ON WOMEN



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“Tagaytay+20” the third Regional Conference on Status of Women in Co-operatives



Participants with “The Gender Tree”

“Tagaytay+20” Third Regional Conference on Status of Women in Co-operatives in Asia-Pacific was held from February 9-11 in Clark, Pampanga, Philippines in collaboration with the co-operative movement of Philippines. The conference was held to mark 20 years since the first conference in 1996 and 10 years after the second in 2006.

The conference was attended by more than 50 participants from 10 countries - India, Iran, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, and Sri Lanka. Ms. Masako Shimbo, Chair of the ICA-AP Committee on Women, in her opening remarks

traced the history of the Women Committee and its activities to enhance participation of women, gender equality, and women in leadership. Ms. Pacita U. Juan, President Women's Business Council of the Philippines, in her keynote address remarked that co-operatives are instrumental in building the institution and capacity building of women.

The findings of the second data study to look at the participation of women and their role in decision-making in co-operatives was presented at the conference. Presenting the findings, Dr. Nandini Azad, author of the Study said that, “Co-



Group photo of organisers and participants at the Conference

operatives are enhancing bargaining power of rural women and of women in the informal sector. While women representation at higher reaches is still not significant; the new trends and issues indicate new threshold of change is happening."

The Conference called for enabling/supportive policies; building capacity of women; collaboration with co-operatives, international agencies and government; funding for women development projects and more research. In terms of policies, ensuring balanced ratio of women to men members, employees, laws and regulations to promote Gender and

Development (GAD) in co-operatives; integration of GAD in the policies, programs and activities of co-operatives; establish a GAD/Gender Integration Committee in the co-operative; implement membership friendly policies that encourage both women and men to be members of the co-operative; and implement a sex-disaggregated data collection and utilization system in the co-operative.

In terms of building capacity - provide appropriate trainings to management, leaders and staff to enhance their capabilities and appreciation of the cooperative, its identity, principles and values; provide confidence-building trainings to women members (lack of confidence was identified as a big challenge to the participation of women); bring in the men in the provision of GAD trainings/(especially coops in "patriarchal mode"); and update/tailor fit coop trainings to the current needs of trainees/demands of the changing times.

From the Editor

Wish you an 'Equal' world from new year-2016 onwards!

This is not a wishful thinking but a choice to be made by us co-operators and our community where we live in and work with.

Having a second woman President at ICA in a row, we are on our way.

Towards achieving the goal of equality, the third conference "Tagaytay+20" was held and data were collected and study of the progress was done. Report of the data and study will be available soon to the coop fraternity.

We have gone a long way in achieving visibility, being heard and counted but 'equality' is still a mirage.

At the Conference, we are not surprised to learn that the issues, challenges and concerns remained the same even after 20 years. But we have emerged more confident and more determined.

Let's STEP IT UP !

- Savitri Singh



Team of organisers at the closing of the Conference

Meeting of Office Bearers

The annual meeting of the Office Bearers of ICA-AP Committee on Women was held on 10th Feb 2016 at 6 pm in Widus Hotel, Pampang, Philippines in conjunction with "Tagaytay + 20" the third Regional Conference on Status of Women in Co-operatives.

The following were present in the meeting:

1. Ms. Masako Shimbo, Chairperson of the Committee
2. Ms. Maria Elena Limocon, Vice Chair of the Committee
3. Mr. Balu Iyer, Regional Director of ICA AP as special invitee
4. Ms. Savitri Singh, Secretary to the Committee and
5. Ms. Kanako Miyazawa, Secretary to Ms. Shimbo

Ms. Masako Shimbo presided over the meeting.

The meeting discussed in detail plan of activities to be implemented in year 2016, especially the arrangements and preparation for the forth coming biennial events, the meeting of the Women's Committee and Regional Women Forum such as the theme, program, speakers and participants etc.

These events are planned to be held on 15 and 16 November 2016 respectively in New Delhi in conjunction with the Regional Assembly of ICA-AP.

The Meeting approved the minutes of the last meeting, took stock of activities completed last year, reviewed status of membership and discussed about preparation of an strategy for the committee for next 4 years as suggested by Mr. Balu Iyer, Regional Director of ICA-AP.

The office bearers will make further discussions on the issue by email to exchange opinions before the Committee meeting in November 2016.

There are 16 members in the committee from 11 countries. The VICTO National from Philippines nominated 2 members last year out of which one is a male member. The committee is encouraging male co-operators to join the committee and make it a gender balanced. The Central Union of Rural and Agriculture Co-operatives of Iran (CURACI) and Supervision and Coordination Central Union of Rural and Agricultural Co-operatives (SCURA) Iran have nominated one member each to the committee last year. The member from SCURA is male member and now there are two male members in the committee. The office bearers welcomed these new members from Iran to the committee.

Ms. Maria Elena proposed vote of thanks to the Chair and to the Secretary for good performance of the committee.

International Women's Day-2016

Ms. Monique Leroux, President of the International Co-operative Alliance and Ms. Maria Eugenia Pérez, Chairperson of Alliance's Gender Equality Committee released messages on the occasion. Please visit the following link:

<http://ica.coop/sites/default/files/ICA%20statement%20International%20Women's%20Day%202016%20EN.pdf>



Monique Leroux

Ms. Monique Leroux gave a video message that can be found at <https://youtu.be/URRT0vBhMk0>.

The script of the message is produced below:

Dear co-operators, dear partners,

My name is Monique Leroux and I am President of the International Co-operative Alliance.

Today we celebrate Women's Day.

Women's day was originally called International Working Women's Day.

Work, and I mean decent work, is central to the original idea of women's day.

Co-operatives provide women with a workplace to develop their potential.

A place where their participation is warranted by the co-operative values and principles.

The theme of 2016 Women's Day, is "step it up for gender equality".

It is part of the United Nations' Planet 50/50 program for gender equality.

It is a call on citizens and governments, to step it up, and take action.

The Alliance is enthusiastic about the United Nations 50/50 program.

The UN have made equality a full part of the sustainable development goals.

This is because equal chances for women are part of the solution to achieve global, sustainable growth.

Co-operatives are a powerful lever to create these equal opportunities, because co-operatives are based on self help, participation, education and inclusion.

Co-operatives are schools of emancipation.

Indeed, by voting and voicing their opinion, women learn to take charge.

But, to take charge, women need access to finance. And, again, co-operatives provide accessible financial services.

Financial co-operatives and mutuals serve the world's most remote regions, where big business doesn't have franchises.

Work opportunity and conditions for women have improved over the decades.

But considerable distance remains to be covered.

As we face major global challenges, and to build a better world, we need the full engagement of ALL co-operators.

We need YOU, co-operators, to free the potential of women, economically, and politically.

Communities where men and women participate in a balanced way, are more resilient, more thriving, and more human.

I thank you, dear co-operators, all over the world, for promoting equality.

Make continued education for women a priority in your co-operative.

Educate on democracy by encouraging women to engage and to vote.

Make access to education for women and girls a priority.

As president of the co-operative movement, businesses based on the principle of equality, I call on you, co-operators, to take action, to close the gender gap, and to build a better world.

Now is the time to Step It Up!



@unwomen | #Planet5050 | #IWD2016

PLANET 50-50 BY 2030 STEP IT UP FOR GENDER EQUALITY



Upcoming Events

1. ICA-AP Training of Trainers (TOT) Programme on "Building Management Capacity of Women for Co-operative Development" will be held from April 18-22, 2016 in Udaipur, India.
2. Biennial meeting of the ICA-AP Committee on Women will be held on 15 November 2016 in New Delhi, India
3. Regional Women Forum will be held on 16 November 2016 in New Delhi, India

Both these events will be held in conjunction with the Coop Forum and Regional Assembly-2016 of the ICA-AP.

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Capacity Building for Gender Mainstreaming



Opening ceremony

From the Editor

The summer of 2016 well began with a training to build management capacity of women.

The UN SDGs 2030 has put gender equality higher among the 17 goals. The consistence efforts by all stake holders, including parents and family are playing a pivotal role in achieving this goal. Women have realised that competence is crucial in gaining a foothold at the patriarchal, globalised world driven by open markets. They ask for more. They demand to learn more. They want to venture out of the familial domain of cooking-stitching driven livelihood means.

Therefore, ICA is making efforts in providing training, clubbed with experience sharing and field visits, to develop specialised skills for women in coop.

As the year is progressing, a couple of significant events will be waiting for you to attend.

See you all in New Delhi in November !

– Savitri Singh

Women empowerment and gender mainstreaming in co-operatives are priority areas of ICA as we are very concerned about the low to negligible participation of women at all levels of co-operatives; especially so at the leadership level. To address this, ICA-AP is implementing a number of capacity building programmes for member co-operatives to promote gender mainstreaming and enhance the number and quality of women participation.

One such endeavor is the, "Building Management Capacity of Women for Co-operative Development". This year, the training was held for co-operatives in India in collaboration with Indian Farm Forestry Development Cooperative (IFFDC) from April 18-22, 2016 in Udaipur, India.

The objectives of the training are to:

- Enhance management skills of co-operative leaders and managers, specially women to handle the day-to-day management of their co-operatives
- Enhance active participation and contribution of members to co-operatives
- Professional management of co-operative business
- Understand the importance of women's participation in co-operatives

The program started with a brief formal opening session wherein Smt. Savitri Singh, Program Director, ICA-AP, Shri S.P. Singh, CEO of IFFDC and Ms. Eva Majurin, Senior Enterprise Specialist from the ILO's Decent Work Team for South Asia made brief remarks.

Mrs. Savitri Singh introduced the program and talked about ICA-AP initiatives for gender mainstreaming in co-operatives and benefits that the co-operatives may derive from equal and active participation by women.

Mr. S.P. Singh talked about the emphasis his organisation is putting on women empowerment through co-operatives and the projects the IFFDC has started in rural and tribal areas for women through management of waste land and unused land. The IFFDC is also engaging members in skill development programs to enhance their income such as plantation on wasteland, thrift and credit, handicraft making and marketing etc.

Mrs. Savitri Singh presented an elaborate account of ICA Gender mainstreaming initiatives and Leadership Development of Women in Co-operatives with Global Perspective.

As the main focus was on "building management capacity", development of crucial management skill such as understanding gender, business life cycle including conception to production and marketing, leadership and self-management skills and financial management of a cooperative were discussed in detail by the experts.

Dr. Veena Dwivedi, Asstt. Prof. Udaipur School of Social Work, JRN, Rajasthan Vidyapeeth University was invited to deliberate on Gender.



Mr. Balu Iyer making closing remarks

20 participants from 5 organisations located in 6 Indian states attended the 5 days training which was broadly based on the 'Resource Guide for advanced training of cooperatives on entrepreneurship development of women and gender equality' developed by ICA-AP. The topics that have been covered during the training are; Status Paper from IFFDC on the organisation's endeavours on women empowerment and inclusion in cooperatives presented and discussed by Dr. Sudhir Maan, Sr. Project Manager of IFFDC, Rajasthan.

Ms. Eva Majurin gave a comprehensive presentation on ILO Gender perspective and Enterprises development projects in India. She shared information on how the ILO is conducting enterprise development trainings in India through a pool of master trainers trained by them. She shared her contact and welcomed participants to reach out to her for any further information on the subject.



Coop members at a meeting with the participants



Participants with co-operative members during coop visit

Shri Mohammed Iqbal who retired as Deputy Registrar of the Coop. Society Office, Udaipur has vast experience on financial management of cooperatives in India and he imparted the technical knowledge to participants in a very simple language which was easily understood by them.

His session was divided into two parts, (i) Financial Management for women leaders and (ii) Financial Management of co-operatives.

The participants were mostly board of directors, projects officers and field officers responsible for mobilising people into self help groups and cooperatives with primary task to engage them in income generating activities to enhance their livelihood.

Most of the participants were very much concerned about 'marketing problem' of the products made by the groups and expressed their desire to learn on how to 'find durable market' and 'how to expand the market' for regular sale.

Ms. Savitri Singh took a session on 'Marketing a product' and explained that the market is not a problem but the product is. The field workers, project officers and women leaders must know about life cycle of a product development and must do an analysis on the requirement/need/demand/usefulness of a product they intend to bring in the market. She also briefly explained marketing and sale and what steps should be taken to make a product successful in the market for a longer period of time.

The training space also provided a platform for networking, experience sharing and mutual learning.

There were 2 chairpersons participants from Women Co-operative Banks from Gwalior and Saharanpur who have been running various innovative projects for women empowerment also shared their experience on graduating from an ordinary co-operator to the position of the Chairperson. They shared tips on how to start a small financial institution, the legal and financial requirements to start a bank and the hurdles they faced and succeeded etc.

The IFFDC arranged a day visit to their cooperative projects in rural area. The participants visited two cooperatives. One cooperative was formed for plantation on the waste land or the land acquired from the Gram Panchayat which was lying unused. The members are getting benefit of firewood and income from the sale proceeds of the plantation.

They are growing, fruits and vegetables with the training from IFFDC and using high quality of seeds. They are also learning and using various irrigation methods to economise use of water resources.

Most of the participants find the idea of using these type of land for livelihood innovative and said that they would like to introduce such projects in their area of work.

The second group was engaged in handicraft business such as incense stick making and meenakari work on wooden articles. The group members were also saving and giving loan to members out of the savings.



Training in progress

The participants spent some time talking to coop members. They observed that the quality of products of these groups need improvement for finding a good market. Some participants find that the meenakari work can be replicated in their area of work and they gathered information on how to get training and raw material for their coop members to start such activities.

The training also emphasised on significance of tracking the progress of a cooperative business. Mr. Balu Iyer, Regional Director of ICA-AP joined the program on the final day and took a session on "Monitoring and Evaluation of coop development projects" and shared with the participants on why the monitoring and evaluation is important and how to monitor progress of a project for successful implementation.

A formal closing ceremony was held and Mr. Balu Iyer and Shri Narayan Lal Ahir, Board of Director of IFFDC delivered closing remarks. Mr. Ahir expressed his keen interest in developing women to develop coop business and how IFFDC is putting in

resources to achieve such goals. He thanked all the participants for their active participation in the program and to ICA-AP for their initiative in organising such program for the Indian co-operators.

Mr. Iyer expressed his satisfaction on successful completion of the program as he had had an opportunity to have interaction and discussion with the participants and got frank feedback from them. He expressed his desire that the participants will take away learning from the project for implementation in their own area of work. He also mentioned about possibility of conducting a follow up after a year or so by visiting the work area of these participants to see how they are using the learning/examples acquired during the training.

The program received wide publicity and extensively covered by the national news channel of India i.e. Door Darshan Kissan (news channel for farmers). The program was telecasted several times within the week.

NEWS Highlights - Membership of the Women's Committee is open.
Please contact savitrisingh@icaroap.coop

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Workshop on Enhancing the Role of Women in Co-operative Business to be held on 27-29 September, 2016 in Korea.
- Meeting of the ICA-AP Committee on Women to be held on 15 November 2016 in New Delhi, India.
- Meeting of the ICA-AP Regional Women Forum to be held on 16 November 2016 in New Delhi, India.

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“Enhancing the Role of Women in Co-operative Business”



ICA-AP(국제협동조합연맹 아시아태평양지부) “협동조합에서의 여성의 역할 강화” 지역워크숍

iCOOP KOREA

ICA-AP Regional Workshop on “Enhancing Role of Women in Co-operative Business”

시간 : 2016.09.27(화) ~ 09.29(목) 장소 : 구례자연드림파크 ICA홀 주최 : ICA-AP, 아이쿱소비자활동연합회 주관 : 아이쿱협동조합지원센터



Participants with Ms. Inja Park and Mr. Balu Iyer

From the Editor

This year, International Day of Co-operatives was celebrated on the theme Cooperatives: Power to Act for a sustainable future. The ‘power’ that is derived from its member’s active participation in fulfilling their socio-economic goals by working for social cohesion and inclusive growth.

Women are significant force behind the ‘Power’. In enhancing the ‘power’ of women to take up lead, a workshop was organised in Korea to get exposure from best practices and take away case/models to be work on at home.

The article aims at giving a holistic view of what is happening around the region in terms of participation of women in the coop businesses.

Enjoy a good reading !

– Savitri Singh

The Workshop on “Enhancing the Role of Women in Co-operative Business” was held on 27-29 September, 2016 in South Korea hosted by ICA member Consumer Cooperative Federation iCOOP. 22 cooperative leaders and officials from 10 countries including South Korean participants (14 participants from 9 Asia and Pacific countries China, India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Palestine, Philippines, Nepal, Japan, members of iCOOP and Kenya) attended the three days workshop.

The iCOOP hosted the workshop in their project at Gurye Natural Dream Park located in south of Korea, 4 hours by road from Seoul city.

The iCOOP stands for promotion of individual ideal (sharing and cooperation), never losing sight of original innocence and practice innovation as a consumer cooperative. The USP or slogan of iCOOP is “ethical production and consumption”. They care for workers and labourers, agriculture and the environment and food safety. This is a consumer cooperative that pursues ethical consumerism. 2,37,610 individuals are member of this federation from 85 member cooperatives. It has 180 stores and business turnover is KRW 526 billion as on December 2015.

The values of iCOOP are solidarity and cooperation on consumption and production resulting into food safety through protection of agriculture, using eco friendly agricultural products. This cooperative strives for building a



A group action is in progress during the workshop

harmonious society through linkages between rural and urban and also to establish a distribution system to provide eco friendly agricultural products at a reasonable price. Their action's goals are to strengthen social practices based on the member activities and introducing new consumer activities embracing production and consumption.

iCOOP Korea has 90% women as members and decision makers. As on June 2016 total employees at iCOOP are 2881 out of which 1437 are male and 1444 are female. The ratio of female managers is about 30% and equal wages system for male and female employees are being practiced. The cooperative also provides maternity leave and support of child care cooperative. Therefore this cooperative was selected as appropriate case to organise the workshop.



Hang-Sik Oh, Managing Director of Gurye Natural Dream Park

The three days programme consisted of one day workshop that included introductory presentation from host on the theme: "Enhancing the Role of Women in Cooperative Business" including situation of women's participation in coops, legal and policy issues, initiatives by coops and by the Government in Korea.

Mr. Balu Iyer, Regional Director of ICA- AP, Ms. Savitri Singh, Programme Director, ICA-AP, Ms. Inja Park, Chairperson of iCOOP, Korea and Mr. Hang-Sik Oh, Managing Director of Gurye Natural Dream Park addressed the participants at the opening of the workshop.

Mr. Balu Iyer made a presentation to introduce ICA future strategy and explained about the "ICA Blueprint for a Cooperative Decade" in the context of promoting inclusive growth in cooperatives.

Ms. Savitri Singh introduced the gender mainstreaming projects and activities of ICA-AP and discussed about current situation of women in Cooperatives in Asia and Pacific . The introductory session was followed by a well defined country paper presentation by the participants focusing on core gender mainstreaming initiatives and business success stories followed by study visits to a couple of successful co-operative businesses/women groups and relevant organizations. The consultations during the workshop focused on co-operative endeavour to promote women's interests for gender mainstreaming in co-operative businesses.

Mr. Hang-Sik Oh also gave a detailed introduction about the origin, growth and current activities of the Natural Dream Park which is created in the lap of nature's abundance to build a linkage among the producers-suppliers and consumers.



Participants at the Campus of the Gurye Park

The population of this town is 27130 persons and financial independence is 6.7%. After the iCOOP Korea established this Natural Park in Gurye province. The town and community witnessed a lot of positive development over a period of time. The park has established the holistic township providing for all the basic needs of the residents in the area including regular employment thereby preventing migration to big cities. The main feature of this park is to establish a linkage between producers – processors and consumers. The initiative by the Park resulted into a rise in the stable employment. More than



Group photo after shopping at the Namwon consumer store

80% of all employees in the Park from the Gurye-Gun and only 32 employees are from multi-cultural families. The Park is providing higher hourly wages to employees than the legal minimum wages. Due to efforts of the cooperatives the number of visitors to the park substantially increased in 2015 as the park provides green tourism, field trips, restaurants and movies. The number of visitors in 2015 increased to 107106 persons from 52846 persons in 2014.

The Gurye community life changed significantly due to education, cultural and social contribution by iCOOP Seed Foundation i.e. movies theatre for a cultural life, Bear, Rock (Pub), and restaurant, rock festivals and film festivals. Also scholarship to the students and donation of goods were supported by total KRW 9.0 million since last 4 years. In 2016 Gurye Natural Dream Rock Festival was enjoyed by 7000 people including members. The participants along with staff of ICA and iCOOP Korea stayed in the guest house of the natural park and used conference room facilities and restaurant during their 3 days visit. The participants also enjoyed the Jim, spa and consumer store facilities located in the vicinity.

Namwon iCOOP Multicultural Centre

On the second day a cooperative visit was organised for the participants specially the foreign participants. The participants visited to Namwon iCOOP Multicultural Centre near the Natural Park.

This centre is "Joyful Cultural Place made with members". The preparatory committee of the Namwon iCOOP started home delivery business to 12 member households with an investment of KRW 3 million. Gradually the cooperative business picked up and the Namwon Centre store was opened on 22nd June 2011. The four storied centre has office of the Namwon Coop with 30 seats meeting room, natural dream cafe which provide fair trade coffee, guest house for 228 persons, 96 seats theatre, area for exhibition of activities and the natural dream

store located at the first floor of the centre that provides eco friendly food, bakery items, meat and pizza. The value of the centre is ecological, social and cultural which encourages eco friendly living, meeting and communication among people and enjoyable and comfortable place for everyone. There are 12 directors in the cooperative and 15 employees. The total membership is 1588 persons out of which 90% are female and 10% male. Following are the projects of Namwon Centre

- Food Safety Education for children with Namwon public health centres
- Small store business with agricultural technology centre
- Project for women friendly city along with women academy and babysitting course.

The Managing Director of the cooperative explained to the participants of the centre and its facilities. The participants were very curious about knowing all about the cooperative. They also visited the coop store at the first floor and purchased various goods contributing into the income of the cooperative.

The Group Discussion (GD) was held to derive clear understanding of issues from the workshop activities. The topic of the GD is "How to enhance women's participation in mixed



Presentation by the Managing Director of Namwon Coop

membership cooperatives – issues and challenges." The participants were divided into two groups and concluded that the issues are low self esteem of women, lack of capacity and attitude of the male members in the society. The social and cultural issues are also there. The challenges are how to empower women, family responsibly, enforcement of law and policy, advocacy and attitude of men. The solution is equal opportunity to join cooperative, facilities such as crèche, maternity and child care leave, mentoring and coaching, develop leadership and youth program, setting up accountability among board of directors.

One the last day after the study visit the participants gathered again at the conference room for the closing. A session on recap, reflection on the learning from the workshop, observation during the coop visit was held. The participants reflected that the consumer coop network is like -what is promised is

ICA AP Regional Workshop on Enhancing Role of Women in Co-operative Business

화) - 09.29(목) 장소 : 구례자연드림파크 ICA홀 주최 : ICA-AP, 아이쿱소비자활동연합회 주관 :



The organisers: (L-R) Ms. Juhi Lee, Ms. Inja Park, Mr. Balu Iyer and Ms. Savitri Singh

delivered- that is natural, pure, high quality products providing quality for loyalty and engaging with retired old staff, board members etc. The cooperative is not only into coop activism for gender balance but is also providing capacity building.

The participants were asked to discuss what is their "take away" from the workshop and what they have planned to do in their respective countries after getting back.

They discussed and made individual presentations.

The Malaysian participants learnt to retain loyalty of members by providing quality goods and services. The topic on "Sex and Gender" provided clarity in understanding gender issues.

Participants from India observed that concerns are the same in all countries and should be working on gender sensitisation, attracting youth by developing urban facilities in rural areas, spread awareness by show casing good stories, for successful business, coop branding is important and engaging retired/older directors should be engaged and training for baby sitters could be provided.

Participants from China focused on how to balance work and life and coops could be developed to provide safe and reliable food.

Participant from Philippines would continue advocacy for gender mapping analysis and is for gaining commitment of members by providing quality and reliability in services.

Participants from Nepal felt the need of mentoring and coaching of coop members on gender sensitisation in their country.

Participants from Myanmar will share the learning from the workshop and raise awareness of members on importance of women in coops and gender participation.

Ms. Lucy, participant from Kenya learnt importance of statistics and how to retain loyalty of members.

Ms. Yuki from Japan was impressed with production of 100% organic food and discount scheme for members. She would share experience on gender integration with her coop.

All presentations and papers can be found at the following link :

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0BxWvQvko9ijeMW9vSy04Zl9iQVk>

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REGIONAL WOMEN FORUM – 2016



Ms. Savitri Singh, Mr. Charles Gould, Dr. Chandra Pal Singh Yadav, Mrs. Lalita Krishnaswami, Ms. Masako Shimbo, Mr. Balu Iyer and other delegates at the opening of the 9th Regional Women's Forum

From the Editor

We are pleased to present the last issue of the year! The last quarter witnessed a number of significant activities; we successfully organised the biennial meeting of the Women's Committee and the Regional Women Forum-2016, and elected new office bearers. Ms. Masako Shimbo was re-elected as Chair and Dr. Nandini Azad from India as the Vice Chair.

We have welcomed the new year by the time this issue reaches you. We take this opportunity to wish you all a happy, equal and peaceful 2017!

– Savitri Singh

Ms. Savitri Singh, Program Director and Secretary of ICA-AP Committee on Women (WC) in her introductory remarks mentioned that the Forum is a biennial event held in conjunction with the ICA Regional Assembly (RA). The First Regional Women Forum was held in 1998 in Seoul, Korea. The Forum is a platform provided for women and men cooperators to get together to discuss and deliberate upon current trends and issues impacting cooperatives, review participation of women in different level of cooperatives functions and resolve to take appropriate measures to accelerate action.

Ms. Masako Shimbo, Chairperson of the Women's Committee delivered the welcome address and extended a warm welcome to the participants and guests and wished them a useful forum. Mr. Balu Iyer, Regional Director of ICA-AP welcomed the participants and encouraged them to participate fully in the deliberations. He talked about role women play in co-operatives and how their participation is vital for development and growth of the co-operative business.

Mr. Charles Gould, Director General, ICA, delivered the special address on the theme, "Women in Cooperatives – The Power to Act for a Sustainable Future." He mentioned that women, and for that matter all cooperative members need to be well informed about the happenings around cooperatives in the world. He explained in detail, ICA's mission to unite, promote and develop co-operatives. His presentation covered growth in membership, status of the alliance, and various initiatives of ICA such as, co-hosting of the International Summit of Co-operatives-2016 in Quebec, promoting cooperatives in collaboration with Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Co-operatives



Dr. C.P.S. Yadav delivering opening speech. On right is Mr. Charles Gould, Director General, ICA delivering special address

(COPAC), the World Cooperative Monitor, Domains.coop and the global cooperative marquee, and the Doing Cooperative Business report. He also shared information on how cooperative enterprises are recognized as important players within the private sector to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He said that, "the ICA has launched a campaign "Coops for 2030". This is a campaign for co-operatives to learn more about the SDGs, commit pledges to contribute to achieving SDGs and report their progress." He called on the need for cooperatives to commit to building a diverse work force and leadership with equal pay for work of equal value and increasingly reflect the composition of the community in which we work. He mentioned about the partnership with the European Commission for "Cooperatives in Development-People Centered Businesses in Action." He also talked about ICA work on gender equality and work with COPAC members.

Dr. C.P.S. Yadav, President of the National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI) and Vice Chairman of the Regional Board of ICA-AP was the Chief Guest at the Forum. In his address he said, "I am very pleased to welcome all of you to my country to participate in the ICA-AP Regional Assembly events! I am particularly happy to see so many women in the cooperative family!" He appreciated the Women's committee for choosing the very appropriate theme: "Women in Cooperatives: The Power to Act for a Sustainable Future," in solidarity with the theme of this year's International Day of Cooperatives. In his remarks he said that, "women represent more than half of the population; are the backbone of a family, which is the smallest unit of a society; and are indispensable labour force in agriculture as well as in industrial business sector. This is very true for co-operative sector as well. (Almost 55% of food production is done by women in Asia as well as many other countries in the world. Majority of the co-operative members are in agriculture and allied businesses such as dairy, fisheries, handloom textile/weaving etc. Women contribute significantly in these sectors. Therefore, it is evident that women's participation in cooperatives is crucial for its sustenance and empowered

women have potential to lead cooperatives to a sustainable future." Sharing the work of NCUI, he mentioned that, "NCUI represents 250 million individual co-operative members from 600,000 cooperatives in the country but women's participation has not yet reached to a desired level. The reason is the same as in many other countries i.e. socio-economic barriers. However, we are committed to increase number of women and their active participation in cooperatives at all levels, as members and leaders/decision makers.

The NCUI and its member co-operatives in the country are proactive in empowering women and building capacity of institutions to achieve Gender Mainstreaming in co-operatives. We have established a fully functional and active Women Empowerment department, Women Cooperative Development Project and Women's Empowerment Committee consisting of women cooperative leaders from across the country. We are also implementing economic development programs exclusively for women in rural and urban areas. NCUI is trying to help women get their due and deserving place as leaders. Since the cultural norms are deeply rooted in the society and have been impediment in speedy achievement of our goals, we have been taking affirmative action and introduced quota for women as directors in the board of all cooperatives. The quota ranges from 3 to 10 % and varies from state to state. This initiative has yielded many tangible results. The concept of Women Cooperative Bank in India is unique and many such banks have been formed 'by the women, of the women and for the women.' NCUI is also running several short and long term leadership and management capacity building programmes for women in India as well as for women in South Asia. We have bilateral agreements with several countries for exchange of education and training. The Women's Empowerment Committee of the NCUI recommends for 30% reservation for women at all levels of co-operatives and 33% of women membership should be prerequisite for registration of a co-operative society." After talking about current situation and initiatives by NCUI, he concluded by saying that he would



Mrs. Vasudha Mishra delivering Keynote speech

be interested in learning good practices from countries represented at the Forum and wished that participants will have fruitful discussion and exchange of information.

Mrs. Vasudha Mishra, Managing Director of National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) delivered the keynote speech. NCDC, an Associate Member of ICA, is established by the Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare for extending financial and technical support to develop cooperatives in India.

Mrs. Mishra talked about the objectives and activities of NCDC and particularly its role in development of women through the cooperative model of business. The role of NCDC is primarily to provide easy funding to cooperatives; their recovery rate is 99.9% due efficient lending procedures. She said that participation of women in cooperatives is essential to save soil and farm diversity. There is need for change in leadership of cooperatives and more women should be included in decision making process. The 97th amendment of the Constitution of India had made the formation of cooperatives as fundamental right of citizen and stipulated that there should be at least 2 women directors at each primary co-operative. There are 6,00,000 primary cooperatives in India, meaning there will be 12,00,000 women leaders. She said that quota system for women in local governance proved to be very effective and will be helpful for women in cooperatives as well. Earlier, the power to the Registrar of Cooperatives (RCS) had been draconian. The RCS should be facilitators and not dictators; they can play a vital role in influencing cooperatives for inclusion of women. The NCDC has trained 328 women leaders and directors at their training institute in Gurgaon and sought advice from women leaders to improve their curriculum. In their initial effort to train women in 9 states, the NCDC got some success and is willing to continue with such programs. While NCDC provides funds for women cooperatives at 15-20% subsidy, they had not received many proposals. She encouraged women participants at the Forum to spread information and take advantage of the NCDC. For the foreign participants, she said that the takeaway from this forum is to remember that women have immense power and possibilities. The Indian participants were very excited to receive information for promotion of women cooperatives by NCDC and asked several questions.

Ms. Mishra said that cooperative laws have power to act and can act as catalyst. The women should use the circle of influence they have as this is the time to share and learn from each other. In order to empower women and to enhance farmer's income, the focus should be on training in crop production, soil safety etc. Mindful agriculture can only be done by collective/cooperative way. The role of women in handling such issues is much more than as mere farm labourers and women have the power to act for sustainable management of agriculture. They are capable and nothing can stop them with a little bit of help and hand holding. The NCDC has established awards for co-operators and cooperatives and the award goes mostly to women cooperatives.

Ms. Eva Majurin, enterprise specialist of ILO Decent Work Team for South Asia – New Delhi was invited to share ILO's perspective on the theme of the Forum. In her presentation she started with the background of setting the new sustainable development agenda. The Rio+ 20 (2012) called for the elaboration of the set of sustainable development goals to address the economic, social and environmental dimensions. A set of 17 SDGs and 169 targets were agreed by the inter-governmental Open Working Group in July 2014. From January to July 2015, the inter-governmental meetings were held on the post 2015 agenda. The post 2015 Summit adopted the new sustainable agenda in September 2015. The parallel and complementary processes were held such as financing for development (Addis Ababa, July 2015) and climate change (Paris COP, Nov 2015).

Sustainability is recognized as one of the five pillars in the ICA's Blue Print for a Cooperative Decade. The Rio + 20 Conference acknowledged the role of cooperatives in social inclusion and poverty reduction. The cooperative enterprises are present in all sectors of the economy and have demonstrated their capacity to address numerous schemes under the SDG framework. The survey of 291 respondents from the cooperative movement and from governmental and non-governmental organizations on the SDGs and Coops found that cooperatives are significant contributors in ending poverty and creating jobs, sustainable livelihoods and equitable growth. Gender equality is enshrined in Goal 5 of SDG but its realization depends on many other goals for example Goal 4 on education, Goal 7 on energy, Goal 9 on infrastructure, and Goal 10 on inequality, promotion of social economic and political inclusion of all, elimination of discriminatory laws. Women co-operators are actively contributing to a sustainable future (SDG 1,2,3,5,8,12,13,15). Examples include, organic farming by PanchKanya Cooperative, Nepal; Co-operative in South Africa, and Solid Waste Collection and Handling in India.

There was a session dedicated to information/case study sharing by cooperative leaders. The session was moderated by Ms. Armi Zainudin from ANGKASA, Malaysia; and presentations made by Dr. Jaya Arunachalam, Chairperson of Working Women's Forum, India; Ms Masako Shimbo, JCCU, Japan; Ms. Ruth Jacutin, Board of Director of NATCCO, Philippines; and Ms. Nazik Beishenaly, President of the Coop Union of Kyrgyzstan.

A Group discussion was held on the topic, "How to overcome cultural and legal barriers towards gender equality in Co-ops?" The group work was facilitated by Ms. Armi Zainudin, Ms. Tahmineh Kashani and Ms. Ruth. The major findings and recommendations of the discussion were:

①

- 50% participation at all levels of cooperatives by 2021
- Gender sensitive law and policies,
- Manual for best practices, capacity building, gender sensitisation to change patriarchal mind-set,
- Sex disaggregated data collection and use,

- Cooperatives in syllabus of schools and universities,
- Use of technology,
- De-politicisation of cooperatives.

Ms. Masako Shimbo concluded the forum and declared it closed with her thank you remarks.

Meeting of the Women's Committee



International
Co-operative
Alliance
Asia and Pacific



National
Co-operative
Union of India



Ms. Masako Shimbo chairing the meeting

The meeting of the WC was held on 15th Nov 2016. 11 members (out of 20) including the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson and 24 observers attended the meeting held biennially in conjunction with the Regional Assembly of the ICA-AP.

Ms. Masako Shimbo, opened the meeting and welcomed the members. In her remarks she said, "It is a very happy moment for me to meet all the members and other co-operators attending the meeting, I am looking forward to having a fruitful discussion." Mr. Balu Iyer, extended his warm welcome and said, "this committee is one of the most active committees of ICA- AP thanks to the active participation by the members. I would like to touch upon membership and why it is important. Membership is important to have a voice on the issues. The ICA-AP Regional Board has approved the co-option of the Chairperson of the Committee on Women to the Regional Board. This is a significant step and a recognition of the work done by the committee." The Vice Chair, Ms. Ruth Jacutin presided over the meeting and took up the agenda of the meeting for discussion.

The meeting adopted the agenda, confirmed the minutes of

the last meeting, discussed the action taken report since last meeting. The meeting also noted that Ms. Masako Shimbo has been elected as one of the two Vice Chairs of the ICA Gender Equality Committee at the election of the committee held on 10th October 2016 in Quebec Canada.

Nine (9) new members joined the Committee since the last meeting held in September 2014. JA Zenchu, Japan and iCOOP, Korea, replaced existing members with new members.

The election of office bearers was held at the end of the meeting. Ms. Masako Shimbo from JCCU, Japan was re-elected as Chairperson and Dr. Nandini Azad from NCUI, India was elected as Vice Chairperson.

The Committee discussed and approved the work plan for 2017 and the Women's Committee strategy for the period 2017-2020. The key elements include:

- Increase membership of the ICA-AP Committee on Women
- Collect, analyse and share sex disaggregated data
- Monitor, follow-up and evaluate programs implemented by the WC

The next meeting of the WC will be held in 2018.

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