

ICA-AP NEWSLETTER

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

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF ICA-AP	2
COVID-19 RESPONSE	2
MESSAGE FROM ARIEL GUARCO, ICA PRESIDENT	2
PLATFORM TO SHARE COVID-19 EXPERIENCES, RESOURCES AND NEEDS.....	4
ICA-AP MEMBERS: RESPONSE WORK	5
<i>Women Cooperators in Iran on the forefront of campaign against COVID-19.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Farmers organisation, IFFCO, responds to containment efforts.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Impact of Covid-19 on the informal economy.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>“We are all individually vulnerable – It’s more than ever urgent to cooperate”</i>	<i>7</i>
ICA-APS WORK IN GENDER EMPOWERMENT	9
FIGHTING FOR WOMEN WORKERS’ RIGHTS TO CELEBRATING THE IDEA OF WOMEN: OBSERVANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY	13
ICA-APS WORK TO ENHANCE GENDER EQUALITY.....	10
ICA-AP COMMITTEE ON WOMEN.....	12
ICA-AP UPDATES	16
ICA-MAFF TRAINING	16
ROLE OF COOPERATIVES IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA-PACIFIC COUNTRIES	17
COOPERATIVE CONFERENCE OF BIHAR	19
GUJARAT STATE COOPERATIVE SEMINAR FOR WOMEN.....	20
ICA-EU PARTNERSHIP: UPDATES	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
GYF20	21
RESEARCH UPDATES	21
GCE AMBASSADOR ON COOPERATION IN INDONESIA.....	22
ICA-AP: IRMA – MEMBER PARTNERSHIP	24
ICA-AP MEMBER ACTIVITIES	25
BOOK REVIEW: A GENEALOGY OF THE COOPERATIVE.....	25
ANNOUNCEMENTS	27
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVES DAY	27
ICA-AP COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CONFERENCE: CALL FOR PAPERS.....	27
UPCOMING EVENTS	27

Celebrating 60 years of ICA-AP



In 2020, we celebrate an incredible journey of 60 years of ICA in the Asia-Pacific region. Our growth has been hand-in-hand with our members in the region. However, at this time, we need to direct our attention to a much larger threat to humanity. The world is going through a pandemic which has affected almost all countries; disrupted work and livelihoods; uprooted lives, irrespective of rich or poor (though the impact on the poor is more severe); and created social and economic upheavals whose effects will be felt for a long time to come.

Cooperatives have risen in times of crises to respond to emerging needs and shown their resilience to survive by focusing on members and staying true to values and principles. In this issue, we will focus on work being carried out by cooperatives to address the impact of coronavirus in their communities.

These are unprecedented times, ICA-AP stands in solidarity with its members and the cooperative movement. We remain available to discuss concerns arising due to COVID-19 and encourage all our members to share their experiences and actions during these times. We hope our members, their communities and loved ones remain safe and well. Together we stand, and together we shall overcome!

COVID-19 Response



Picture credit: Cornell Cooperative Extension

Message from Ariel Guarco, ICA President



ICA President Ariel Guarco

Dear Members, Dear Friends,

In these difficult times, I would like to express my solidarity with all ICA members, and in particular with all those who are going through a painful and containment period.

The emergency we find ourselves in and the measures enacted by the national authorities to prevent the spread of Covid-19 pose a great challenge to our communities and to the cooperatives that play an important role in them.

For the good of the communities, we must all demonstrate intelligence and great composure to face not only the health risk, but also the general functioning of our enterprises and activities.

Many cooperatives have already reorganized the way they work. The ICA offices did the same. I would like to commend the efforts you have made within your respective organisations.

It is clear that we will adapt our actions according to the provisions prescribed by the competent authorities to best contribute to the protection of people as we have always done.

In the cooperative movement, we know that "the experience of the other" based on values such as respect, listening, acceptance, empathy, mutual aid, good will, responsibility, solidarity, good citizenship, etc., is also fundamental.

In crisis situations, cooperatives have always been at the forefront with lucidity, audacity and determination. Today, thanks to their inherent solidarity, unity and pioneering spirit, they continue to generate powerful ideas for the benefit of all.

Let us continue to communicate, to share relevant information, to appeal to the responsibility and sensibility of the entire cooperative movement.

I wish you all the strength and courage to face this troubled period.

Ariel Guarco
ICA President

Platform to share COVID-19 experiences, resources and needs



International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)

This group has been created for members to discuss various issues.

THREADS

POLLS

MEMBERS

FILES

SUBGROUPS

SETTINGS

ICA forum on Loomio platform for sharing experiences and needs during COVID-19

ICA has launched a forum for its members to participate in coordinating the global cooperative response to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. The platform, created on www.loomio.coop, a worker cooperative based in New Zealand, provides the space and means to share and build the cooperative narrative in terms of the movement's impact across socioeconomic scales, and create a consolidated response to the crisis.

Members are invited to share their ongoing experience and needs, including short-term and urgent ones such as medical supplies, and more long-term ones. There are five main threads on the platform:

- The situation on the ground
- How are you helping?
- What do you need?
- Cooperative Solidarity Fund
- Online resources and links

To join this discussion platform built by Loomio, click [here](#). For any questions regarding Loomio, please mail Santosh Kumar: kumar@ica.coop. Please allow up to 24 hours for a response and approval to join the discussion.

ICA-AP Members: Response Work

Women Cooperators in Iran on the forefront of campaign against COVID-19



Picture credit: Reuters

We celebrate 2020 International Women's Day by expressing support for the Iranian Women Co-operators' Think Tank which has been active in the battle against the COVID-19 outbreak, alongside Iran's medical community. Iran's cooperative entities, Tehran's Handicraft Cooperative Union, Iranian Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC), the Iranian Co-operators' Association, and Rah-e-Roshd cooperative school have been closely cooperating with the Women Co-operators' Think Tank in fighting the disaster. Here is a quick look at work being carried out by Iran's cooperatives:

- In Golestan province, Gonbad-e-Kavus Welfare Cooperative in collaboration with the local medical university has started a project of producing one million masks and isolation gowns for medical personnel. This project is similarly being followed in six other provinces. The that masks and gowns are produced in small workshops but their isolation property is taken care of by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as the workshops don't have the necessary technology to do so. Meanwhile, Ms Salehian, a cooperator and the managing director of a women's cooperative in Golestan province, has been involved in the production of medical essentials. Their team has succeeded in mass producing masks using a reliable fabric.
- In Kermanshah and Arak provinces, a similar project is underway. However, due to the traffic ban between Tehran and the two provinces, it is has not been possible to obtain the special 'tissue' fabric used for producing medical masks. Cooperatives here have improvised to use a polyester fabric (Tetron), whose properties are similar to tissue.
- In Tehran, the Handicraft Cooperative Union has taken bold steps in cleansing and disinfecting pavements and ATMs across the district. Under joint support of Tehran's Municipality and

UNESCO club, Sepidjamegan Volunteering Campaign has kicked-off to welcome and organise the members of the public joining the fight against COVID-19.

- Rah-e-Roshd cooperative school has joint the nationwide Dastyar campaign, announcing readiness to provide their comprehensive online education service to all schools across the country to help them make up for the hiatus faced by schools due to the lockdown.

The phenomenal response by women cooperators in these unprecedented times will unmistakably facilitate social resilience in the face of this pandemic.

Farmers organisation, IFFCO, responds to containment efforts



The Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Ltd. (IFFCO), the leading cooperative in India has been active in lending its hand in fighting Corona Virus. IFFCO's five Fertilizer Units in the country are functional and producing Fertilizers and essential soil nutrients to ensure the agriculture operations in the country are not affected. IFFCO's field staff across the country have been active in providing masks, soaps and other protective gears to farmers and laborers. In response to the call made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the people of India to contribute to the **PM CARES Fund** toward relief efforts against the coronavirus outbreak, IFFCO made a very generous contribution of \$3.6 million to the Fund. Dr. U.S. Awasthi, Managing Director IFFCO said, "Our humble contribution, made on behalf of staff, members and farmers, is to strengthen the country's efforts at fighting against COVID19.

Impact of Covid-19 on the informal economy



Watch Mirai Chatterjee's message on the impact of COVID-19 [here](#)

SEWA is a central trade union that works with women in the informal sector. We draw here from SEWA members and workers from 20 different trades across 11 states who were interviewed about

their awareness of COVID, how it was already impacting their income and their families, their access to clean water, and medical services. Some key insights are presented below:

The informal sector, despite being a huge contributor to India's GDP, is often neglected when it comes to supportive policies especially in times of crises. Currently, with the spread of the COVID-19, there is significant rallying by governments, policymakers and health professionals for 'social distancing' and maintenance of proper hygiene. This implies minimising contact with the outside world and taking precautionary personal hygiene measures such as frequent use of hand sanitisers, wearing masks when ill and other such.

While these advisories may seem simple enough to carry out for a large proportion of the formal sector workforce, they are exclusionary towards informal sector workers as it is impossible for them to observe these measures due to the nature of their livelihood and their socio-economic standing.

SEWA for its part is engaging in advocacy efforts on behalf of the informal economy; establishing market linkages for SEWA production units and social enterprises to stitch and distribute masks, production of fair cost sanitisers and hand wash via lok swasthya; carrying out awareness campaigns- videos, voice messages, whatsapp forwards; ensuring timely access to savings through our mobile bank saathis and banking correspondents promoting savings and credit across states – Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Gujarat.

“We are all individually vulnerable – It's more than ever urgent to cooperate”



Picture credit: Economic Times

Balasubramanian Iyer responded to questions posed by Eugenie Park, reporter from Erounnet (<http://www.eroun.net/news/articleView.html?idxno=11054>), an Internet news company covering stories in the social sector.

1. *As the Regional Director of AP region, do you find the crisis due to COVID-19 in coop business serious in Asia? Are there any specific figures?*

The Covid-19 pandemic is a crisis faced by humanity, and cooperatives are not isolated from it. The situation is still unfolding in many countries so it very difficult to put specific figures; but as we know, it will be very large.

The impact on cooperative business will vary as we work across many sectors. Even during this time of crisis, many activities of cooperatives are deemed essential and need to continue. This includes

agriculture and allied sectors, credit, health, retail and others. These cooperatives may see a lesser impact compared to those in the services sector, which are more severely impacted. The impact is bound to be across economic and social terms.

To cut community transmission, governments are advocating 'social distancing.' The impact of being confined, not being able to freely step out, loss of contact, ways and means to survive, and keeping oneself and family together will extract costs.

2. How is the cooperative movement dealing with the pandemic? Are there any examples of cooperatives contributing to tackle the pandemic in the AP region that I can introduce to the readers? (For example in Korea, more than 25 members coops in iCOOP donated goods to health centres, hospitals, low-income groups, etc.)

I am happy to hear that cooperatives in Korea are coming together to help front line workers and groups most impacted. The work being done by iCOOP, Korea is very encouraging, and resonates with reports coming out from across Asia.

In Australia, the Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals, the apex body, is providing information to their members on the government assistance for coronavirus impacted businesses and what it means.

In India, one of the plants of the Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative has received requests from the local administration for support. They immediately arranged for the supply of several medical emergency items including nebulizers, oxygen cylinders, masks, sanitizers, etc.

In the Philippines, cooperatives have launched a nationwide campaign of donations to combat the virus and help the elderly, who are the most vulnerable. These include washable face masks, vitamins, and other kits.

In India, the Self-Employed Women's Association's health wing, Lok Swasthya has low cost pharmacies outside two large public hospitals 24x7. Lok Swasthya is also manufacturing low cost hand sanitizers as the poor cannot afford these, and also to bridge the demand-supply gap in markets.

In Iran, the Iranian Women Co-operators' Think Tank, comprising among others the Tehran Handicraft Cooperative Union, Iranian Chamber of Cooperatives, the Iranian Cooperators' Association, and Rah-e-Roshd Cooperative School has been running projects in different provinces in collaboration with the medical community to produce masks and isolation gowns.

President Ariel Guarco and Director General Bruno Roelants of ICA have written letters of concern and support to all members. ICA is inviting members to share their ongoing experience as well as their short-term and long-term needs on the [Loomio Platform](#). ICA is also planning to establish a Cooperative Solidarity Fund to support cooperatives in need.

3. *The Summer Olympics have been postponed. Are there any possibilities that the 2020 World Congress might be rescheduled?*

The ICA Global Board is currently having online deliberations about this very issue. There are a number of parties involved in organising the 2020 World Congress whose views need to be ascertained, projections made about what the situation would be, the sentiments of cooperatives taken on board, etc. The decision should be made and conveyed soon.

4. *What kind of wise measures do you think coops should take in this kind of situation to survive?*

Measures can be taken across the entire cooperative system - apex bodies, cooperatives, and members. Government across the world are taking steps to provide massive stimulus to kick-start the economy. Apex bodies can look into details of the stimulus and see how cooperatives can benefit, provide the information and help cooperatives access the benefits.

Cooperatives, as people-centered business, can look at member needs and ascertain support requirements. For example, some credit cooperatives are deferring loan repayments; while it could impact their business in the short-term they are keeping their member interests at the centre. Some cooperatives are using their Cooperative Development Fund meant for education to provide medical and other supplies. I see this as an opportunity to enhance cooperation among cooperatives. Credit cooperatives can step up and provide assistance to many of the worker and services cooperatives which have had to shutter their operations, defer payments and lay-off workers.

Members themselves need to ensure they adhere to measures put in place by the government and support members and others in their community in whichever way they can.

5. *Are there any messages of hope that you want to deliver to all cooperators in the AP region?*

I would like to share a message that a member sent to me, “the coronavirus crisis reminds that we live in a common home where we are all individually vulnerable and at the same time collectively interdependent. It’s more than ever urgent

ICA-APs work in gender empowerment

Women in cooperatives have been at the forefront, be it at home, work, or in the community. This month we commemorate the role of women in cooperatives. We highlight the work done by ICA-AP over the years to enhance gender equality, the recent initiative by the Regional Women Committee, and the significance of International Women’s Day. The examples on work done by cooperatives to tackle the current COVID-19 pandemic further shows that women in cooperatives have taken the lead.

ICA-AP's work to enhance gender equality

This month, to commemorate the invaluable role of women in the cooperative movement, we mark 60 years of work undertaken by ICA-AP and its members to enhance gender equality and work on gender empowerment across regions and sectors.

In the sixties, the focus areas of the ICA Education Centre were in the field of cooperative education, building capacity, and human resources development. From the beginning the Centre focused on gender issues and in enhancing youth and women participation in cooperatives. In the seventies, during the United Nations Women Decade (1975-85), initiatives for integrating women and gender concerns in cooperatives were accelerated. In 1990, the Human Resources Development Project of ICA identified the need for gender integration and put women's participation as an important agenda.

The first Gender Consultation held in Colombo, April-May 1992, was attended by 32 delegates from Movements in the Region. This was followed by a more strategic Gender Planning Conference in Tokyo in 1993. Several Regional Consultations/ Conferences were organized and as result of continuous efforts and increasing activities in gender integration, the idea of a regional women committee was mooted in 1997. In the same year, the First Conference on the Status of Women in Cooperatives in the Asia-Pacific region was organized in Tagaytay, Philippines on capacity building as well as cooperatives for leadership development of women.

The ICA-AP Committee on Women was established in 1998, in Seoul Korea. It promotes gender integration and increased participation of women at all levels in cooperatives, especially, at leadership levels. This is done through representing women in cooperatives through a common forum; promoting the understanding for gender integration and gender equality through networking; identifying areas for capacity building; advising and implementing activities; and liaising and collaborating with different stakeholders.

In the nineties, the International Organisation of Industrial, Artisanal and Service Producers Cooperatives (CICOPA) provided funds and expertise for the training and development of women and artisans in handicrafts, and to display their products. ICA-AP has assisted women's handicraft and textile cooperatives by providing them with techniques and marketing opportunities, through the CICOPA programmes.

In 2001, ILO-CoopNet and ICA, developed a training manual for leadership development in cooperatives in Asia-Pacific. This manual has been subsequently revised and is being used for training of trainers who train women cooperative leaders.

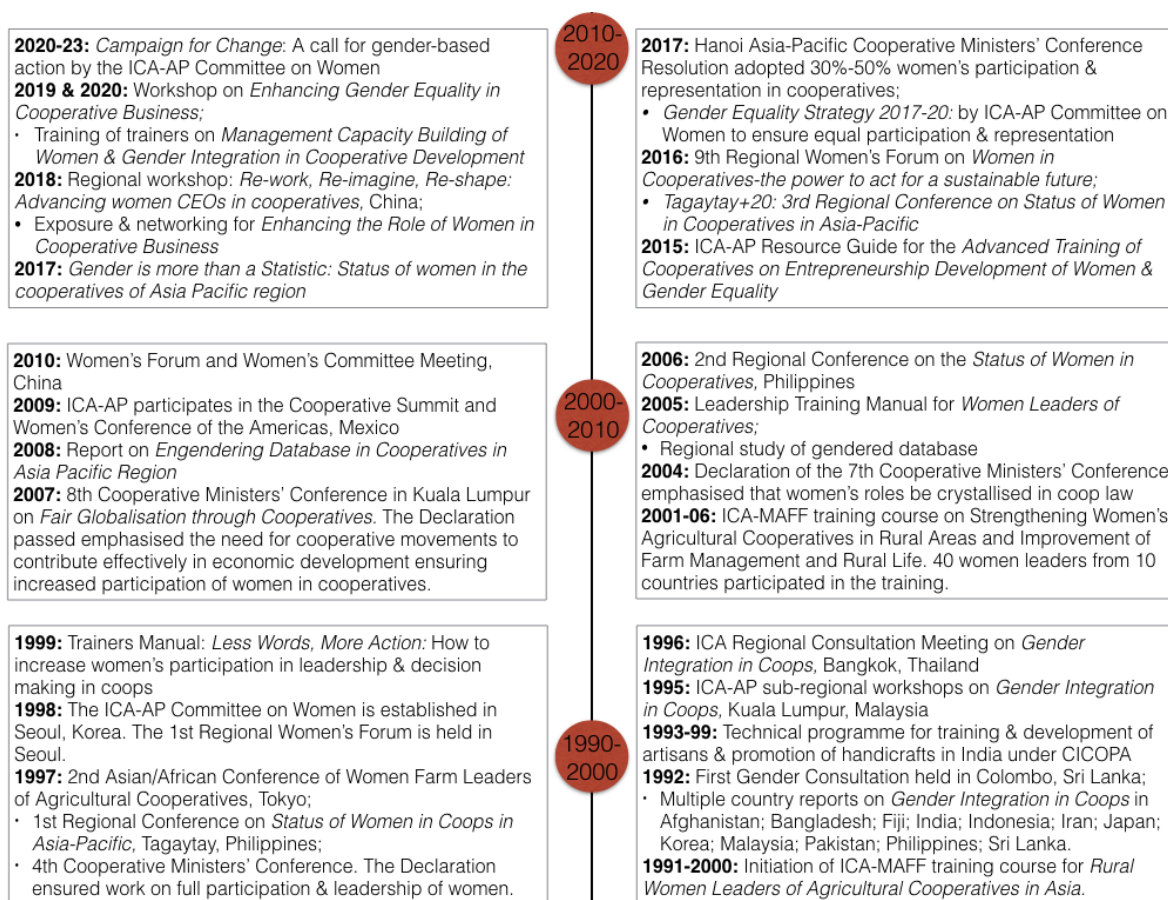
The first Regional study of gendered database was conducted in 2005. In 2017, the second study on sex-disaggregated data, *Gender is more than a Statistic: Status of Women in the Cooperatives of the Asia Pacific Region* was released.

The JCCU has been an active supporter of the Women Committee activities. They supported the first Regional Gender Consultation in 1992 in Colombo, have seconded experts to work at ICA-AP; financed training programs; and organized seminars and Forums.

Over the years, ICA-AP has collaborated with members in the region to conduct and facilitate a wide array of programmes to build capacity of cooperatives and build women’s capacities, to achieve gender equality. A number of conferences, seminars, workshops, research programmes, training, and capacity building programmes have been carried out across the region. Some of the key areas of work are:

- ❖ Organising regional Women Forums, Women CEO meeting, and other conferences;
- ❖ Networking programmes for women’s empowerment;
- ❖ Training of trainers for leadership development of women in cooperatives;
- ❖ Advocacy and lobbying at the Cooperative Ministers’ conferences to impress upon governments to enact gender sensitive laws and policies;
- ❖ Technical and financial support to organise gender programmes; provide resources – human and educational;
- ❖ Sex disaggregated data collection and dissemination;
- ❖ Information dissemination through newsletters and periodicals;
- ❖ Demonstrating methods to involve women in operating consumer cooperatives, in income generating activities, and other forms of cooperatives.

The chart below provides a brief overview of some of the key activities organised by ICA-AP to enhance gender equality in the region, since 1960.



1990: Report on *Women in Development through Fishery Coops in Asia*: Report of the Joint ICA-CCA-SDID Planning Mission on Bangladesh, India and Philippines
1986 - Govt. of Japan extended full financial support in sponsoring training programmes for managers and women leaders of agricultural cooperatives
1986 – 2010: Under the ICA-MAFF Training Courses on *Strengthening Management of Agricultural Cooperatives in Asia*, 10 programmes on the *Promotion of Sustainable Enterprises for Women in Cooperatives* were carried out up to **2010**. Each programme was covered over one month, with participation from 100 women farm leaders.

1980: Regional Seminar on *Enhancing Women's Participation in Cooperative Activities*, Kandy, Sri Lanka
1977: Basic courses for women co-operators held at Colombo, Sri Lanka and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
1976: Regional Seminar on Orientation for Asian Women Cooperators at New Delhi
1975: Role of Women in Cooperative Development regional seminar at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
1971-77: ICA-AP partnered with NCUI for the *Cooperative Field Education* project in Indore, India. This was a district level cooperative field education project funded by the Swedish Cooperative Centre. One of the components of the project was to enhance women and youth participation in cooperatives, and work on income generating activities. The success of the project led to the Government of India sanctioning 50 similar projects for NCUI, of which, 40 continued up till **2010**.

1980-1990

1985: Technical studies carried out on women and cooperatives for presentation at the World Conference on Women, Nairobi;
 • *Women's Industrial Cooperative Societies in Bangladesh: A case study*
1984: ICA/SCC/NCC project for *Women's Consumer Education and Information through Cooperatives in Sri Lanka: An Experience in enhancing women's involvement in cooperative activity*.
1983: Report on *The Women's Associations of Fishery Cooperatives in Japan*
1982: Regional Meeting-cum-Workshop for representatives of national cooperative women's committees/national coordinators of cooperative women's activities held in Galle, Sri Lanka
1981: Report on *The Role of Women in the Japanese Agricultural Cooperative Movement*

1960-1980

1971: ICA-AP implemented a number of development programmes for member countries. 500 cooperative scholarships by the Govt. of India were offered to coops in the region for training in India on women and youth empowerment, particularly in relation to safe drinking water, income generation, nutrition, etc.
1962: ICA Regional Office in collaboration with UNESCO and NCUI organised the first regional seminar on *The Contribution of Cooperation to the Emancipation of Women*, at New Delhi, December
1960: U Nyi Nyi, the first Regional Director of ICA-AP, in his paper on *The Role of Secondary Organisations in Developing Leadership at District and National Levels*, presented at the first international seminar organised by ICA-AP in Delhi, stressed the need to organise women for greater participation in the cooperative movement, particularly in capacities suited to their status as mothers and housewives.

Biennial ICA-AP Committee on Women's Newsletter

MARCH, 2020



WOMEN IN COOPERATIVES

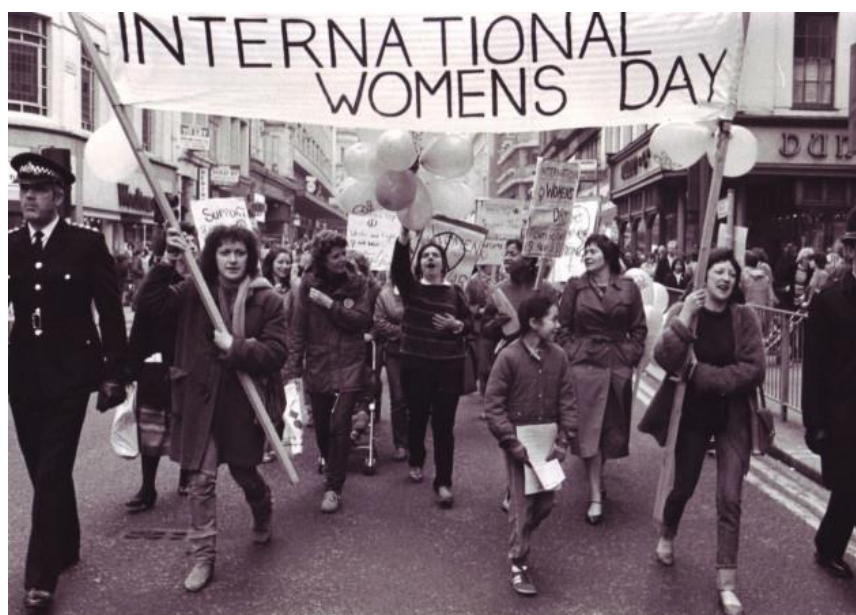
BIENNIAL NEWSLETTER ON WOMEN IN COOPERATIVES
 BY ICA ASIA AND PACIFIC COMMITTEE ON WOMEN



In October 2019, the Office Bearers of the Committee met in Kigali, Rwanda and decided to renew the Committee's newsletter on a biannual basis (March and September). The newsletter will document and disseminate activities undertaken by the Committee. The biennial ICA-AP Committee on Women's Newsletter can be viewed [here](#).

Fighting for Women Workers' Rights to Celebrating the Idea of Women: Observance of The International Women's Day

by *Simren Singh*, Program Officer, ICA-EU Cooperatives in Development People-centred Businesses in Action, ICA Asia and Pacific



The earliest records of observing women's day goes back to early twentieth century. Stemming from the simmering demands for the rights of women workers in factories and workshops in the United States, the purview of women's rights as workers gradually expanded to women's rights as citizens and ultimately as human beings.

It was in 1909, that the first ever National Women's Day was observed in the United States in honour of garment workers, who showed resistance against the long working hours and low wages. By 1911, the movement comprising of collectivised resistance and unionised voices for women, turned international. The first ever International Women's Day was marked on 19th March 1911 by over one million women and men in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. In times, when mass rallies were symbolic of popular disenchantment, the demand for women's rights to vote, to work, to hold public office, to vocational training, and to end discrimination on the job, were loud and clear. Over the decades, more and more aspects involving women caught attention, making International Women's Day symbolic of public sentiment. During the World War years, the mobilisation of women (and men

supportive of the cause) represented their stance against the war and the overbearing ramifications it had on their lives. Subsequently, a day that was an expression of discontentment and quest for improved rights, symbolising days of resentment and struggle, took the form of official holidays and half-day-outs for working women in some parts of the world, especially in socialist countries during the 1950s and 60s. However, the burgeoning international women's movement in the world was still fragmented.

It was not until 1975, when the United Nations declared it as the International Women's year, that the consolidation of voices to institutionalise change at the global level, began for the first time. The year also marked the launch of a dedicated decade (the United Nations Decade for Women: 1975-85) to focus on policies and issues that impact women at large, such as, pay equity, gendered violence, land ownership, women's education, and a wide range of other human rights. The concerted efforts of women activists and leaders who represented their local social-cultural- political and gendered milieu in a preliminary globalised world, were formalised post 1970s, at the international level.

The World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico City in 1975 is one of the foremost steps towards the formalisation and recognition of a worldwide women's movement. The Conference resulted in the Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and their Contribution to Development and Peace, that laid out a set of principles concerning the equality of men and women. The Conference also defined a World Plan of Action for implementation of the objectives of the International Women's Year, which offered a comprehensive set of guidelines for the advancement of women. This was followed by three other World Conferences (Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995). The last World Conference on Women held in Beijing, resulted in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which is considered a historic agreement signed by 189 governments, focussing on 12 critical areas (poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflict, economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, media, environment, and the girl child), and envisioning a world where each woman and girl can exercise her choices, such as participating in politics, getting an education, having an income, and living in societies free from violence and discrimination. The international women's movement has, thus, been strengthened by these four global conferences that have been devoted to garnering worldwide support to women's rights and their participation in political and economic spheres.

International Women's Day 2020 marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. According to UN Women, "the year 2020 is a pivotal year for advancing gender equality worldwide, as the global community takes stock of the progress made for women's rights since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action. It will also mark several other galvanizing moments in the gender equality movement: a five-year milestone towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals; the 20th anniversary of UN

Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security; and the 10th anniversary of UN Women's establishment." On this occasion, the UN Women also notes that, "the emerging global consensus is that despite some progress, real change has been agonizingly slow for the majority of women and girls in the world. Today, not a single country can claim to have achieved gender equality. Multiple obstacles remain unchanged in law and in culture." Thus, the theme of this year's women's day by the UN Women, 'I am Generation Equality: Realising Women's Rights for an Equal Future' becomes symbolic of all the collectivised resistance and unionised voices that have been in existence by and for women throughout multi-generations, including the present one.

Over the last few decades, it has been widely observed that International Women's Day, in a more privatised and globalised world has become symptomatic of a universal need to recognise women in an exclusive way. The day, which is now observed on the 8th of March every year, is usually marked with events, contests, shows, and a series of feel-good messages and gestures, such as, women-friendly discounts and sponsorships, and is, increasingly characterised by less of collectivisation of women demanding radical albeit progressive reforms. 2020, thus, also becomes important in a more significant way. It offers the world an opportunity to steer attention from the much-appreciated celebrations to more fundamental issues at hand. That is, a reflection on, if women have an enabling environment where they can be actively involved in various stages of decision making.

In other words, 2020 gives an opportunity to take stock of women. For example, are we still the 'other' exclusive gender in decision making, or have decision making processes become more inclusive and integrated, recognising women's needs, capabilities, and aspirations? The theme of this year's women's day- 'I am Generation Equality: Realising Women's Rights for an Equal Future' throws a critical question at us, whether we are willing and ready to partake in a gender-equal future, that is fundamentally representative of critical and progressive reforms for women.

ICA-AP updates

ICA-MAFF Training



Participants and trainers at the ICA-MAFF Training Course in Thailand



Participants and trainers at the ICA-MAFF Training Course in Thailand

The training course on *Fostering Leaders for Management and Development of Agricultural Cooperatives in Asia-2019* is running in its third decade under the ICA-MAFF partnership. The training

was conducted in Thailand and Japan from February-March, 2020, with the objective to foster agricultural cooperatives and farmers' organisations to boost agricultural production, increase farmers' income and eradicate famine and poverty.

Read more here <http://icaap.coop/icanarticles/ica-maff-japan-training-course-%E2%80%9Cfostering-leaders-management-and-development>

Role of cooperatives in sustainable development in Asia-Pacific countries



Delegates at the international workshop on the *Role of Cooperatives in Sustainable Development in Asia-Pacific Countries*, Nadi, Fiji

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) organised an international workshop on the *Role of Cooperatives in Sustainable Development in Asia-Pacific Countries*, March 3-5, 2020, at Tokatoka Resort, Nadi, Fiji. The workshop was organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism of the Government of Fiji.

Around 25 participants from national governments, civil society organisations and international agencies from Australia, Brazil, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, the Philippines and Tonga participated in the 3day workshop. Their active presence helped in strengthening the capacities of cooperatives in the region to support national and local efforts for achieving the sustainable development goals, and to build cross-country alliances for collaboration. The workshop was also useful in mainstreaming representation from the region in ICA's development process, in understanding the realities of doing cooperative business, and the challenges faced by cooperative institutions in the Pacific Islands.

Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director of ICA-AP delivered the keynote address, focusing on the cooperative identity with its values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. Commitment to these values across business models is fundamental, and ever more pertinent in today's world.



Delegates during a session at the workshop

The ICA-EU Partnership on Cooperatives in Development (#coops4dev) was represented by Ms. Ann Apps, legal expert for Oceania and Pacific island countries and Mr. Mohit Dave, Programme Manager, ICA-AP. Ms. Apps discussed the findings from her preparation and review of national reports from Vanuatu, Kiribati and Fiji, on their existing co-operative law as part of the Legal Framework Analysis research. She focused on better understanding the role of regulation and regulators in promoting cooperative development by securing a cooperative identity that is distinct from the ‘for profit’ company model. Mr. Dave presented the best practices for managing cooperative enterprises in different sectors and countries in the Asia-Pacific region, while maintaining the principles of cooperative organisations, with reference to the World Cooperative Monitor 2019 report. He also moderated the panel discussion with registrars from Fiji, Kiribati and Solomon Islands to discuss challenges and opportunities for growing the cooperative sector in their countries, and issues around compliance and competence.

The workshop provided a good opportunity for the registrars to examine synergies for expanding the scope of cooperative enterprises. It highlighted that the lack of education, ineffective legal and policy environments, lack of cooperative statistics, and access to finance were the main and common challenges for cooperatives in the Pacific.

ICA-AP will continue working in the region to increase membership and understanding through the ICA-AP Committees, the legal framework analyses and mapping exercises; and work to develop partnerships with the Pacific Islands Development Forum and arrange exchange visits. ICA-AP is currently working to support the creation of an enabling environment, strengthening cooperative federations, and establishing a regional network for cooperatives to promote the cooperative enterprise model in the Pacific.

Cooperative Conference of Bihar



The Bihar Cooperative Marketing Federation organised a state-level cooperative conference in Patna, Bihar from February 22 to 24. The theme of the conference was the *Role of agriculture and cooperation in doubling farmers' income*, in line with targets set by Central and State governments in India on doubling farmer's incomes by 2022.

Mr. Nitish Kumar, Chief Minister of Bihar, opened the Conference, setting the objective for discussions on cooperatives' contributions to farmers' income. In 2002, as the Agriculture Minister of Bihar, Mr. Kumar supported the Multistate Cooperative Societies Act, and the demand for more autonomy to cooperatives. He reiterated his support to the cooperative movement, and to cooperators, noting their important role in environmental and social sustainability, and the rural economy in India. The Government of Bihar has supported the cooperative movement by enabling the formation of Primary Agricultural Cooperatives (PACs), which have 35% reservation for women. PACS have also been strengthened with a grant fund of Rs. 15 lakhs for computerisation and purchase of agricultural machinery.

Dr. Prem Kumar, Agriculture Minister of Bihar; Mr. Rana Ranjit Singh, Cooperative Minister of Bihar; Dr. Chandra Pal Singh Yadav, President, National Cooperative Union of India; Dr. U. S. Awasthi, Managing Director, Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited; and other Ministers and Cooperative Leaders in India engaged in the three-day Conference. Over 6,000 cooperators from Bangladesh, India and Kenya took part in the discussions on the how cooperatives could double farmer's income. Elected representatives from 3,500 of the 8,500 newly elected PACs in Bihar and farmers and leaders from the farming community participated in the Conference. Issues on good governance, business development, collaboration, innovation and competition were discussed between the multiple stakeholders.

Gujarat State Cooperative Seminar for Women



Women cooperators at the Seminar

The Gujarat State Cooperative Union (GSCU), India, organised a one-day state level seminar for women cooperators on 8th March 2020. More than 600 women cooperators and leaders from across the state, representing various cooperatives, participated in the Seminar.

The dignitaries at the seminar were, Mr. Nitinbhai Patel, Deputy Chief Minister; Mr. Ishwarsinh T. Patel, Cooperation Minister of Gujarat; and Ms. Bijalben Patel, Mayor of the Municipal Corporation of Ahmadabad. Mr. G. H. Amin, Chairman of GSCU chaired the Seminar and delivered welcome address. He highlighted the role of GSCU in promoting women in cooperatives and enhancing their economic and social empowerment through capacity and skill development initiatives.

Ms. Savitri Singh, Programme Director of ICA-AP participated in the Seminar and made a presentation on the *role of cooperatives in women empowerment*. Ms. Singh shared information on women in cooperatives at global level, the work of ICA on gender equality, the importance of sex disaggregated data, and some examples of women empowerment and gender equality through cooperatives from the Asia-Pacific region. Ms. Singh also highlighted the current situation of women in cooperatives in Gujarat, particularly, the low numbers in membership and leadership, and highlighted measures to enhance their active participation at all levels of a cooperative business management. Women are mostly segregated in 'women cooperatives' organised by the dairy sector and SEWA Federation in Gujarat. It is imperative to bring women into the mainstream, and in mixed membership cooperatives to bridge the gender gap in formal employment and income levels. She also called for a review of cooperative law and policies to create an enabling environment for more women to join coop businesses.

GSCU also launched a significant campaign for environmental sustainability through a collective pledge to discard the use of plastic bags and replace them with cloth bags. The Seminar created the opportunity for networking and knowledge sharing among women cooperators from across the state.



The articles related to the ICA-EU Partnership in this newsletter have been co-funded by the European Union. The contents of these articles are the sole responsibility of the International Cooperative Alliance Asia-Pacific and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

GYF20



The Global Youth Forum Cooperative Entrepreneurship 2020 (GYF20) was a first-of-its kind week long immersive training for youth entrepreneurs (ages 18-35) and cooperators from around the world. GYF20 took place in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia from 3rd-7th February 2020 with over 150 youth participants from 50 countries and 20 trainers, professionals and experts from around the world. From the Asia-Pacific region, we had participants and trainers from Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Palestine, Iran, India, Sri Lanka, Japan and Nepal

Reflections from AP participants at GYF20: <https://youtu.be/rftwwaOshhA>

Research updates

Legal Framework Analysis

National Reports of Japan, Jordan, Korea, Nepal, Palestine, and Vietnam can be viewed at the [coops4dev website](#). The reports of Australia, Fiji, and New Zealand have been received and will be uploaded soon.

Mapping

The Mapping of Cooperatives aims at collecting and publicising statistics of cooperatives in different countries to showcase the impact and provide data for advocacy. National Reports for Iran and the Philippines can be accessed at the [coops4dev website](#).

Country snapshots

16 country snapshots are now available on the [ICA-AP website](#). These include snapshots for Australia, China, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, PNG, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, and Vanuatu.

GCE Ambassador on cooperation in Indonesia



KODI.id, PT and BRI Institute at Indonesia

GCE is the Global Cooperative Entrepreneurs programme, initiated under the ICA-EU Partnership on Cooperatives in Development (#coops4dev). The initiative aims to support the creation of mentorship programmes to stimulate youth cooperative entrepreneurship worldwide.

BRI Institute cooperates with Fintech Digital Company for KODI.id Cooperatives.

On 11th March, BRI Institute, the 1st fintech university in Indonesia started by the oldest bank of the country, Bank Rakyat Indonesia, committed to cooperate with PT. Democracy of the Archipelago Economy to further the Tridharma of Higher Education and Internship Activities, of KODI.id Cooperatives.

KODI.id is a cooperative digitalisation platform to help meet the needs of cooperatives. From the establishment of cooperatives, facilitation of SHU (Annual General Assembly), distribution to online RATs (dividend of cooperatives).

BRI institute was represented by its director, Prof. Dr. Dana S Saroso and PT. Democracy of the Archipelago Economy was represented by its CEO, Mr. Inra Sumahamijaya, who is also the Global Cooperative Entrepreneurship (GCE) Ambassador from Indonesia. The GCE is part of the ICA-EU Partnership on Cooperatives in Development (#coops4dev) which aims to promote cooperative entrepreneurship among youth.

The collaboration was in line with the “Education, Training and Information” principle of cooperatives with details as follows: -

1. Education and Teaching – Initiating curriculum review of the BRI institute and bringing it in line with industry needs. This will be supplemented by guest lectures from individuals of PT. Democracy of the Archipelago Economy;
2. Research and Development - Joint research focusing on existing problems in the fintech industry, especially in the field of Digital Cooperatives and Microfinance;
3. Community Service - To conduct community service by educating the public about the importance of information technology, emphasising cooperatives and microfinance;
4. Internship and Apprenticeship – Facilitating internship/industrial work opportunities to students in the fintech industry.

Moving forward, BRI Institute is envisioning the creation of a campus-based cooperative with its campus employees, lecturers and students as members, with support from KODI.id.

ICA-AP: IRMA – member partnership



Yogeshkumar Joshi in Nepal during his internship with NACCFL

Yogeshkumar Joshi from the Executive Post Graduate Diploma in Management (Rural) from Institute of Rural Management, Anand, joined the Nepal Agriculture Cooperative Central Federation Ltd. (NACCFL), Kathmandu for a 2.5 month long internship. The internship was facilitated by ICA-AP. Yogeshkumar shares his internship experience and learnings with us:

My internship with NACCFL has been a great learning experience. I've learned the value of both transactional experiences and relational experiences. Working with small cooperatives operating in extremely challenging environments has been a very insightful experience. My experience with NACCFL, in Nepal and with the Nepali people has been heart-warming, despite the very cold winter! NACCFL, established in 2008, is promoted by small farmers' cooperatives with the purpose of providing non-financial services to small farmers' agricultural institutions and similar maturing agricultural institutions. The main objectives of NACCFL include policy advocacy, capacity building, network expansion, increasing agricultural production and productivity, value chain and market promotion. Currently, NACCFL has its network in 72 districts with 1066 small farmers' agriculture cooperatives, with an outreach to 1 million households.

As an intern, I worked to design and develop a business plan for the dairy processing plant for Shree Tulsī Bhanjyang Small Farmers' Agriculture Cooperative Ltd. (TSFACL), a district level agricultural federation having three tier structure and guided by cooperative principles. TSFACL is promoted, managed and operated by small farmers. They are headquartered in Galyang city and have 400

primary cooperatives associated with them, covering Malunga, Jagatradevi, Pakwadi, Tindobate, Tulsibhanjyang, Nibuwakharka, Pindikholā Batuwa and Pelakot Talukas of Syangja District, Gandaki Padesh, Central Nepal. TSFACL was established with the objective to incubate and provide operational support, training, development and extension services to primary cooperatives. It initially operated as a savings and credit cooperative, and has now evolved to agriculture, horticulture, floriculture and the dairy value chain. TSFACL operates in the mountainous region of central Nepal, dealing with major infrastructure gaps in road and electricity. Villages and households are scattered, and farmers have limited landholdings. While these factors restrict dairy cattle ownership in the region, agriculture and animal husbandry form the primary source of income for households here.

TSFACL is currently procuring an average of 2000 litres of milk per day. The milk is procured twice a day and stored in refrigerators in villages before being transported to the milk collection centre in Galyang. From there, it is sent to the Dairy Development Corporation. I worked on preparing a business plan for the processing unit, addressing inbound logistics, processing, production, outbound logistics, sales, marketing, cost and pricing, human resource planning and financial projections. These were challenging exercises! Especially considering the environmental and infrastructure constraints. To work around these constraints and develop economies of scale, my suggestions included increasing the farmer network, adopting technological solutions such as artificial insemination and veterinary services, route changes, and training to members.

The biggest challenge however, was a behavioural challenge, wherein locals were reluctant to shift their consumption patterns from loosely available milk to pasteurised milk. We are currently working on these challenges and hope to come up with a feasible solution soon.

ICA-AP Member Activities

Book Review: A Genealogy of the Cooperative

By Ivjyot Singh, Program Officer, ICA-EU Cooperatives in Development People-centred Businesses in Action, ICA Asia and Pacific

A Genealogy of the Cooperative by Mohammad Bahirae of the Barg-e-No Research Cooperative, Iran, illustrates the rich history of the cooperative movement in Iran.

In the chapter, *Problematisation of the controversy*, the author sets the context by stating that the economy was a function of social relationships. The cooperative movement was marginalised from the mainstream due to the decoupling of the economy from society. He states that cooperatives exist in two different ways: one, where they have minimal association with the mainstream economy of capitalism and bureaucracy; and the other, where modern cooperatives assume capital relations and hierarchical order.

The second chapter, *Collective work in a non-capitalist economy*, explores the formation of *Vaareh* and *Boneh*, the two collectives in Iran. *Vaareh* is an informal cooperative system mainly run by women and based on collective mutual help. In this system, families owning livestock pooled their milk and

set up dairy cooperatives. At each round of pooling and processing, the produce distributed. The redistribution was unique in that it was not based on the amount and quality of contributions, but on the right of the presence and participation of women who represented their families, i.e. pooling for the purpose of reproducing the group. *Boneh* is a collective agricultural system based on cooperation that goes beyond work, including close relationships between member families. Each collective unit had a different area depending upon the amount of water available for it. The producers were entitled to a share of produce, as were others who had either indirect or no relation to production (for example, carpenters and blacksmiths). The economy was based on production of goods for the sake of using them and not for accumulation and further profit. Excess production thus was not an issue and in the rare case it happened, non-contributors could benefit from it.

The cooperative economy stood out as one where social and economic relations were inextricably mixed, with the rejection of consumerism and tending towards redistribution in cases of surplus production.

In The advent of progress discourse, a change in the cooperative dynamic is noted, with a shift from the 'collective' to the 'individual' and consumerism. The subsistence economy was being looked down upon and the earlier concept of labour (involving engagement which didn't necessarily associate with income)-transformed to that of a job.

In the chapter, *The Birth of Cooperatives* and *The Hatching of another type of Cooperatives*, the author explores the inclusion of cooperatives under commercial law and its repercussions on the cooperative economy. Cooperatives in their natural character were not seen as useful and to be so, they had to be instrumental in wealth creation and increased production. Cooperatives then became means for the government to gather statistics and learn about rural populations. However, cooperatives without hierarchies and state experts also existed. These were economic entities which facilitated greater local autonomy. However, many of these cooperatives remained separate from other social groups, eventually becoming a capitalist haven for some privileged groups.

The final hit came to the cooperative movement in Iran came with the joining of market and state. Cooperatives were denied facilities and started competing in the open market; combined with the state-led merging of cooperatives they became more hierarchical. The book incites introspection on the cooperative movement, leaving one to wonder on how cooperatives can overcome these threats and establish themselves as mainstream, sustainable socioeconomic model.

Announcements

International Cooperatives Day



Join us in celebrating the International Day of Cooperatives this 4th of July, 2020! In our commitment to the Sustainable Development Agenda, the theme this year is in support of SDG 13: Climate Action: **Cooperatives for Climate Action**. Follow #Coops4ClimateAction and #CoopsDay on social media for updates on activities planned to mark the International Day of Cooperatives.

ICA-AP Cooperative Research Conference: Call for papers

The ICA-AP Committee on Cooperative Research invites paper proposals for the 15th ICA-AP Cooperative Research Conference, which will be held from November 25-27, 2020 in Trivandrum, India. The conference is organised under the ICA-AP Committee on Cooperative Research, with support from the Government of Kerala and the ICA-EU Partnership on Cooperatives in Development (#coops4dev). The conference theme this year is “Confronting climate change through cooperative enterprise”.

More details about the call for papers can be found here: <http://icaap.coop/sites/ica-ap.coop/files/CfP%20Trivandrum%20Conference.pdf>

All abstracts of the papers should reach Mr. Mohit Dave, Secretary, ICA-AP Committee on Cooperative Research at research@icaap.coop on or before 1st July, 2020.

Upcoming Events

The Covid-19 outbreak has disrupted many scheduled plans and activities across the world. Following WHO guidelines and government advisories, ICA-AP and members have put out on hold activities planned for the time being. We will update you as and when the rescheduled dates are available.