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## 2014 Asia Pacific Region Annual Activities Report

The 2014 Asia Pacific Region Annual Activities Report is now available at: <http://ica-ap.coop/sites/ica-ap.coop/files/ICA.pdf>. This year in addition to the summary of activities carried out during the year, we have highlighted stories from some participants who attended trainings and workshops. Kavita Khobragade from IFFCO who attended the training, *Improving Capacity of Rural Women in Japan*, narrates the active role of women in development of cooperatives in Japan while Tecla Van Bussel and Olivia Tan, interns from the Canadian Cooperative Association who attended the workshop, *Enhancing the Role of Women in Cooperative Business*, think aloud about the barriers that exist for women in co-operatives today and the need to overcome them. Ms. Ligaya Adame Barbadillo, Store Manager of Co-op Mart, ADTEMPCO, Philippines writes about how she revamped her store based on learning at the Japanese Consumer Cooperative Union training program for Managers of Consumer Cooperatives in Japan. Farmer Sangay Rinchen pens about the organic movement in Bhutan while Indra Panta talks about organizing youth in Nepal to make them financially literate. It is gratifying to see how learnings from the classroom are being put into practice!

## ASEAN++members gather for Regional Consultation, Jakarta, Indonesia

In preparation for the 10<sup>th</sup> Minister's Conference in April 2016, the ICA-AP regional office is planning a series of regional consultations. The first Regional Consultation of High Ranking Government Officials and Cooperative Leaders from the ASEAN ++ (including China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia and Timor Leste) was held in Jakarta from 30<sup>th</sup> September to 3<sup>rd</sup> October. The consultation held in collaboration with the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs and the Indonesian Cooperative Council (DEKOPIN) attracted 40 participants from 11 countries. Minister Secretary Agus Muharram, inaugurated the consultation at the behest of Mr. AAGN Puspayoga, Honorable, Minister of Cooperatives and SME of Indonesia. The set of recommendations to participating governments included earmarking funds to match educational funds developed from within the co-operative movements themselves, to empower co-operative leaders, managers and members, especially women and the young; engaging co-operatives in program activities dealing with women and youth empowerment; providing access to digital technology for co-operative organizations equal to their public and private counterparts, urging the ASEAN Secretariat to involve co-operatives in activities of the ASEAN Economic Community above and beyond Agricultural ones; establishing a "Co-operative Rating Agency" by way of funding and financial technical know-how based on the feasibility study prepared by the ICA AP; enacting

appropriate regulations and support effective education to young co-operative leaders to take advantage of the demographic bonus; committing themselves to empowering co-operatives to have access to social and financial services, while facilitating the inclusion of co-operatives in the process of reaching food sovereignty and security; and augmenting the role of co-operatives in pursuing the public-private partnerships, and in organizing returning migrant workers and people still trapped in the informal economy. The conclusions and recommendations, will be taken by the participants for discussion in their respective countries. The recommendations from all the planned consultations will be placed for adoption at the Co-operative Ministers Conference in April 2016.

## **Asia-Pacific Cooperative E-Business Summit, Kunming, China**

Accelerating global trade between co-operatives is not only an important part in ICA Blueprint for a Cooperative Decade, but also a cornerstone for China Coop's international business strategy. ACFSMC organized the Asia-Pacific Cooperative E-Business Summit in Kunming (China) from 8-12 October to promote C2C trade by taking advantage of opportunities brought about by the fast-growing e-business. 63 participants from 17 countries attended the Summit. The Summit saw presentation of e-business initiatives from Australia, China, India, Korea, Malaysia and New Zealand. Interest was expressed by members from Indonesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Turkey, and Sri Lanka to start in their respective countries. The conference culminated in a joint declaration to commit to the development of e-business in the Asia Pacific region. Among the recommendations proposed were cooperative trade directories to help cooperatives discover trade synergies; B2B trade platform to support in the entire process of sourcing and procurement between different cooperatives; support in the process of trade negotiations; formation of region specific trade team to enable and support local and regional C2C trade; develop a system of global or regional cooperative accreditation or rating system to allow trading partners to do business more effectively; develop a financial backbone for payments to develop B2B trade ecosystems; forge trade pacts between governments of different countries to facilitate C2C trade; and promote a single brand COOP to rival commercial/ standard brands.

## **Research Conference in Iran - Capacities and Advantages of Co-operatives for development**

The Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare, Islamic Republic of Iran organized a two-day international conference on the advantages and capacities of co-operatives. The conference was attended by Iranian policy makers, international agencies dealing with cooperatives such as the ILO Coop, Huia.coop (New Zealand), Cooperative Bulk Handling (Australia), and representatives from universities from and outside Iran. Dr. Chandrapal Singh Yadav, Vice President – ICA Asia and Pacific and the President of the National Cooperative Union of India led the Indian delegation. Savitri Singh and Santosh Kumar from the ICA-AP regional office attended the conference and presented papers on gender and youth. The Iranian government is committed to ensuring cooperatives contribute 25% to the national GDP. Dr. Kalantari, Deputy Minister in-charge of Cooperatives and his team convened the conference around *pathology* of the cooperative sector, where the challenges and shortcomings that cooperatives encounter today and what they may experience in the run up to the culmination of the cooperative decade in 2020. Issues related to gender balance and youth engagement in

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cooperatives were discussed during the main sessions. The breakout sessions were focused on the principles of autonomy and independence and the level of Government influence in cooperative affairs.

## **Consumer Co-operatives in Myanmar**

Myanmar has active cooperatives in the areas of banking, production, services, trade and finance. The trading cooperatives whose main business is retailing (are very similar to consumer co-operatives), have a chequered history. They were very active in the 1950s, went into slump thereafter and operate on the margins these days. The Central Co-operative Society, the apex organization in Myanmar is working to revive consumer cooperatives as they can help bridge the gap between the producer and consumer and help provide goods at affordable prices. Yuki Nishimoto, from the Malaysia Business Office, visited Myanmar and documented her experiences. She found that the consumer cooperatives are active in pockets and providing essential services. Cooperatives were putting in place novel schemes such as the credit book of Aung Nyein Chan Trading Co-op and mutual support of Khayan Trading Co-operative and reminding members of the cooperative identity. The trading co-operatives face stiff competition from private companies, lack adequate human resource and receive no support from the government. The main challenge for the consumer cooperatives, as in other countries, is to increase the number of members. The other is to make entry into cooperatives affordable. The secondary cooperatives need to be strengthened to help primary cooperatives maintain their business and provide a safety net. CCS is rightly focusing on member education and building management capacity. According to a board member of Thazin trading co-op, "Step by Step is how the co-operative movement can bloom again."

## **Singapore Co-operative Movement celebrates milestones**

Singapore's Co-operative Movement celebrated two important milestones at the Singapore National Co-operative Federation's (SNCF) 35th Anniversary Celebratory Dinner on 26 September – 35 years since the establishment of SNCF in 1980 to promote the interests of co-ops, and 90 years of economic and social contributions by the co-operative (co-op) movement. To mark this special occasion, SNCF put together an exhibition and commemorative book that document the sector's contributions in almost a century. Guest-of-Honour, Mr. Lawrence Wong, the-then Minister of Culture, Community and Youth, officially launched the commemorative book, titled 'The Singapore Co-operative Story (1925 – 2015)', at the celebratory dinner that evening which gathered close to 500 co-operators. The book tells compelling stories of how co-ops have and continue to support Singapore's changing social needs in different times of our history to improve the lives of members and residents here.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

1. ICA-AP Committee on Cooperative Research Annual Conference, November 5 and 6, 2015, Vaikunth Mehta National Institute of Co-operative Management, Pune, India
2. ICA-AP Regional Board meeting, November 9, Antalya, Turkey
3. International Cooperative Alliance General Assembly, November 11 to 13, Antalya, Turkey
4. ICA-AP Consumer Committee Annual Meeting, Fairtrade and Halal Seminar, December 1 to 3, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
5. High Level Consultation of Cooperatives from SAARC countries, December 14 and 15, Kathmandu, Nepal
6. Third Regional Conference on Status of Women in Cooperatives in Asia-Pacific, February 9-11, 2016, Philippines

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