

ICA-AP NEWSLETTER

News from members, ICA-AP activities,
ICA-EU Partnership update & more!

IN THIS MONTH'S NEWSLETTER

- Release of the Reports on the Autonomy & Independence of Cooperatives in India, and the Asia Pacific Research on Work & Ownership
- ICA-AP activities
 - 12th annual meeting of the ICA-AP Committee on Youth Cooperation (ICYC)
 - ICA-AP Regional Board meeting, Kigali, Rwanda
 - India International Cooperatives Trade Fair (IICTF)
 - ICA-MAFF Follow-up visit to Mongolia
- News from our Members
 - Singapore Co-operatives, Singapore Stories - Documenting the history of cooperatives in Singapore
- ICA-EU Partnership update
 - Asia Regional Meeting of the Policy Forum on Development, Kathmandu, Nepal
- Upcoming events

Reports on the Autonomy & Independence of Cooperatives in India, and the Asia Pacific Research on Work & Ownership

ICA-AP released two Reports that mark the culmination of research carried out under the ICA-EU Partnership.

The Study of Industrial and Service Cooperatives in the Asia-Pacific region is the result of a one-year research project conducted by ICA-AP & CICOPA in close collaboration with ICA member organisations, research institutes, individual cooperatives and individual researchers. The study attempted to answer some of the burning questions from the world of work and cooperatives.

- What are the contributions of cooperatives to work and employment?
- What are the new emerging models of worker cooperatives in the Asia Pacific Region?
- What are the different constituents of the ecosystem of a worker cooperative?
- How can policies be amended for the conducive growth of worker cooperatives?

This Report highlights different models of the industrial and service cooperatives in the Asia-Pacific region with concrete examples. It raises ongoing issues on the role of cooperatives in contributing to decent work and provides analysis and recommendations for the creation of an ecosystem conducive

to promoting these types cooperatives. The synopsis of the Report can be accessed [here](#) and full Report can be read [here](#).



ICA-AP and Access Livelihoods Consulting (ALC), India carried out a joint research project to ascertain the status of 'Autonomy & Independence' of Cooperatives in India. The need for this research was triggered by the following factors: enactment of the 97th Constitutional Amendment Act 2011, repealing of the Self-Reliant Co-operative Acts in two out of nine states (Madhya Pradesh and Odisha), and the emergence of people-centric enterprise structures and models in India especially those based on information technology. The study has attempted to assess India's commitment towards the 4th Cooperative Principle and the actions initiated to give cooperatives sufficient autonomy and respect for their values of self-reliance and self-management. The full Report 'Autonomy and Independence of Cooperatives in India' can be read [here](#).

ICA-AP ACTIVITIES

12th annual meeting of the ICA-AP Committee on Youth Cooperation (ICYC)

The 12th annual meeting of the ICYC was held on October 12, 2019 in Kigali, Rwanda. The annual committee meeting is a requirement where members meet to discuss activities undertaken by the committee by and plan for the upcoming year. The meeting was attended by members from Karachi Cooperative Housing Society (KCHSU), Pakistan; AIMCoop, Philippines; and Iran Chamber of Cooperatives, Iran (ICC). Members from Nepal Agricultural Cooperative Central Federation Limited, Nepal and KOPINDO, Indonesia also virtually joined the meeting.

The Chairperson, Mr. Ahsan Ali Thakur from KCHSU opened the meeting with his remarks on the activities undertaken by the committee such as the Go Green Workshop and Go Green Campaign 2.0 in collaboration with ICA Africa Youth Network to commemorate the International Mother Earth Day in April; and the global youth cooperative webinar to celebrate the International Youth Day in August. This was followed by brief country reports by the members present.



ICYC Chairperson congratulating the new Vice Chairperson Mr. Alireza Banaeifar.

During the course of the meeting, the members discussed the proposed changes to the Constitution of the committee; need for enhanced involvement and participation of ICYC members in committee activities and meetings; and activity plan for 2020. Election for the post of Vice-Chairperson was held in which Mr. Alireza Banaeifar from ICC contested and won.

The meeting was also attended by a few guests which included the former ICYC Secretary, Mr. Santosh Kumar who spoke about platform cooperatives and how youth can benefit from integrated tech-based business platforms. He mentioned that in 2017, [ICA General Assembly passed a resolution](#) calling on cooperators to explore the potential of platform cooperatives. He urged the ICYC members to participate in an ongoing [survey](#) on platform cooperatives which would help ICA determine interests at large in advancing platform cooperatives. Ms. Gemma Obeng from the Co-operative College UK informed the ICYC members about the upcoming [Centenary Conference](#) by Co-operative College in Rochdale from 26-28 November 2019. She highlighted the need for redirecting the focus on youth and cooperation for and by new generation. She also touched upon the future of work, role of youth in cooperatives and the role of cooperatives in educational institutions. Mr. P. Jayasrinath (Shree) from ICA-AP who provides technical support to the committee, informed the members about the digital initiatives of ICYC such as [YouTube Channel](#), [Facebook](#) and the ICYC [website](#). He noted that these social media platforms are actively used by the committee to promote ICYC activities and to reach out to youth within and outside the cooperative movement.

The meeting culminated with the Chairperson recognising the contribution of Mr. P. Jayasrinath and distribution of certificates to the participants of the Go Green Campaign 2.0. The Go Green Campaign certificates were jointly presented by the ICYC Chairperson and Ms. Hilda Ojal, President ICA Africa Youth Network.



L-R: Mr. P. Jayasrinath (ICA-AP), Mr. Cecile Jay Masanegra (AIMCoop), Mr. Alireza Banaeifar (ICC), Mr. Ahsan Ali Thakur (KCHSU), Ms. Simren Singh (ICA-AP), Mr. Ryan M. Huesca (AIMCoop)

ICA-AP Regional Board meeting, Kigali, Rwanda



ICA-AP Board members at the conclusion of the meeting.

The ICA-AP Regional Board Meeting was held at the Kigali Convention Center (Rwanda) on October 13, 2019 from 14:30 to 18:00 hours in conjunction with the ICA global Conference and General Assembly. The board meeting was attended by 31 participants, including 13 board members, observers and interpreters. The meeting was chaired by Li Chunsheng, Chairperson of the Regional Board who in his opening remarks extended a warm welcome to the members.

The important items discussed at the meeting were: ICA-AP Activities report for the period March to August 2019; Membership situation (at present ICA-AP has got 108 organizations from 33 countries); Financial report for January to June 2019; ICA-AP Activity Plan and Budget for 2020; Updates from the ICA-EU project, Women and Youth committees; ICC proposal for Cooperative Research and Development Center (CRDC) in Iran; Updates on ICA strategy and 2020 ICA Congress; and Venue and date of 2020 Regional Assembly.

It was decided to hold the next board meeting in the Philippines in late April 2020. The Regional Director was authorized to fix the date in consultation with the ICA-AP President.

India International Cooperatives Trade Fair (IICTF)

The India International Cooperatives Trade Fair (IICTF) was organized by the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) and supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare, Government of India and cooperative federations from October 11 to 13. The IICTF was the first of its kind trade fair to be organized in India and was attended by 35, 000 participants from 30+ countries. ICA-AP participated in the trade fair by setting up a stall to promote its activities and display its publications on themes like cooperative law, gender, and cooperative development. The stall was visited by many participants including Registrars and Joint Registrars from cooperative departments, Managing Directors from various national and state apex federations, as well as primary cooperatives and onlookers from outside the cooperative ecosystem. This was an opportunity for ICA-AP to share its publications, its long-standing work and advocacy on cooperatives, and spread awareness about the model.



Crowds flocking to the ICA-AP stall at the IICTF 2019.

The IICTF also hosted a series of thematic panel discussions on topics like youth and women empowerment through cooperatives, globalization of cooperative trade, big data and cyber security and cooperatives, amongst others. ICA-AP participated as a knowledge partner for the thematic panel on youth and gender empowerment through cooperatives. Mrs. Savitri Singh, Program Director, ICA-AP made a presentation about the current scenario of youth and gender equality in the Asia Pacific region, the lack of data, and the myriad ways through which ICA-AP has been advocating for greater inclusion of young people and women within cooperatives.



Mrs. Savitri Singh delivers her presentation during the session on youth and women empowerment through cooperatives.

ICA-MAFF Follow-up visit to Mongolia

A delegation from the Institute for Development of Agricultural Cooperation (IDACA) represented by Mr. Toru Nakashima, Manager, Training and Department Department/ General Affairs Department and Ms. Hiroko Tayama, staff of Training Department and the International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific (ICA-AP) represented by Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director visited Mongolia to meet participants of the ICA-Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries training program and to review the implementation of the Action Plan.



Follow-up team with participants at NAMAC office.

Cooperatives in Mongolia

The new cooperative movement in Mongolia has been developing over the past 20 years, changing its characteristics and basic principles dramatically compared to cooperatives in socialist regime. The

development of cooperatives is seen as beneficial to create jobs and improve livelihoods in a country which has low population and small market.

The governments interest is to increase cooperatives' contribution to society by creating favorable legal and economic environment, to develop small and medium enterprises intensively, improve competitiveness, and increase collaboration among cooperatives and supportive institutes. Currently there are over 4,200 cooperative nationwide with a predominant number in the agriculture and livestock sector.

In 1995, Mongolia drafted its first cooperative law; which has been amended at various times (1998, 2002, 2006). Efforts have been underway since 2010 to ensure cooperatives are recognized as a form of business and to have amendments made to existing cooperatives laws to fit with ICA's definition that cooperatives are businesses owned and run by and for their members. The most recent effort has been the submission (September) of a draft law by a group of representatives of the Great State Hural (Parliament), which include Mr. Eldev-Ochir Lkhagvaa, President National Association of Mongolian Agricultural Cooperatives (NAMAC) and Mr. Nyamaagiin Enkhbold, President Mongolian National Cooperative Association (MNCA).

The Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry's goal is to promote sustainable development concept in Mongolia. Towards this end they are looking to develop intensive livestock farming based on the population concentration and market demand; increase the fertility of soil, reduce land deterioration, adopt economical and efficient techniques; support the business and economics of herders and herder groups, small and medium sized farmers; develop the industrial sector; and introduce advanced technology. The plan is to raise the share of agriculture from 17.4% (2017) to 20% (2030) and increase income of herders by 80%. Mongolia has a substantive livestock population which includes lamb (27.3 m), sheep (30.1 m), cow (4.4 m), horse (3.9 m), and camel (0.4m); which provide meat, milk, wool, cashmere, and leather. The SME and cooperative sector policy is to stabilize SME and coop development, increase finances, improve competitiveness, market expansion, clusters, training, incubation.

The National program on cooperative development has been implemented in three phases. The first phase from 1998 to 2008 focused on promotion, development and strengthening of cooperatives. The second phase from 2009 to 2017 focused on creation of enabling environment and strengthening the supply chain. The third phase from 2019 to 2024 which was recently approved will increase production and raise awareness and share of cooperatives (budget still needs to be allocated).

Interview with Participants

We met some of the participants individually and also visited the cooperatives to see the implementation of the action plan. Some of the participants when they attended the training were employees of NAMAC; after the training, they have moved to other organizations. The important things are that they continue to be involved in cooperatives, carry out their action plan, and put in place learning from the training.

Giiikhnanan Mashbat attended the Fostering Leaders to Reinforce Business Development of Agricultural Cooperatives in 2016. His action plan was to strengthen the marketing system of NAMAC by looking into the environment for cooperatives, introducing marketing systems similar to JA, and upgrade training given to members. Upon coming back, he introduced the action plan to his co-workers.

Giiikhnanan focused his attention on improving the visibility of the cooperative brand. The NAMAC Agri-Coop brand has been shared with members at the annual meetings and in exhibitions.

Competition is held to choose the products with the highest quality which can use the Agri-coop brand.

In 2017, Giikhnanan got an offer to join Caritas, an international NGO, as Coordinator for one of their projects. After having spent a few years in NAMAC, he felt this was a good opportunity to pursue as he would still be involved in cooperatives and work in the same sector – agriculture. His role in Caritas is to conduct surveys (baseline information on income and status) in two provinces, organize trainings (green house farming, improve consumption), form the 200 members into groups (which would later be cooperatives), and market the products. The project which was to end in 2020 has been extended by one year. Even though he has left NAMAC, he is still in touch with them.

The ICA-MAFF training he underwent is still very relevant to his work in Caritas. During the training he learned about the importance of quality, marketing and understanding customer's needs. In Mongolia, most agriculture produce are imported from China which are not secure. Also the produce is not graded based on quality. The aim of the project is to increase household income from 1.5 million Tugrik to 3 million Tugrik. In order to do this, he is developing business plan with the groups, teaching them to grow vegetables in green houses and encouraging them to brand their products. Mongolia has harsh weather and vegetable growing is seasonal; to boost income he is teaching some members to make soap during winter.

Zinamyadar Dashdonov attended the Fostering Agricultural Cooperatives for Food Value Chain training in 2018. His action plan is to increase productivity of herders in Undurshireet soum. The project is being implemented with 467 herder families. Animal husbandry is the main source of income and money is earned by supplying dairy products, meat, wool, cashmere and skin. The project involves serving the veterinary needs of herders at an affordable price. This in turn would help herders manage livestock better, increase productivity, improve quality, and derive better prices. The veterinary services provided over the year would involve processing, deworming, deeping, dropping and disinfecting. The uniqueness of the project is that it rests largely on trade in sheep rather than in cash. This fits well with the herders strength to rear and the cooperative's to provide service. Meetings have taken place with the herders and the project initiated on pilot basis with 10 households.

Byambatseren Dorjsuren attended the Fostering Leaders to Reinforce Business Development of Agricultural Cooperatives in 2015. Her action is to enhance Youth participation in the Agricultural Sector. The ICA-MAFF training program was the first exposure for Byambaa in an international development context. Given her background in law she had to do more study to know about the agriculture sector and dwell deeper to understand the needs of farmers. *"I have taken more interest in farmers and their capacity development. In meetings with members, I always start with the developments in the agriculture sector in Japan and the role of cooperatives in improving the situation of farmers. I talk about the importance of marketing, value addition, and presentation."*

The action plan was based on a survey when NAMAC started work the Asian Farmers Association for Rural Development to organize a national youth forum in 2013. Most young people are not interested in agriculture. Even as the number of students graduating with a degree in agriculture is increasing, there is a decreasing trend in those joining agriculture. Farming in Mongolia, as in other countries is also facing the issue of aging farmers. In many cases, the husband stays back in the soum to take care of the herd, while the wife and children move to the city (for education).

There is good basis for focusing on youth as the population of the country as a whole is relatively young, with the average age being 27.5 years. About 59% of Mongolia's residents are under the age of 30, while over a quarter of that population is under the age of 14. The young population, coupled with a growth rate of 1.31%, has put a strain on the country's economy.

(source: <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/mongolia-population/>).

The youth outreach has been put in place to increase the number of youth in agriculture, provide work opportunities of interest to youth, enhance awareness about cooperatives, and meaningfully use the talent of youth. NAMAC has signed an MoU with the university to give lecture of cooperatives and agriculture, provide opportunities for youth to experience cooperatives, and hold competitive events among youth (to generate interest). Internet access and electricity is an issue in rural areas and having these would motivate more youth to move away from cities. NAMAC is also engaged with various ministries in charge of cooperatives and is mooting the idea of school cooperatives.

NAMAC has held four (4) youth forums (three regional and one smaller) in which around 200 youth under the age of 35 have participated. The purpose of these forums is to promote youth and sustainable development. The Forum is an opportunity to raise awareness and promote all forms of cooperatives. During the NAMAC annual assembly, a special event is held focused on youth. Youth in provinces are encouraged to form small groups and have their own activities. In some centers women come together and form a community and engage in handicrafts and other income generation activity.

The third Sustainable Development and Young Cooperators was being held during the time of the follow-up visit at the Bakh Bayang Institute of Peace. Around 50 youth and government representatives from 9 aimag in the Central region were present at the training. The topics covered during the training were on decent work, gender, good governance, leadership, and participation.

Tuul Tuvshinbayar and Otgonbolor Gantumur attended the Fostering Agricultural Cooperatives for Food Value Chain training in 2017. Their action plan was to develop Marketing Business of Dairy Cooperative

The Suun Dalai Tsatsal cooperative in Bayang Chandman Soum, Tuv province is located around 70 kms from Ulaan Batar. In 2009, with the support of the participants and Global Communities, the members came together as a producer group. In 2013, the cooperative was registered and it currently has 16 members who each have three to four cows. Initially the cooperative was not well recognized, the price which members got was low, and there was less capacity to process.

The yield from the cows is low, the cooperative is working to provide veterinary service and nutritious fodder. The milk collected is processed and converted to dairy products (cheese, ice cream) and sold in the shop set up by the cooperative (supported by the Support to Employment Creation in Mongolia project by the EU and UNIDO), made-to-order, and in exhibitions.

The cooperative used to share its profits till 2016. Since then, it has accumulated the money and taken a loan (5 million tugrik) from the soum to build a new space for office and processing (up to 1 tonne per day). The cooperative also has four employees.

The members of the cooperatives had visited Anand in India to study the AMUL cooperative model. The learnings the members carried to their cooperative were: commitment of members (time devoted to the cooperative), need to expand products, timely testing and carrying out processing. According to Tsermaa, the Chairperson, "Quality is the most important part of production. We are very particular to see that hygienic practices are introduced."

The cooperative would like to increase the number of members. The criteria which it would look at were knowledge about cooperative, attitude of members, and willingness to work for the cooperative.

NEWS FROM MEMBERS

Singapore Co-operatives, Singapore Stories- Documenting the history of cooperatives in Singapore

On October 18, the President of Singapore Halimah Yacob, launched the book, “Singapore Co-operatives, Singapore Stories”, a commemorative book published by the Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF), at SNCF’s final art-themed pop-up installation at Plaza Singapura. It covers the contribution of cooperatives to the development of Singapore and had been launched to commemorate the Singapore Bicentennial. The book contains historical accounts and anecdotes from the time when Singapore’s first co-op was registered in 1925. Today, there are more than 80 cooperatives which provide affordable goods and services to more than 1,000,000 Singaporeans. President Halimah Yacob gave the books to 15 cooperators, whose stories are told in the pages.



(L-R) Ms. Dolly Goh, CEO, SNCF, President Halimah Yacob, Mr. Kok Kwong Kwek, CEO, NTUC Learning Hub.

President Yacob then toured the cooperative booths (showcasing cooperative stories and their contributions) and interacted with different cooperatives at the exhibit. She visited the pop-art installation and the cooperative history journey wall (which highlights how cooperatives have helped better the lives of Singaporeans by addressing the social needs). Copies of the book will be available at public and school libraries in Singapore from next month. You can view photographs from the launch [here](#).



In March 2016, the ICA and the European Union signed a Framework Partnership Agreement (Europe Aid/150-053/C/ACT/Multi) to implement a multi-year and multi-country development program aimed at benefitting and advancing cooperatives worldwide. The Partnership is officially titled "Cooperatives in Development: People Centred Businesses in Action", translated into the social media hashtag #Coops4Dev (cooperatives for development). The Partnership has 8 Result Areas and 33 Activity Streams for delivery by 5 units, one housed in each regional office and one at the coordination level in Brussels. The AP unit has identified three strategic development priorities namely, participation of Cooperatives in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Youth Inclusion in Cooperatives, and Exploring Work and Ownership Structures in Cooperatives. The ICA-AP implements the program in collaboration with ICA members and in partnership with other stakeholders such as governments, international development agencies, private sector and NGOs in the region. You may read more about the Partnership [here](#).

Asia Regional Meeting of the Policy Forum on Development, Kathmandu, Nepal



Group photo of the Regional PFD participants.

The Policy Forum on Development (PFD) held its Asia Regional Meeting in Kathmandu, Nepal from September 24-26, 2019. Around 80 representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs), local authorities (LAs), and representatives of international organisations, national governments and the EU gathered to discuss issues on top of global agenda and the progress made in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It was attended by ICA staff from the global office in Brussels, regional office in Delhi, and ICA members from Nepal and Sri Lanka.

The regional PFD looked at cooperation and partnerships between the EU and Asia; examined the progress of the 2030 Agenda at regional, national and local levels; encouraged debates around the state of enabling environment and presented the specific challenges that climate change brings to the region. The meeting reflected the essence and goal of the PFD: recognise CSOs and LAs as essential development actors to achieve shared development goals and create space for trust-building and frank exchange in developing multi-stakeholder dialogue on development policies.

While the SDGs focus on the national level, interactions and participation at the regional level provide space for sharing and discussion. This would help identify areas of cooperation and participation, identify “nuggets” of success, learn who has done what and how, and see if these examples can be replicated at the national or global level. In short, it was widely believed that good partnerships and best practices in the region could set an example for others to follow.

Despite consensus about the need to act to tackle the impact of climate change, the Asian region is not planning well to deal with the potential consequences of climate change. Human and environmental rights must be balanced, and social and equitable solutions taken into consideration. These were exemplified in the session that discussed the impact of climate change on indigenous and other vulnerable communities. It was stressed that a shift needs to be made towards low carbon economies, adaptable infrastructure, and encourage models of sustainable consumption as well as emission-free jobs.



Mrs. Savitri Singh, Program Director, ICA-AP makes an intervention during the meeting.

Cooperatives in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and consumer have a large membership base and the effect of climate change is felt directly by these members. Addressing climate change should be a priority to save members and institutions. ICA-AP staff shared information about the “ICA-AP Regional Capacity Building Program on SDG-13: Climate Action” from 19-21 November 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand. The theme of the program is: “Save the Environment to Sustain Future Generations.” The program is co-designed with experts from GIZ to build the capacity of senior executives and leaders of cooperatives.



(L-R) Dr. Asana, Thilakrathana, NCC, Sri Lanka, Ms. Meena Pokhrel, NCCFL, Nepal, H.E. Veronica Cody, Ambassador, EUD Nepal, Mrs. Savitri Singh, ICA-AP & Mr. Mohit Dave, ICA-AP.

The ICA delegation had an opportunity to meet and greet H.E. Veronica Cody, Ambassador, European Union Delegation to Nepal. A draft communiqué summarising the main discussions with recommendations was presented by CSOs and LAs during the closing session: *“We welcome and acknowledge the value of the Regional PFD Meeting in bringing us together to constructively engage with one another... the PFD looks forward to see Asia as an equal partner to the EU in the successful continue to collaborate among each other and with the EU in cooperation with regional bodies and in pursuit of genuine SDG implementation in the region towards development justice.”*

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 2019

- ICA Regional Workshop for Managers on “Management of Consumer Co-ops”, Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam, November 3-7 (tbc)
- Training of Trainers for Management Capacity Building of Women and Gender Integration in Cooperative Development, Colombo, Sri Lanka, November 5-8
- ICA-AP Regional Conference on Climate Action: SDG 13, Theme: Save the environment for future generation, Bangkok, Thailand, November 19-20
- Training Programs for Managers of Consumer Co-ops in Japan (Winter), Tokyo/Kobe, Japan, November 18- December 1
- ICEI annual meeting, Kathmandu, Nepal, November 25-26

December 2019

- ICA-AP Cooperative Research Conference, Newcastle, Australia, December 12-14
- Second ICA-AP Meeting on Development of Cooperatives in Pacific Islands, Newcastle, Australia, December 13

February 2020

- Global Youth Forum, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, February 3-7, 2020
- 3rd ICA-MAFF Japan Training Course on ‘Fostering Leaders for Management and Development of Agricultural Cooperatives in Asia 2019’, Thailand and Japan, February 2- March 18, 2020