

# ICA-AP NEWSLETTER

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

<b>CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF ICA-AP .....</b>	<b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>
<b>ICA-AP UPDATES .....</b>	<b>9</b>
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF COOPERATIVES: LAUNCHING THE ICA-AP WEBPAGE.....	9
ICA-AP POSITION ON COOPERATIVES FOR CLIMATE ACTION .....	9
WEBINARS .....	10
MESSAGE FROM ICA DIRECTOR GENERAL, BRUNO ROELANTS .....	10
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION CELEBRATES #COOPS DAY .....	12
#GOGREEN 3.0 .....	13
ICA-AP 2019 ANNUAL ACTIVITIES REPORT .....	14
ICA-AP MEMBER RESPONSE TO COVID-19.....	14
PLATFORM TO SHARE COVID-19 EXPERIENCES, RESOURCES AND NEEDS.....	14
WEBINAR: MEMBERS IN IRAN.....	15
WAKING THE ASIAN PACIFIC COOPERATIVE POTENTIAL.....	16
INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR YASHAVANTHA DONGRE, UNIVERSITY OF MYSORE, INDIA.....	17
INTERVIEW WITH PROF. SEUNGKWON JANG, SUNGKONGHOE UNIVERSITY, SOUTH KOREA .....	20
MEET GANESH GOPAL, ICA-AP’S NEW PROGRAMME OFFICER .....	22
<b>NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>APPOINTMENT OF NEW ICETT CHAIRMAN.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>ANGKASA: DISCUSSION ON EFFECTS OF MCO TO COOPERATIVES IN ASEAN.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>ICA-EU PARTNERSHIP: UPDATES .....</b>	<b>26</b>
ICA-AP CONSULTATION WITH THE EU DELEGATION TO BHUTAN AND INDIA .....	26
ICA-EU PARTNERSHIP: YEAR 4 REPORT.....	27
YOUTH REPLICATION PROJECT .....	33
RESEARCH UPDATES .....	34
GYF20 .....	35
<b>ANNOUNCEMENTS .....</b>	<b>35</b>
POSTPONEMENT OF 33 <sup>RD</sup> WORLD COOPERATIVE CONGRESS AND 14 <sup>TH</sup> ICA-AP REGIONAL ASSEMBLY .....	35
<b>UPCOMING EVENTS .....</b>	<b>36</b>



ICA-APs work with credit & banking cooperatives

In 2020, we mark 60 years of ICA in the Asia-Pacific region, working hand-in-hand with our members to grow and enhance the cooperative movement. Over the years, ICA-AP has worked across many sectors and focused on key development areas such as gender equality, youth inclusion, entrepreneurship, and capacity building. This month, we highlight the work undertaken by ICA-AP through the Credit and Banking Committee and bring insights from Mr. Bhima Subrahmanyam, Chair of the International Cooperative Banking Association (ICBA).

Cooperative credit and banking institutions play an important role in enabling financial inclusion, access to financial services and meeting credit and savings needs in rural and urban areas. The range of institutions include: rural savings and credit institutions (to meet short and long-term agriculture and other needs), urban cooperative banks, consumer credit societies, cooperative banks, mutuals and credit unions. Cooperative institutions in the financial sector are crucial in supporting economic development and important players in implementing SDG8: Decent work and economic growth, and SDG10: Reduced Inequalities. In the [2019 World Cooperative Monitor: Exploring the Cooperative Economy](#), 21 credit and banking cooperatives were in the top 300 cooperatives (based on turnover) and 33 financial services cooperatives in the top 300 (based on turnover over GDP per capita). From the Asia-Pacific region, the National Agriculture Cooperative Federation (NACF), Korea and The Norinchukin Bank, Japan are among the top 10 financial services cooperatives in the world (based on turnover).

### **ICA-AP Committee on Credit and Banking**

The ICA-AP Committee on Credit and Banking (earlier called Regional Cooperative Banking Association (RCBA)) was constituted around 1998. The aim of the Committee is to promote the development of cooperative credit and banking in the region and to recommend activities in the field of credit, banking and finance. The objectives of the Committee are:

- ❖ To periodically review the progress made in the field of cooperative credit, banking and finance, and initiate necessary action;
- ❖ To recommend policies and common lines of action in the field of cooperative credit and to initiate implementation;

- ❖ To facilitate business linkages among cooperative banks and other cooperative financial sectors such as credit cooperatives and credit unions;
- ❖ To identify systematic gaps within the banking structures, and facilitate processes for organisational efficiency;
- ❖ To identify areas for training, research and technical assistance, and initiate action in collaboration with other ICA-AP sectoral and thematic committees;
- ❖ To identify areas of technical assistance required for national and regional projects, and to facilitate such programmes;
- ❖ To promote the systematic dissemination of information and the exchange of experiences among the cooperative credit movements both within the region and internationally;
- ❖ To liaise and collaborate with the International Cooperative Banking Association (ICBA), and other regional and international organisations concerned with cooperative credit and banking.

The Credit and Banking Committee emphasizes the role of women and youth in credit and banking cooperatives, encouraging cooperatives to send women and youth representatives to meetings and trainings. The Committee has organised seminars and published reports to improve the understanding of credit and banking cooperatives in the region. In 1976, the Regional Seminar on Cooperative Insurance and Promotion of Savings was held in Tokyo, Japan and the Open Asian Conference on Cooperative Credit and Financial Management was held in Chennai, India. In 1981, ICA-AP published *Thrift and Credit Cooperatives in a Changing World*. In 2008, during the 10<sup>th</sup> RCBA meeting in Hanoi, Vietnam, members focused on cooperation among cooperative banks at the local, national, regional and global levels, addressing the importance of 'Global Networking of Cooperative Banks'. During the 2014 Regional Assembly in Bali, Indonesia, the Committee organised a seminar on *Capitalisation: Challenges for cooperative banks*. The seminar focused on the challenges of matching capital funds with capital adequacy norms prescribed by regulators. In 2015, the Committee, organized a round table dialogue (RTD) discussion on the role of cooperative banks and social finance institutions in promoting and financing social initiatives and social and solidarity enterprises. The RTD was organized under the aegis of the National Federation of State Cooperative Banks (NAFSCOB), Eco Foundation for Sustainable Alternatives, the Mont-Blanc Meeting- International Forum of the Social and Solidarity Economy Entrepreneurs, the International Co-operative Banks Association and the International Association of Investors in the Social Economy.

As of August 2019, the Committee has 18 credit and banking cooperative members from 13 countries. The image below indicates RCBA's members from the region.



### Interview with Mr. Bhima Subrahmanyam

Mr. Subrahmanyam is the Chair of the International Cooperative Banking Association (ICBA) and President of the National Federation of State Cooperative Banks (NAFSCOB), India



1. Congratulations on being elected as the Chair of ICBA! From your vantage point as head of NAFSCOB, one of the important banking federations in the region, how would you rate the performance of the credit and banking sector in the region?

The overall performance of the Credit & Banking Sector or institutions in the short-term rural cooperative credit, in spite of certain regulatory and supervisory controls and constraints, over the past few years, has been impressive in the Region. The credit flow to cater to the needs of the farmers, has been in absolute figures is on the increase. While the share of cooperatives in agriculture lending appears to be declining but the quantum of lending has been increasing in absolute terms. The sector is well poised to contribute to achieve the Government of India's vision & mission of 'doubling of farmers' income'. In fact, loans and advances by State Cooperative Banks (SCBs) and District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCBs) amounted to around Rs.1,50,000 crores and Rs.3,00,000 crores respectively, as on March 2019 - a creditable performance.

It is encouraging to note that 29 out of 33 SCBs and 320 out of 363 DCCBs have complied with capital adequacy ratio (CRAR) norms by achieving more than 9% CRAR. The assets quality of rural cooperative banks has been on the increase. All SCBs and 363 DCCBs have fulfilled the norms for grant of license. SCBs mobilized deposits to the tune of around Rs.1,35,000 crores, and DCCBs mobilized deposits to the tune of Rs.3,78,000 crores.

The financial performance of the Rural Credit and Banking (RCB) sector in terms of share capital, reserves, net owned funds, etc., has been depicting an increasing trend. The gross non-performing assets (NPAs) as percentage of gross loans outstanding, as on 31 March 2019 of SCBs has been less than 5 %. It is a matter of great satisfaction that even the Maharashtra SCB reports net NPA of 0% for the first time in 109 years. However, there are certain issues concerning the sector which needs attention and they pertain to governance and structure. The absence of democratically elected Boards of Management and of freedom for functional autonomy are major issues which restricts development of member driven cooperatives. This discourages leadership development efforts. This is due to direct interference of respective governments. Efforts towards restructuring in the name of delayering of well-conceived three tier cooperative structure is a major concern to rural credit and banking sector. The developments towards 'unjustified' mergers weakens and destabilizes the rural cooperative credit structure and raises about their future. The performance of the rural credit and

banking sector tend to be better placed in the absence of direct interference of Government, Regulatory & supervisory agencies.

2. What has been your association with the ICA-AP Credit and Banking Committee? How do you visualize its role?

The erstwhile RCBA, part of ICA-AP, with dynamic leadership, played a significant role in adding fairly a good image to ICA-AP till 2010. RCBA maintained closer contacts with the existing important credit and banking federations. My association and association of NAFSCOB with RCBA and with the present committee has been active and participative.

I visualize an important role to this ICA-AP Credit and Banking Committee. ICA-AP is the only region which has set up a Credit and Banking Committee. Hence, the office of ICA-AP should review the contribution of ICA-AP Credit & Banking Committee over the last one decade and take measures to make it more visible, vibrant and meaningful.

3. How have ICBA and members responded to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Excellent! ICBA members are very sensitive, emotional, philanthropic, cooperative and more responsive. Almost all members of ICBA have initiated measures both in cash and kind to help contain the spread of COVID-19 in their respective countries. ICBA members supported by their regulatory authorities availed the advantages of regulatory measures to continue to carry out banking operations, lending operations, offer moratorium on loans, etc. I place on record the excellent contributions of many ICBA members, particularly NAFSCOB, NCUI, NAFCUB, NCDC, TSCA Bank, Karnataka SCB in India, Samabaya Bank in Bangladesh, SANASA Federation in Sri Lanka, KUSCCO in Kenya, MASS-SPECC Coop Development Centre of Philippines, National Cooperative Council of Poland, EACB from Belgium, and DGRV of Germany. Various important measures have been taken at the European level as reported by Confederation Nationale Credit Mutual, France, one of the members of ICBA. The positive response of ICBA members is a continuous and ongoing process. They are committed to contribute by all means to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

4. How do you see the landscape changing for cooperatives, especially credit and banking in the post COVID world?

Cooperatives, especially credit and banking coops, have the ability and willingness to show their commitment and perseverance to help even post COVID-19. Taking into account that cooperative banks are very close to their members, customers and local cooperative societies, RCBs play a special role in stabilizing economy. Liquidity positions, which have impacted the sector due to the spread of COVID-19 have been addressed well.

RCBs, federal in character, will be able to absorb and balance the inevitable losses in the structure to carry out their operations uninterrupted. With the kind of stimulus provided by Government of India under Atma Nirbhar Bharat Package, the rural cooperative sector will be able to address the adverse implications of COVID-19. As has been rightly observed by ICA President Ariel Guarco, "Cooperation is

not only for emergencies, cooperation is the alternative way to build a fairer, more balanced and, fundamentally, less fragile economy in the face of global challenges such as the pandemic”.

The cooperative banking structure was unaffected by the financial crisis of 2008 due to their ‘inbuilt’ characteristics. The cooperative credit and banking sector will continue to influence rural households irrespective of the structural changes even during post COVID-19. The cooperative credit and banking institutions will work to ensure adoption of technology, digitalization, formulation & compliance of risk management guidelines, information security guidelines, cyber security, fraud monitoring guidelines, etc. The sector will also be in a position to concentrate on the important pillars of corporate governance namely accountability, transparency, responsibility and fairness. The agriculture loan portfolio will continue to be unaffected due its large rural network and well-established structure. The landscape of Indian rural cooperative credit and banking structure will continue to be mostly three tiers in bigger states and two tiers in smaller states. Any effort to destabilize the well-conceived 3 Tier rural cooperative credit structure will be construed as a deliberate attempt to weaken the cooperative credit structure. The structure will make all efforts by building their capabilities to prevent them from being unhealthy, unviable and undemocratic.

5. What actions would you recommend credit and banking cooperatives take to optimize on opportunities emerging from the COVID-19 crisis?

There are both challenges & opportunities before RCBs: COVID-19 created such an impact on the rural credit and banking cooperative structure restricting their capabilities to continue to contribute to ensure agriculture/farming operations. Hence NAFSCOB and their members impressed upon the policy, promotional, development, supervisory and regulatory agencies to help formulate appropriate policy frameworks and announce regulatory and refinance packages to cope with the situation emerging out of the spread of COVID-19. They are as follows:

- i. Policy initiatives include continuation with 2% Interest Subvention to banks and 3% Prompt Repayment Incentive to farmers for the extended period of repayment of short term crop loans up to date of actual repayment. This arrangement is to ensure that farmers do not have to face the situation of paying penal interest and they continue to get the benefit of short-term crop loans at a concessional interest rate of 4% p.a., which is applicable on timely repayment of the short-term crop loan of up to INR 3 lakh per farmer, given by Banks @7% p.a. which have fallen due or shall fall due between 01.03.2020 and 31.05.2020.
- ii. Regulatory Package: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced a regulatory package in order to mitigate the burden of debt servicing brought about by disruptions on account of COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure the continuity of viable businesses. The regulatory measures include ensuring the continuity of viable businesses such as a) Rescheduling of payments wherein the cooperative banks are also permitted to grant moratorium of three months on payments of all instalments falling due between March 01,2020 to 31 August 2020; b) Classification of Special Mention Account (SPA); and c) Non Performing Assets, d) the additional measures for liquidity management, Refinancing Facilities to All India Institutions, Asset Classification and other related issues. RBI announced Special Liquidity

Facility (SLF) for a total amount of Rs. 25,000 crore to National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), to enable them to meet the refinancing needs of Cooperative Banks. RCBs ensured that their branches in rural areas, especially those located in mandis (local markets) and other market areas function normally with adequate staff, cash and other facilities, to ensure that the Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS).

These measures helped RCBs enhance their preparedness and to be well poised to meet challenges or any eventualities likely to be caused by the spread of Pandemic COVID-19. These measures facilitated optimization of opportunities to ensure continuation of farming activities and also banking transactions. RCBs will have to optimize on available opportunities and take swift action to address the sectoral needs of MSMEs to release emergency credit facilities and also additional credit through Kisan Credit cards as a part of stimulus provided under Atmanirbhar Bharat package, Government of India.

6. How do you see ICBA's role going forward?

A big Challenge. Please allow me to take a little longer time to explain about this sectoral organization which actually was started as a committee in 1922. Let me also at the outset appreciate, congratulate and extend gratitude to the President and Board of Directors of ICA who recognized the potentiality of the excellent sectoral organization of International Cooperative Banking Association (ICBA). It appears that the ICA Board was, rightly, reluctant to discontinue ICBA, though it was allowed to be inactive for about a decade. Someone within the ICA circle commented that ICBA was in 'coma', for a decade. The firm decision of ICA Board taken in 2018, to revive ICBA was effectively implemented on 12 October 2019 at Kigali, Rwanda. The ordinary members meeting has been convened, Board was elected and president of ICBA was elected. Recalling this background becomes necessary to understand that the work needed to be commenced from "scratch", as no concrete information about "work Done" has been made available to the new President, ICBA. Fortunately, I have been associated with ICBA since long as an ordinary member of ICBA. Therefore, it helps to revive and activate this important sectoral organization.

ICBA has more challenges to address. It has excellent potential and capabilities to perform. Looking at the work done and or one may say the activities carried out within the first eight months, it may be concluded that ICBA will be a force to reckon with in the future and will prove to be an asset to ICA. Three Board meetings within less than six months, providing exposure to four international seminars /meetings/events, the launching of a first ever website for ICBA, enrolment of nearly 14 members in ICBA, are few examples to demonstrate the renewed effectiveness. I do not think any other sectoral organization of ICA has had such achievements. One of the biggest challenges is to ensure active participation of all 42 members representing Cooperative Banks and Cooperative Financial Institutions. The constraints being faced due to the wide spread of COVID-19 has not deterred ICBA from continuing efforts, online, to involve members in sharing and caring. ICBA has succeeded to some extent. These efforts also aimed to work out strategies to contain COVID-19. ICBA also commissioned two major studies: Contribution of cooperative banks in Sustainable Development Goals and Financial Cooperatives. ICBA will continue the fundamental role to facilitate and encourage the exchange of information amongst members on key cooperative banking issues and foster inter-cooperation in the



finding of solutions. ICBA will also ensure the financial stability of cooperative banks /financial cooperatives to carry out their credit and banking activities. Further, we envisage an effective and positive role in addressing the different aspects of regulatory, technological, credit delivery channels, digitalization, computerization, fraud monitoring systems, etc.

ICBA looks forward to establishing contact with all regional offices of ICA, and also different sectoral associations, aimed to ensure sound financial stability of cooperative banks and financial cooperatives. ICBA also looks forward to better coordination with European Association of Cooperative Banks (EACB) to work towards strengthening of cooperative banks in Europe. Finally, I say, I envisage a very positive role to ICBA to face challenges post COVID-19.

## ICA-AP updates

[International Day of Cooperatives: Launching the ICA-AP webpage](#)



We are pleased to launch the [ICA-AP 2020 International Day of Cooperatives webpage](#). In line with the theme, **Cooperatives for Climate Action**, the page is designed to engage and inspire members to take action against climate change. Visit the [page](#) to know more about ICA-AP position on Cooperatives for Climate Action, webinars being organised around the theme of Coops Day, and Climate Action responses from members in the region.

### [ICA-AP Position on Cooperatives for Climate Action](#)

The ICA-AP representing 107 members from 32 countries would like to use the ICD to reinforce the 7th Cooperative Principle (concern for the community), mobilize members to commit climate action and achieve a fair, green and just transition for all communities, leaving no one behind. ICA members in Asia-Pacific can facilitate climate action by promoting the Cooperative Identity, reducing carbon footprint, supporting Go Green Campaign, implementing 5Rs and 2Ss, creating a disaster response fund, and auditing environment footprint.

Read ICA-APs Position Paper [here](#).

## Webinars

ICA-AP has organised four [webinars](#) to celebrate Cooperatives for Climate Action this International Day of Cooperatives.

[July 2](#): Panel discussion with the editors of the newly launched book: Waking the Asia Pacific Co-operative Potential

[July 4](#): ICA-AP in collaboration with the National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI), will host a webinar to celebrate International Day of Cooperatives: Cooperatives for Climate Action

[July 7](#): Webinar on the International Youth Cooperatives for Climate Action hosted by ICA Asia and Pacific Youth Cooperation

[July 8](#): Cooperators to share their experiences and case studies on, “Sustaining Environmental Actions Post COVID-19”

We encourage you to promote **#CoopsDay** and **#Coops4ClimateAction** widely on all your social media channels. This event will focus on the contributions of cooperatives to combating climate change, one of the most severe challenges facing our planet during the 21st century.

## Message from ICA Director General, Bruno Roelants

Dear members,

A month ago, I invited all of you to participate in this year’s International Day of Cooperatives (or Coopsday) campaign and today, I would like to thank all of you for not just participating, but for confirming that the cooperative movement is indeed engaged in protecting our planet. Each of you has demonstrated the many ways cooperatives are taking action against climate change and are leaders in your community.

To celebrate Coopsday and illustrate this year’s **#Coops4ClimateAction** theme, I’m pleased to announce there are **two winners** for this year’s **inaugural photo competition** as it was impossible to choose one. They were submitted by:

- **Middlebury Natural Food Cooperative** (Vermont, USA). In this photo, their staff is posing with items they proudly reuse at the cooperative, and all are engaged in implementing a “zero waste” program.
- **The Central Union of Consumer Societies of the Russian Federation** (Centrosoyuz of Russia). Centrosoyuz represents more than 2000 consumer cooperatives in 70 regions in the country. The winning photo illustrates students in their cooperative institutions who often take the initiative to protect their fragile ecosystems.



In addition, you also may be interested in:

- The cooperative stories: This year **70** cooperatives are represented on our interactive map in collaboration with Dotcoop.
- An inspirational video message from ICA president Ariel Guarco.
- The “In 10 years, I hope...” video consisting of submissions from the cooperative movement.
- The #Coops4ClimateAction social media campaign, which includes some visuals for you to spread the word on your social media accounts.

To view all of this and more, please visit <https://www.ica.coop/en/2020-international-day-cooperatives>.

Next week on Thursday 9th July 2020, COPAC will continue celebrating CoopsDay, with an online webinar taking place from 09:00 to 10:30 EDT (15:00 to 16:30 CEST). There will be a screening of a short documentary on the Creando Conciencia cooperative, who are fighting ecological and social injustice through decent work, mobilising the local economy and expanding opportunities in the Benavidez district in Greater Buenos Aires, Argentina. Two cooperatives will also present their work on climate action and sustainable development, which will be followed by an interactive discussion on how to expand the impact of cooperatives worldwide in the field of climate action. More information will be shared on this webinar soon through a mailing and our social media channels.

Lastly, we have many other stories of cooperatives around the world who continue to implement sustainable and practical solutions to protect the planet. Please take a moment to read about them [here](#).

Thank you once again for your leadership in the fight against climate change, and Happy International Day of Cooperatives!

Thank you!

Cooperatively,  
Bruno Roelants  
Director General

## International Labour Organization celebrates #Coops Day

The International Labour Organization (ILO) Director General (DG) Guy Ryder shares a [statement](#) this International Day of Cooperatives to mark the importance of 'Cooperatives for Climate Action'. The video message can also be viewed [here](#).



The ILO has been closely linked with the global cooperative movement since the inception of ILO's [Cooperative Unit](#) 100 years ago! The ILO remains the only organisation within the UN to have an explicit mandate on cooperatives, and continue to work with the cooperative movement globally to advance the cause of social justice. For the International Day of Cooperatives, the ILO has released a 2-minute video which focuses on this year's theme "[Coops for Climate Action](#)". This video will also be featured at the [#coopsday webinar organized by the ILO](#) on Friday July 3<sup>rd</sup> at 13.30 CEST.

The [ILO Blog](#) will also feature a blog from Sonia Dias on waste pickers cooperatives, with a focus on Latin America in general and Brazil in particular. In addition, you may want to put on your calendar and register for the UNTFSSSE webinar on "[What role for the Social and Solidarity Economy in the post COVID-19 crisis recovery?](#)" on 10 Jul 2020, 3.30 pm CEST.

## #GoGreen 3.0

International Cooperative Alliance - Asia and Pacific Committee on Youth Cooperation

International Co-operative Alliance - Africa  
A Region of the International Co-operative Alliance  
Youth Network

Cooperativas de las Américas  
Comité Regional de Juventud (CRJ)

youth-asiapacific.coop

@icaapyouth

AHSAN ALI THAKUR  
SUBSCRIBE

COOP YOUTH SDG#13

13 CLIMATE ACTION

2020 July #coopday  
International Day of Cooperatives

GO GREEN CAMPAIGN 3.0

Spreading awareness and plant saplings from  
**1-21 July 2020**,  
in celebration of  
International Day of Cooperatives (4th July 2020). Be part of a global movement to raise awareness about cooperatives and climate action!

Co-operative Housing International  
A Sector of the International Co-operative Alliance

The ICA Asia-Pacific Committee on Youth Cooperation (ICYC) Go Green campaign is now in its third year and builds on campaigns carried out in 2018 and 2019. In 2019, the campaign included youth from Africa. This year, **Go Green 3.0** is being celebrated as **World Goes Green**, with the Youth Committees of ICA-Africa and ICA-Americas.

Due to the Covid-19 crisis, the network is encouraging participants to plant trees at home or their workplace. The Network will host an International webinar on International Youth Cooperatives for Climate Action on 7 July, 7pm Pakistan Standard Time. The webinar brings together youth speakers from Africa, Americas, Asia-Pacific, and Europe, who will share their experiences and case studies to enhance awareness on climate action, and increase youth engagement with cooperatives and the SDGs. Ahsan Ali Thakur, who chairs the ICYC says, “the campaign is driven by a desire to show the contribution of cooperatives to meeting the SDGs. “The campaign is based on two values, self-help and solidarity,” he adds. **Go Green 3.0 will run from 1-21 July, 2020 (Asia-Pacific, July 1-7; Africa, July Asia 8-14; Americas, July 15-21).**

Cooperative Housing International is also partnering with the ICA Asia & Pacific Committee on Youth Cooperation on the Go Green Campaign. “This campaign connects youth with cooperative societies and how they can be a sustainable model for their community. We support this campaign to empower youth in this positive and concrete action!” said Julie LaPalme-Secretary-General, Cooperative Housing International.

Learn more about the campaign [here](#).

The ICYC has launched a toolkit with instructions on how to use the Go Green Campaign 3.0 banner for social media purposes. For more information and to download the toolkit, please visit our [website](#).

## ICA-AP 2019 Annual Activities Report

We're proud to present the ICA-AP 2019 Annual Activities Report. It has been a year of workshops, seminars, conferences and other events that have helped us build knowledge, connect further with our membership and undertake dynamic work furthering co-operative development! We're thankful to everyone who has been part of this journey, and to those who have kindly contributed articles for the report.

Read the full report here:

<http://icaap.coop/sites/ica-ap.coop/files/Annual%20Activities%20Report%202019.pdf>

## ICA-AP member response to COVID-19

ICA-AP has consolidated member responses from the region and is proud to present the [COVID19 Response webpage](#). The pages showcase the immense support provided by the cooperative sector to their communities and governments. We are humbled by the magnitude of cooperative action and the display of community concern across the region.

Follow these links to view the [webinar recordings](#) and [speaker presentations](#).

## Platform to share COVID-19 experiences, resources and needs

ICA launched the Loomio discussion platform for members across the world to coordinate a global cooperative response to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. The platform, created on [www.loomio.coop](http://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 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](mailto:kumar@ica.coop). Please allow up to 24 hours for a response and approval to join the discussion.

## Webinar: Members in Iran

Representatives from ICA members in Iran and ICA-AP staff took part in a webinar on June 12 to discuss responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and propose future actions.



The ICA members in Iran were represented by Mr. Mohammad Ali Zeyghami and Mr. Alireza Banaeifar, from Iran Chamber of Cooperatives; Ms. Forough Davari, Rah-e-roshd Cooperative Educational Complex (RCEC); Ms. Sarah Amoli and Mr. Mohammad Nekouyi, Central Union of state Rural Production Cooperatives of Iran (CURPC); Mr. Emad Ghadami, Pishgaman Cooperative Union (PCU); Mr. Mohsen Azizi, Tose'e Ta'avon Bank (T.T. Bank); Mr. Younes Mazloumi, Managing Director, Taavon Insurance Co.; Mr. Alireza Sharafi, Iran Oilseeds & Vegetable Oil Processing Factories Co-operative (Farda Co-op); Mr. Ahmad Balan and Mr. Abdolreza Moslemi, Central Organization for Rural Co-operatives of Iran (CORC); and Mr. Dariush Hekmat, Managing Director, Supervision and Coordination Central Union of Rural and Agricultural Co-operatives of Iran (SCURA). ICA-AP was represented by Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director; Mr. Sethu Madhavan, Advisor; and Mr. Shree Padmanabhan, IT and Communications Officer.

CORC's immediate response was to get into the distribution of masks and gel, give members respite from loan repayment, assess how damage in production could be compensated and provide fresh loans to members. They opened their facilities for use by members and continued with training online. In terms of future action, they were looking to provide start-up aid to individuals and to support the community to set up shops to sell products. CORC members were able to pool resources in order to buy and share. SCURA launched an awareness campaign to avoid COVID-19 and distributed food in far off places.

Taavon insurance saw decrease in demand for their products and increase in claims due to loss in business. Their first response was to address needs of members by deferring premium payments and trying to see how exclusions clauses (pandemic as force majeure) could be overcome. They are looking into new areas (health products) and accelerating moves towards digital applications.

TT Bank faced a direct economic impact due to the shutdown and fall in economic activities. They were able to open their physical locations as soon as the lockdowns were eased and took ample

precautions to protect their staff and customers. They were able to provide respite to their customers in terms of payment deferment and interest reduction.

PUC as an IT and communications cooperative saw an upsurge in the use of internet and an increase in demand for bandwidth. Despite this they saw a decrease in business but their first response was to prevent layoff, keep staff on their rolls and substitute them across functions. They plan to increase business through webinars, application development and online sessions.

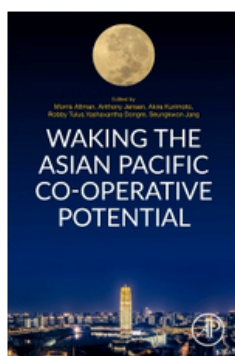
REC's core activities – the physical running schools and educational institutions came to a halt. However, they were able to shift some of their classes to online mode. This required orientation of their teachers to online teaching, resources being made available online and ensuring their students had access to facilities. They had to do this in a short time and now have the systems in place to conduct trainings, engage in online discussions and disseminate information.

ICC in summarizing said that cooperatives across all sectors (agriculture, banking, insurance, education and IT) were doing a lot to meet the needs of their members. ICC as the representative body was lobbying with the government to include cooperatives in economic packages and pay attention to their needs. On the occasion of International Day of Cooperatives, the plan was to launch the campaign, "Affect, Share and Recover." They were planning to ask members to share their top three ideas to preserve the environment.

Members from Iran were looking to share their experience, learn from other countries and take part in trainings and webinars (online).

## Waking the Asian Pacific Cooperative Potential

*Waking the Asian Pacific Cooperative Potential* was released on June 20, 2020. The book is a culmination of five years of research, involving 34 academics across 11 countries in the Asia-Pacific.



## Waking the Asian Pacific Co-operative Potential 1st Edition

☆☆☆☆☆ [Write a review](#)

**Editors:** Morris Altman, Anthony Jensen, Akira Kurimoto, Robby Tulus, Yashavantha Dongre, Seungkwon Jang

The book is based on a cross country comparison methodology of successful cooperatives in different socio-political systems. It provides numerous case studies drawn from successful cooperative organisations; advances a theoretical framework to help readers access and understand the reasons



for cooperative success in the Asia-Pacific, and develops tools for practitioners to establish effective cooperatives and restructure them to optimal goals.

The book has been led by an Editorial Board closely associated with ICA-AP research: Professor Morris Altman, University of Dundee, Scotland; Professor Yashavantha Dongre, University of Mysore, India; Professor Seungkwon Jang, Sungkonghoe University, Korea; Professor Anthony Jensen, University of Newcastle, Australia; Professor Akira Kurimoto, Hosei University, Japan; and Drs. Robby Tulus, Credit Union Movement, Indonesia.

The book can be ordered at: <https://www.elsevier.com/books/waking-the-asian-pacific-co-operative-potential/altman/978-0-12-816666-6>.

### Interview with Professor Yashavantha Dongre, University of Mysore, India

Dr. Dongre has served as Professor of Commerce and the Director of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Board at the University of Mysore, India. Dr. Dongre is also a Consultant to the High-Powered Committee on Cooperatives set up by the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, and serves as the Co-Secretary of the ICA-AP Committee on Cooperatives in Educational Institutions.



#### 1. How did you get involved in the book?

I owe it to the ICA-AP Research Committee. I have been a regular participant in the ICA-AP research conferences. During the Research Conference held in Bali, Indonesia during 2014, I met with Dr. Anthony Jensen from Australia and Dr. Ben Nieto from the Philippines. Anthony Jensen asked some of us, and Prof. Akira Kurimoto from Hosei University, Japan to discuss and explore the possibility of joint research on issues related to cooperatives in the Asian Pacific region. After a couple of hours of brainstorming, all of us were convinced of the need to build a cooperative scholarship in the Asian Pacific region, and as a step towards realising that we need to carry out research and publish scholarly

works as a team. I think I was part of the book project due to this path breaking event that happened on the side-lines of the ICA-AP Research Conference.

2. What was your experience as you interacted with the editors and authors on the book?

This is my second experience being part of a book which is the product of a multi country joint effort among the Asian Pacific academic circle. In my first, a publication by Springer on the Governance of Third Sector Organization in Asia, I was part of the research and an author for the publication. This time around, I was part of the editorial team and has had the experience of sharing and learning from important scholars of the region. Over a period of four years all the editors and many of the authors could personally meet and interact. As the meetings of the editors was generally held on the side-lines of the ICA-AP research conferences, it provided a unique opportunity for the editors to interact with the authors and understand their perspectives. At a personal level, being part of the editors group and interacting with other editors provided me with a chance to see how we all share common concerns and think on a common wavelength, though our perspectives need not necessarily be the same. Six of us from six different regional, linguistic and cultural backgrounds working together was by itself a great lesson on collective and cooperative way of working for a common cause.

3. What are the key takeaways from the Asian cooperatives experience?

Cooperatives in Asia are generally seen to be state sponsored and depending on state patronage. But during the course of our interactions with authors of case studies and by reading through the examples of successful cooperatives of the region, we witnessed a different and very positive dimension as well. Successful cooperatives in the region have shown tremendous capabilities to survive and succeed in a 'not so friendly', if not hostile, setting. They have been innovative, pursued a professional approach and stood for members' benefit. Therefore, the most important takeaway to my mind is that cooperatives in the region certainly have the potential to withstand crisis and evolve into more autonomous and member centric organizations. It looks cooperatives are likely to expand in the Asian region especially in new and emerging areas such as health care, education and related services, urban utilities, and as youth entrepreneurship especially start-ups by first generation entrepreneurs.

4. How did you narrow down on the cooperatives which were featured from India?

Over the years, in the various seminars and conferences on cooperatives, in particular the ICA-AP research seminars and annual conferences by Indian Society for Studies on Cooperatives, many case studies on successful cooperatives in India were presented by researchers. So, we had an idea about the important cooperative initiatives in the country. For the purpose of this book, we were looking to have case studies of such cooperatives which are generally of relatively large size, have diverse activities and/or unique in terms of the way they are formed and run. We actually did a sort of key-informant survey by informally speaking to scholars from different states and prepared a list of cooperatives that fulfil the above criteria. The authors were asked to select a cooperative from this list, based on their own assessment of suitability for the book.

5. What are the core lessons from the case studies regarding the role of cooperatives?

The case studies included in the book are those of successful cooperatives with a specific focus on what challenges these cooperatives faced and how did they manage to overcome such challenges over the years. Speaking of Indian cases which include an agricultural cooperative and two worker cooperatives, one key lesson is the capacity of cooperatives to withstand crisis and their resilience, where there is a clear vision and purpose motivating the members and leaders. Two of the three cases demonstrate how cooperatives can expand and diversify to meet varied needs of the member community, while the other shows cooperatives can successfully deliver in the most unconventional and highly competitive sphere of the economy like public transport. Therefore, to my mind, the case studies establish that cooperatives can survive, compete and be an effective alternative in a market which is threatening to be growing in a unipolar dimension due to the neoliberal policies pursued by policy makers.

6. How do you see the future for cooperatives in educational institutions in the region?

I have always held that the cooperatives in educational institutions, especially those having the entire institutional community, students, teachers, staff and management of the institution as members, are extremely important for any country. In India, cooperative leaders encouraged formation of cooperatives in schools and higher education institutions, right at the beginning of the cooperative movement in the country. The fact that the first cooperative in educational institution was established as early as 1912, shows that they were seen as a very important cog in the wheel of cooperative sector. Unfortunately, though, barring a few countries – Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Indonesia for example – not many countries in the region have pursued promoting cooperatives in educational institutions with the required vigour and enthusiasm. They are the best laboratories (in fact, these cooperatives are called Laboratory Cooperative in the Philippines) for young people to learn about cooperatives, through actual participation. At a time when youth need to be roped in to the movement in a big way, establishing cooperatives in educational institutions is the one best way of preparing and attracting them to the movement.

7. What opportunities are there for cooperatives in the region during the current COVID-19 crisis? And how does this book address this issue?

In times of crisis, whether due to economic downturns or natural disasters, cooperatives have demonstrated that they remain resilient and take care of the suffering community. The present pandemic situation is no different. Cooperatives the world over have responded to the needs of the community. With globalization and neo-liberal economic policies widening the rich-poor and urban-rural divide and the markets witnessing a unipolar growth, there is need both for a more equitable institutional choice as well as a constructive competitor. Cooperatives are the best to be this alternative. The Covid-19 crisis is indeed a global crisis and most marginalized groups are the sufferers. At these times, it is important to look to successful cooperative initiatives. This book highlights through case studies, how such cooperatives have evolved and thus provides a roadmap for more cooperatives in the region to adopt ways and means of becoming stronger and succeeding in the market place. Also, it is the community participation and engagement which is central to addressing the present crisis and here again the book provides many leads to policy makers both for engaging communities and for mainstreaming cooperatives and such other social businesses.

8. What is the future of APCRP and for the Editors of this book?

One of the main aims of APCRP is promoting cooperative scholarship in the Asian Pacific region. Therefore, apart from continuing to collaborate for serious academic research on cooperatives, APCRP would increasingly focus on more such publications. The editors of this book have already begun discussions on the next publication and we hope to realize that in the next three-four years. Also, we intend to nurture and support other groups on themes critical to the cooperative sector in the region and through this encourage new and young scholars to publish their works through publishing platforms that help drawing global attention towards Asian Pacific cooperative scholarship.

**Interview with Prof. Seungkwon Jang, Sungkonghoe University, South Korea**

Dr. Jang is Professor of the Department of Management of Cooperatives at the Graduate School, Sungkonghoe University, Korea. Professor Jang earned his PhD in organization theory from Lancaster University Management School, UK. He is the editor-in-chief of the *Korean Journal of Cooperative Studies* and has been involves in various research projects on organizational change and development in Fair Trade organizations and social economy organizations.



1. How did you get involved in the book?

In the ICA AP research conference 2015 at Pune, India, the research team of my department had presented the case studies of Korea's agricultural cooperatives, consumer cooperatives, and worker cooperatives. Then, the leaders of APCRP have invited me as a member of editorial team of the book in the ICA AP research conference 2017 at Seoul, Korea. I was glad to accept the offer. Since then, I have been working with other editors of the book.

2. What was your experience as you interacted with the editors and authors on the book?

It was a wonderful experience for me to communicate and share my ideas with the editors and the authors of the book. I've learned a lot about the current state of cooperatives in the Asia Pacific region. It's important that each and every country has its own history and issues. The learning became useful in teaching my students and managers in Korea, and doing research on cooperative management. Furthermore, the editing the book based on international case studies takes every participants' passion and energy for cooperation and coordination.

3. What are the key takeaways from the Asian cooperatives experience?

Every country has its own unique history. The political, economic, social and cultural systems all differ. Therefore, there can be different ways of understanding cooperatives depending on the country. There is no single best way to make good cooperatives, but to learn better way to make better cooperatives. Doing so, we have to share many stories of better cooperative cases with other Asia Pacific cooperators. And we are able to collaborate with each other in doing cooperative businesses and movement, and to let young cooperators and researchers work together. This book will be the first step towards collaborating efforts in comparative research and building the research network in the Asia and Pacific.

4. What are the core lessons from the case studies from Korea regarding the role of cooperatives?

In order to understand Korea's cooperatives, there needs to be an understanding of its past and present. You would need to understand the legal, political, economic and social systems of Korea first. Cooperatives in Korea matured as the country underwent major social changes. It's important to grasp the dynamics between the state, market and civil society. Since the 1960s when Korea was a developing country suffering the Korean War, agricultural cooperatives and credit unions have been playing a significant role for eliminating the poverty in rural and urban communities. And since 1980s, Korea's consumer cooperatives have been developing to address socio-economic challenges in promoting environmentally friendly farming, raising consumers' environmental awareness, and leading civil right movement based on civil society organizations. In addition, Korea's worker cooperatives are formed to be human-centred enterprises as employee-owned and democratically controlled businesses for responding the issues of widening the gap between the poor and the rich. In short, Korea's cooperatives have been moving towards a better society for all Koreans.

5. How have cooperatives in Korea evolved over time?

Cooperatives in Korea have evolved over the past hundred year since 1919. The duration and method depend on what kind of cooperatives we're discussing. Agricultural cooperatives evolved with the support and control of the state. Established in 1961, Nonghyup (NACF, National Agricultural Cooperative Federation) is the multi-purpose cooperative with a major presence in the country's financial sector. Consumer cooperatives have been playing bigger roles in our society alongside the growth of civil society since 1980s. Worker cooperative is somehow a new comer, and we're seeing a recent growth. The enactment of the Framework Act on Cooperatives in 2012, 'new' cooperatives

including worker cooperatives have been created and this growing number of cooperatives will be continued.

6. Where do you see opportunities for cooperatives during these times? Could you locate this 1) in the Korea context and 2) for cooperatives in the region?

It is worrisome to witness the societal and economic inequality between the classes and the communities in Korea. I believe cooperatives will contribute to resolving many socio-economic challenges. Cooperatives in the Asia Pacific region can and must all play a major role in this regard. My hope is for cooperation between all cooperatives in the region to explore the possible options we have, and to share the solutions for the issues that face all of us.

### Meet Ganesh Gopal, ICA-AP's new Programme Officer



**Hi Ganesh, welcome to ICA-AP! Do tell us about your background, and what brought you to working with cooperatives?**

It is exciting to be part of the ICA-AP as part of the European Union Project! Over the past seven years, I have worked with a few organisations in various roles across sectors such as technology-innovation, entrepreneurship, finance and policy research.

My last stint was with the National Centre for Financial Education (NCFE) at Mumbai, the nodal national organisation accorded responsibility for spreading financial literacy in India. My role involved coordinating with multiple stakeholders, ministries and apex bodies for implementing targeted financial education programmes. Here, I also had the opportunity to be part of the team framing the National Strategy for Financial Education and lead the development of a e-learning management system(e-LMS) for financial literacy.

Previously, I had worked with the then newly formed Kerala Start-up Mission (under the Government of Kerala) which was the nodal organisation to promote start-ups and tech-innovation within the

State. Here I had the opportunity to learn, experiment and tinker with a gamut of activities and even don the hat of an entrepreneur. I also had the opportunity to work with two non-profits operating in the domains of policy analysis & research and technology-skills respectively. Both these roles were interesting and brought about key learnings particularly in policy research, programme implementation and project management.

With my roots belonging to a state like Kerala, where I was exposed to a robust cooperative ecosystem that encourages the virtues of awareness, equality and democratic principles; the core ethos of the cooperative model is not alien to me, and something that I believe in and connect with.

**That's interesting! Given your engagement with start-ups, and your own experience as an entrepreneur, what advantages do you see in the cooperative business model?**

The cooperative model embodies tenets of humanity, equity and along with their collective strength seeks to address some of the most pressing challenges of our age. They are local agents of capital accumulation who work towards economically sustainable development that is translated in local spending and community resilience. Cooperatives with their bottom-up ownership dynamic, place the interests of their enterprise, and therefore their members' interests, ahead of the organization's short-term financial interests. Thus, through their collective strength they seek to address the most pressing challenges of our age including rising inequality, unsustainable development, unemployment, climate change and so on.

In the face of a changing workplace and the impending fourth industrial revolution, there is a massive untapped potential for technology driven cooperatives in the coming days. Notably, the cooperative business model, which is part of the larger Social Solidarity Economy(SSE) is one which has proven to be resilient in the wake of crises.

**Great! What is your role going to be at ICA? And how does working with cooperatives align with what you want to do?**

I have joined as part of the European Union Project at the ICA-Asia Pacific Regional Office. My key role would be to ensure the effectiveness of youth entrepreneurship projects, inclusion of innovation in such projects, infusion of technology to the extent of catalysing the larger objectives of cooperatives and to support policy advocacy based on research and training outputs. The role within the project would also entail undertaking detailed research pertaining to the existing legal frameworks and cooperative laws in countries within the Asia-Pacific region, and further attempt to create an enabling environment for enterprise creation, by liaising with various stakeholders in the region.

Cooperatives per say, is a new field for me, and looking at the history of the cooperative movement and the principles that form the bedrock of their collective identity, I feel immense satisfaction to be working for a cause with such a rich and noble legacy.

Personally, I am also excited to work, experiment and explore the encouraging potential that cooperatives at this juncture offer to the world. I look forward to learning a lot more in my journey with the International Cooperative Alliance.

---

## News from our Members

### Appointment of new ICETT Chairman



Dr. Awasthi (L), Managing Director of IFFCO with Mr. Tarun Bhargava (R), newly elected Chair of the ICETT

Tarun Bhargava from the Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Organisation (IFFCO) has been appointed as the new chair of the International Cooperative Entrepreneurship Think Tank (ICETT). ICETT is an ICA initiative, formed in the first meeting organized in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in conjunction with the ICA General Assembly and the Cooperative Summit of the Americas in 2018. Talking to [Indian Cooperative](#) Bhargava said, “This recognition of IFFCO is a salute to the Visionary and Inspirational Leadership of Managing Director, IFFCO, Dr U.S. Awasthi, who constantly motivates us to Look Beyond and Do More. It will be a big responsibility on IFFCO, India will definitely add a new dimension to the current scenario of Cooperative Movement across the Globe. Further, this group will work cohesively to integrate the Cooperatives from various sectors and implement the ICA Strategic plan.”

Mr Bhargava also met with ICA staff and ICETT members over two days to share responses and actions for COVID-19, climate change, and collaborations for cooperative entrepreneurship.





Mr. Bhargava with ICA staff and ICETT members during the meeting to share responses and actions for COVID-19 and climate change

## ANGKASA: Discussion on effects of MCO to cooperatives in ASEAN

On 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020, ANGKASA as chair of the ASEAN Cooperative Organisation (ACO) initiated an online discussion to understand the effects of the Movement Control Order (MCO) on cooperatives in ASEAN countries. The MCO introduced by governments in the region as a preventive measure to contain the Covid-19 outbreak affected business and regular activities of cooperatives in ASEAN. The main points for discussion were:

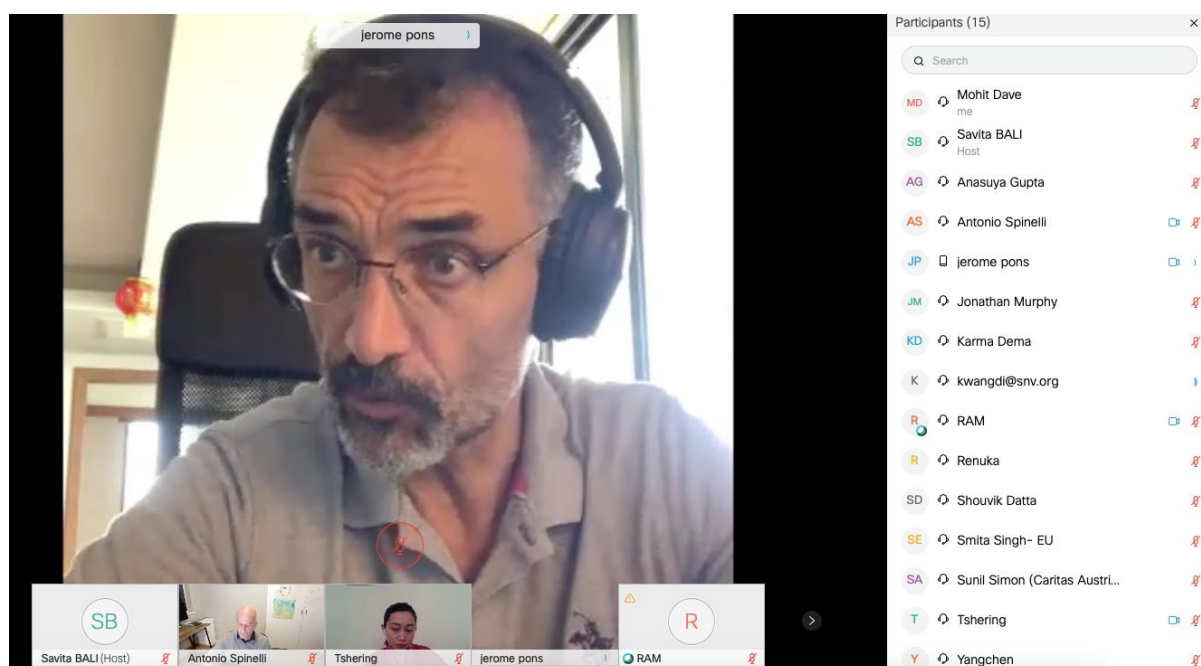
- a) Share work of cooperatives in ASEAN to mitigate the effect of COVID-19 pandemic
- b) Share action taken by the ASEAN governments and the stimulus packages offered particularly to SMEs and cooperatives
- c) Hear suggestion on what ACO members could do together

34 representatives from Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam participated in the discussion. Dato' Abdul Fattah Abdullah, President of ANGKASA and President of ACO chaired the session which was moderated by Haji Nasir Khan Yahaya, Group CEO of ANGKASA.

Read the full agenda and presentation points during the discussion [here](#).

## ICA-EU Partnership: Updates

### ICA-AP Consultation with the EU Delegation to Bhutan and India



In view of the preparations for the next financial framework (2021 - 27), ICA-AP was invited for a virtual consultation with Civil Society Organisations on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020 by the EU Delegation to India and Bhutan. The EU team made a presentation on the programming process and proposed EU flagship initiatives in Bhutan which were in line with the European Commission priorities as well as with the national priorities identified as part of their country assessment. The flagship initiatives aim at identifying opportunities for collective EU response in the partner country including engagement with EU CSOs and private sector. The focus was on climate resilience, green growth, disaster resilience, digitalisation of health services, upgrading skills of health staff, teachers and others, transform learning in schools thru' ICT and Linking to Vocational Education system.

As of 2019, there were 509 farmer groups and 71 cooperatives registered with the Department of Agricultural Marketing and Cooperatives (DAMC – the government department in charge of registering cooperatives) in Bhutan. The 69% of Bhutan's population who live in the rural areas primarily depend on agriculture for livelihood. It is also in the rural areas, where majority of the country's poor live. Therefore, agriculture is a critical sector for pursuing equitable socio-economic development and reducing poverty. A number of farmer's cooperatives have been formed in Bhutan to effectively manage agricultural enterprises. A partnership program has also been initiated to connect agriculture and tourism sector by bringing together cooperatives and consumers especially in the hospitality industry. The prospect of organic farming in the country is huge because of the very limited or no use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Rural enterprises that enhance and sustain the values of agriculture, livestock, and forest products as well as cultural products (e.g. textiles, bamboo and cane handicrafts, woodwork) are also being promoted by the Royal Government. Product diversification and improvement are being persisted through skills development and products marketing is being encouraged through formation of cooperatives and improved market access.

Representing the cooperative movement, Mr. Mohit Dave briefed the discussants on the ongoing ICA-EU Partnership, ICA-AP priorities in the region and DAMC's role. Given the focus on climate and digitalisation, he mentioned about DAMC's work in the area, need to build capacity for digitization of monitoring and evaluation of coops, and the climate pledge made on the Coopsfor2030 campaign. The Ministry of Agriculture & Forests in the Royal Government has been pursuing the formation and development of cooperatives and farmer groups for several years, in order to help farming become more efficient, profitable and market oriented, which in turn can enhance the income and standard of living of the members. One of the outcomes of establishment of cooperatives is the creation of gainful employment - be it for its own members or for those who are not members of the group.

The meeting was the first of-its-kind for Bhutan and there was interest to continue such an engagement regularly on a biannual basis.

### ICA-EU partnership: Year 4 Report

The [International Cooperative Alliance](#) (ICA), established in 1895 and currently headquartered in Brussels is the global umbrella organization that represents, unites and develops cooperatives across diverse sectors of the economy. The ICA represents 300 plus apex federations and leading sectoral cooperatives from over 100 countries. [ICA Asia and Pacific](#) (ICA-AP), the regional arm of the ICA was established in 1960 in New Delhi (India), and services 107 members from 32 countries.

In March 2016, the ICA and the European Union signed a [Framework Partnership Agreement](#) (Europe Aid/150-053/C/ACT/Multi) to implement multi-year and multi-country development programme aimed at benefitting and advancing cooperatives worldwide. Titled "Cooperatives in Development – People-centred Businesses in Action", the programme is implemented by the four ICA regional offices (Africa, Americas, Asia-Pacific and Europe) and will run until May 2021. The AP unit has identified three strategic priorities: participation of Cooperatives in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Youth Inclusion, and Exploring Work and Ownership Structures in Cooperatives. A video explaining the hashtag, #Coops4Dev, and the program can be viewed [here](#).

The following is the Year 4 (March 2019 to February 2020) report of the activities carried out by the Asia Pacific Unit.

#### **Institutional Strengthening**

A [training program on SDG-13 Climate Action](#), "Save the Environment to Sustain Future Generations" was held in November, at the Cooperative League of Thailand (CLT) Training Center in Bangkok. The capacity building program was conceptualized and designed in consultation with GIZ, Thailand, to strengthen the capacity of leaders and managers of cooperatives. The 31 participants from eight countries across Asia and Africa deepened their understanding on SDGs and its relevance for cooperatives; explored and analysed the impact of climate change on various sectors (agriculture, credit, fisheries and consumer) and exchanged good practices and lessons-learned to reduce or cope with climate change risks.



Delegates during the ICA-AP SDG13 workshop in Bangkok, Thailand in November 2019

Coop Mic is ICA-AP's endeavour to provide a platform for experts from within and outside the cooperative ecosystem to talk about topical issues and help spread awareness about the cooperative model. The latest edition of [Coop Mic in June](#) was with Mr. Rajiv Khandelwal, Executive Director of Aajeevika Bureau, India. The topic of the talk, 'Decent and Dignified Work Demands Action Now', was in consonance with the theme of 2019 International Day of Cooperatives - Cooperatives for Decent Work.

### **Enabling Environment**

The [status of cooperatives](#) in eighteen countries of the Asia and Pacific region were studied and mapped using secondary research. The key parameters were contribution of cooperatives to the national economy, sectoral distribution of cooperatives, genesis and evolution of the cooperative movement, historical and current laws on cooperatives, and association of national cooperatives with the international cooperative movement and ICA. Eleven national reports on the legal framework have been uploaded on the #Coops4Dev [website](#).

ICA-AP entered a joint research project with Access Livelihoods Consulting to ascertain the status of autonomy and independence of cooperatives in India, which can be accessed [here](#). The research on [Cooperatives in Industrial and Service Sectors in the Asia and Pacific Region](#) was co-designed with CICOPA<sup>1</sup> as a participatory study with the engagement of experts and practitioners from 12 countries. Another study on the challenges faced by youth and the role for cooperatives is under finalisation.

### **Capacity Building**

A training of mentors of the [Global Cooperative Entrepreneurship \(GCE\)](#) was held at Manchester, United Kingdom from 18-21 March. The objective of the GCE project is to set up an experimental global community of mentors, mutualize tools and resources and implement activities for cooperative entrepreneurship. From Asia and Pacific unit, 5 mentors from 3 Indonesia, India and Malaysia participated. The mentors continue to collaborate on developing, reviewing and sharing resources related to youth entrepreneurship and cooperative development via an online knowledge base. In collaboration with Uralungal Labour Contract Cooperative Society, we organized the [GCE Training for Ambassadors](#) from 25-28 November in Kerala, India. 20 Participants from India and Indonesia attended the four-day training meant to capacitate participants with the skills and knowledge to set up new cooperatives.

---

<sup>1</sup> International Organization of Industrial and Service Cooperatives



In August, ICA-AP along with the Gujarat Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Cooperative Federation and SEWA Bharat organized the [National Workshop for Women's Cooperatives](#), in Ahmedabad, India. The workshop stemmed from the need to empower women's cooperatives and had four-pronged focus: accessing finance, leveraging technologies to boost business, networking and marketing linkages for goods and services, and supporting an enabling environment. We participated in the [India International Cooperatives Trade Fair](#) from 11-13 October, by setting up a stall to promote our activities and display publications on cooperative law, gender, and cooperative development

An [inter-regional workshop](#) on cooperatives in educational institutions was organised by the ICA-AP Committee on Cooperatives in Educational Institutions in collaboration with ICA Africa in Kigali on October 14, 2019. The objective of the workshop was to share knowledge between ICA members and other stakeholders about cooperatives in educational institutions such as universities, colleges, and high schools. The workshop was attended by 51 participants from diverse backgrounds including policy makers, students, university management and staff, and youth from over 17 countries. We also organised an [International Seminar on Curriculum Development for Cooperative Education](#) on 25-26 November in Kathmandu, Nepal. The program was attended by 22 international delegates from six countries and 50 Nepalese stakeholders. The seminar looked at the current status of curriculum development in formal education on cooperatives and in mapping out future needs.



In December, we organized the [2<sup>nd</sup> ICA-AP Forum on Development of Cooperatives in Pacific Islands](#) in Australia. It came as a follow-up to the one in Vanuatu in 2018 to mainstream cooperatives from the Pacific within the ICA's development processes. The Forum was attended by delegates from

academia, cooperative federations and government agencies from Australia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Kiribati, and New Zealand.



Delegates during the 2<sup>nd</sup> ICA-AP Forum on Development of Cooperatives in Pacific Islands

### **Cooperative Networking**

The 13<sup>th</sup> edition of European Development Days (EDD) took place in Brussels on 18-19 June. The Asia-Pacific unit attended the EDD and [discussed with potential partners](#) on the EC's collaborative [platform](#) for the international development community, where cooperative organisations could join the discussions, access resources and learn from peers. This presented an opportunity to meet with the representatives of Cooperatives Europe Development Platform (CEDP) to discuss potential collaboration with ICA members in the Asia-Pacific region and establish a regional platform to promote cooperatives in international development.

### **Advocacy and Political Dialogue**

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. We were present at the [63<sup>rd</sup> UN CSW](#) held at New York from 9<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> of March. Our representative, Dr. Nandini Azad, Chairperson of the ICA-AP Women Committee made a successful intervention to the UN Secretary General, António Guterres, during a Town Hall meeting between the SG and CSOs.

We participated in the [annual meeting of the Global PFD](#) held in Brussels, Belgium from 13-15 March and shared our work in Nepal on the contribution of cooperatives in the Voluntary National Reporting (VNR). The ICA-AP also made an intervention at the panel 'Towards more effective multi-stakeholder partnerships to achieve the environmental ambition of the 2030 Agenda' and described the work of cooperatives in saving the natural environment by citing the example of SANASA (ICA member) in the Lassana Lanka (Beautiful Sri Lanka) project. The PFD held its [Asia Regional Meeting](#) in Kathmandu, Nepal from 24-26 September to discuss issues on top of global agenda and the progress made in the implementation of the SDGs. Our delegation had the opportunity to meet and greet H.E. Veronica Cody, Ambassador, European Union Delegation to Nepal.



ICA-AP staff and delegates with EUD Ambassador to Nepal, H.E. Veronica Cody during the Policy Forum on Development, Asia Regional Meeting

We partnered with the Vietnam Cooperative Alliance (VCA) to organize the [2<sup>nd</sup> Asia Pacific Cooperative Registrars' Forum](#) on creating enabling legal framework and policies to promote sustainable development of cooperatives in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Ho Chi Minh City from 16-19 April. The Forum brought together registrars and regulators concerned with the promotion and development of cooperatives nationally; leaders and managers of cooperatives from the Asia-Pacific region; and other stakeholders to discuss matters pertaining to legislation on cooperatives, as well as policies and regulations that complement existing laws. It was attended by 294 delegates from 22 countries including Vietnam and included government representatives from Bhutan, Fiji, India, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.



Training session during the Global Youth Forum (GYF20) in Kuching, Malaysia in February 2020

The [Global Youth Forum Cooperative Entrepreneurship 2020 \(GYF20\)](#) was a first-of-its kind immersive training for youth entrepreneurs (ages 18-35) and cooperators from around the world. GYF20 took place at the Majestic Riverside Hotel in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia from 3-7 February 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. GYF20 was a forward-looking event to create a global network of youth in entrepreneurship and cooperation. The main outcome of the event was the passing of the [GYF20 Youth Resolution](#).

We reviewed the VNRs from 2016 to 2019 to see how cooperatives are featured. Our premise is that cooperatives play an important role in implementation of the SDGs and being part of the VNR process will help put forth the views of cooperatives to focal point and stakeholders, be included in national targets, gain recognition, and provide added avenues for engagement (with government, aid agencies and civil society).

We continued keeping track of the consultations organized by the European Union Delegations (EUD) to update and revise the roadmaps on civil society engagement and participated in the consultations for India. The AP unit also engaged in bilateral meetings with EUDs in India and Bhutan, Jordan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. The meetings were to introduce ICA members in the country to the EUDs and to familiarize the EUDs to the Partnership activities.

### **Alliances with CSO actors**

ICA-AP was able to actively engage CSOs in its activities through the year. We were able to further progress on the MoUs with the Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA) and the Access Livelihood Consulting India.

We collaborated with Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development, the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) in India, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation through its Secretariat and the SAARC Agriculture Center to attend the [Regional Experts Consultation Meeting on Family Farmers Cooperatives](#) to End Hunger and Poverty through Integrated Farming in South Asia. The meeting was organized at the Verghese Kurien auditorium of NDDB from 22-24 July. The objective of the consultation was to strengthen farmers' cooperatives in attaining the SDGs on no poverty and zero hunger in South Asia, by sharing of good practices, through policy formulation, and support incentives.

We also engaged with the Verghese Kurien Centre for Excellence (VKCoE) at IRMA and the Department of Cooperation in Government of Odisha for the Workshop on "[Doubling Farmers Income: Exploring Pathways for Cooperatives in Odisha](#)". It was organized at the Odisha State Cooperative Bank from 29-30 August. The [Aflatoun Global Social & Financial Skills Conference](#) took place in Amsterdam on October 30 and November 1. The conference had a dedicated break-out session on 'Partnering with Cooperatives' which was facilitated by us. ICA-AP and Aflatoun International signed an MoU to take forward these conversations to a fruitful partnership.



## Youth Replication Project

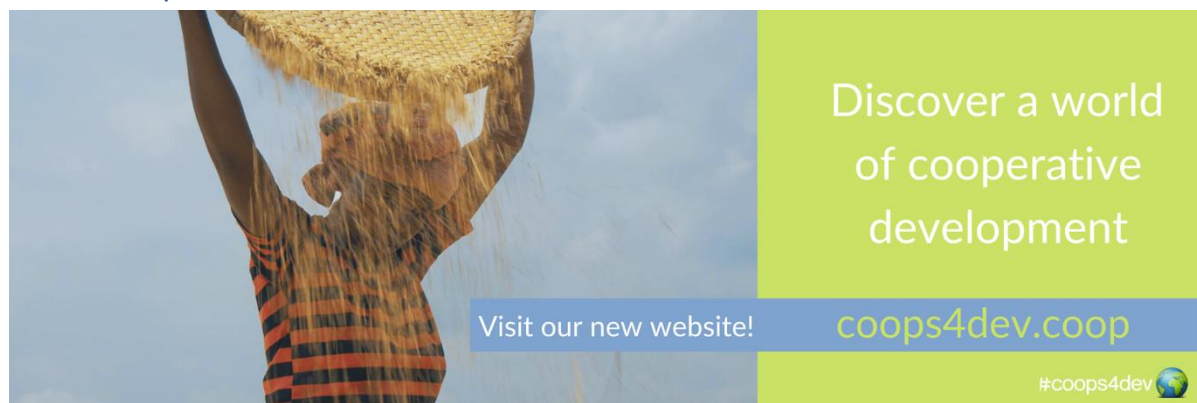


The Replication Project is an initiative of the Youth Network, led and managed by the Executive Committee (EC), in order to understand existing cooperative youth projects, and to support replication of existing models and create new ones. The program was launched in mid-2020 and aims to have a global reach. The EC will choose at least 8 projects (two per region) and fund them with a maximum of EUR 10,000 per project. They will also recruit mentors from the ICA network to help support the building of strong foundations and structures.

Applications will be reviewed by the members of the EC and a representative of the International Summit of Cooperatives. A minimum of two projects from each ICA region will be selected and we will fund the creation of different types of coops. The judges will evaluate the applications based on the answers to each question in the application form. The short-listed projects will have a Skype call with one of the EC members in their region and a second neutral evaluator. More information is available [here](#).

The call for applications is open until **16<sup>th</sup> August (midnight Brussels time)**.

## Research updates



### **Legal Framework Analysis**

National Reports of 13 countries can be accessed at [#coops4dev](#).

### **Mapping of Cooperatives**

The mapping research aims at collecting and publicising exhaustive and up-to-date statistics of cooperative organisations in different countries. The national Reports for Iran and the Philippines can be accessed at [#coops4dev](#).

### **Global thematic research on youth**

The findings of the global thematic research on youth from all regions have been compiled into a global report based on themes concerning youth, including education, employment, entrepreneurship, and inequalities. Stay tuned for updates on the findings!

### **Country snapshots**

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

### **Sectoral/thematic snapshots**

The snapshot on consumer cooperatives can be accessed [here](#). This snapshot provides one-stop information on consumer cooperatives in the region and includes definition of consumer cooperatives, number of consumer cooperatives by countries and interesting case studies.



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 co-operators from around the world. GYF20 took place in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia from 3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> February 2020 with over 150 youth participants and 20 trainers, professionals and experts from 50 countries. From the Asia-Pacific region, we had participants and trainers from India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Singapore, and Sri Lanka.

## Announcements

Postponement of 33<sup>rd</sup> World Cooperative Congress and 14<sup>th</sup> ICA-AP Regional Assembly



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ICA Global Board has decided to postpone the 33<sup>rd</sup> World Cooperative Congress. The Congress on **Deepening our Cooperative Identity**, will now take place from

**March 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021** in Seoul, Republic of Korea. The preparatory events, the **ICA Cooperative Research Conference** and the **International Cooperative Law Forum**, will take place from 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of February.\*

Looking beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, the Congress will look to deepening understanding of how the cooperative identity has enabled cooperatives to tackle the crisis and to overcome global challenges like climate change, sustainable development, peace and equality. The 33<sup>rd</sup> World Cooperative Congress will be an opportunity to look back and validate the cooperative movement's resilience, leadership and solidarity during times of crisis. This Congress will serve as an important forum to:

- Discuss why the cooperative identity, including definition, principles and values, is needed now more than ever;
- Show cooperative resilience by sharing experiences and testimonies; and
- Discuss how cooperatives can significantly contribute to the global economic, social and environmental reconstruction.

The ICA-AP Regional Board in its online meeting on May 19, decided to **postpone the 14<sup>th</sup> ICA-AP Regional Assembly to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021** and hold it in conjunction with the ICA World Cooperative Congress (March 1-3). It also approved the procedures for the board elections to be held during the Regional Assembly.

*\*The dates for these events are subject to be further rescheduled should the pandemic make it necessary for force majeure.*

## Upcoming Events

- International Day of Cooperatives: Cooperatives for Climate Action: Webinar with ICA-AP and NCUI – July 4<sup>th</sup>
- GoGreen 3.0 International Webinar – July 7<sup>th</sup>
- Webinar: Cooperatives & Climate Action: Sustaining Environmental Gains Post COVID-19 – July 8<sup>th</sup>
- 14<sup>th</sup> ICA-AP Regional Assembly – Feb 28<sup>th</sup>
- ICA World Congress – March 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021

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 physical activities planned for the time being. We will update you as and when the rescheduled dates are available.



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 Co-operative Alliance and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.