

ICA-AP NEWSLETTER

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

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60 Years Celebration of ICA in Asia-Pacific

Celebrating Cooperation



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.

The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) came to the Asia-Pacific region with the establishment of the Regional Office and Education Center (ICA ROEC) in 1960, as a result of the discussions that had taken place at the various ICA Congresses since 1948. The ICA ROEC was opened on November 14, 1960, by late Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, first Prime Minister of India. ICA ROEC was the first to be set up by the ICA as the precursor and a model for other regional offices.

Given the commendable work done by the ICA ROEC and based on the demands made by cooperators from the region at various fora, the scope and area of operations were gradually expanded to cover all countries in Asia and the Pacific region. The office was called ICA Regional Office for South-East Asia from 1960 to 1963; the ICA Regional Office for Asia from 1963 to 1990; and since 1990 as the International Cooperative Alliance Asia Pacific (ICA-AP). The Regional Office has been situated in New Delhi (India) from the start with branch offices in Singapore (1999 to 2012) and Malaysia (2013 onwards).

Starting with 7 members from 6 countries, the ICA-AP today serves 109 member organizations from 32 countries. ICA-AP has worked to unite, promote, and develop the character and nature of cooperatives. It has been able to consolidate the thought-process within the movement in the region and provide platforms for discussions, exchange of experiences, and mutual collaboration. Over the past 60 years, it has helped in the development of cooperatives, assisted in the improvement of managerial and decision-making capacity of the members, and strengthened the knowledge base of members in the region.

ICA-AP from its early days has forged partnerships with governments, civil society organizations, and international development agencies. The Regional Office began with a national campaign and a fund

“Without Boundaries” launched by Kooperativa Forbundet (KF, Swedish Cooperative Union and Wholesale Society) in 1958 to secure the support of the Swedish cooperators. The Government of India and the National Cooperative Union of India extended complete moral and financial support to host the office. The Government of Japan and its cooperative movement (JA-Zenchu, JCCU) have been sponsoring several training programs for managers and women leaders of cooperatives. The ILO, FAO, IFAD, UNDESA, and most recently the European Union have extended support to the development of cooperatives. Members from China (ACFSMC), India (NCUI, IFFCO), Korea (NACF), Malaysia (ANGKASA) and Singapore (SNCF) have supported various development initiatives and the branch offices.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to two-thirds of the world’s population (around 4.58 billion) living in 53 countries and territories. The COVID-19 pandemic has for the time being dented the region’s economic growth, potentially increased the number of people living in poverty, and stalled the aspirations of its young population. At the same time, it has shown the need to look beyond current models which value short-term gain over long-term viability, increase inequality, lower social capital, and create environmental imbalances. The need is for cooperatives which center collective action to build a better world; new forms of cooperatives to emerge in light of the socio-economic-environmental needs and communication tuned to show the relevance of the model to an aspiring young generation.

Cooperatives in the region have, in the face of adversity, be it natural or manmade, shown their relevance, proven their resilience, and demonstrated their endurance. The challenges and urgency have magnified post the pandemic and the relevance of cooperatives in the region has never been greater. The work for the ICA-AP and cooperatives in the region is cut out for the next sixty years!

60th Anniversary Virtual Celebrations – 13th November 2020 via Zoom

To celebrate ICA-AP’s work with members across six decades, recognize those who have been part of the journey, and look ahead to the coming decades, we are organizing an online event on 13th November 2020. The event to mark the 60th anniversary will feature a live discussion with cooperators from different parts of the region, many of whom worked in earnest to help build the office and the cooperative movement in Asia and the Pacific region.

We welcome you to join us for the online event on 13th November from **11:00 to 13:00**, India Standard Time, using the below mentioned details.

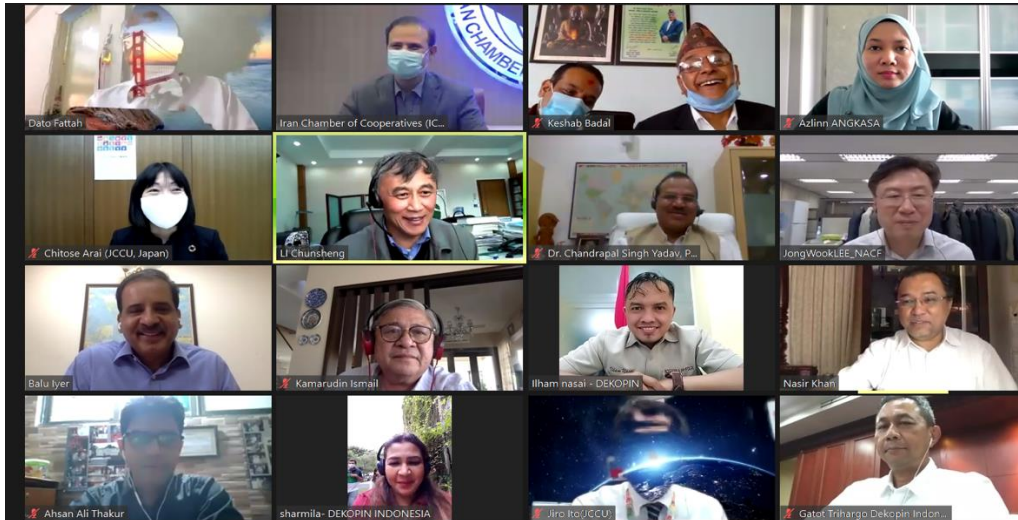
Online Event at <https://zoom.us/j/93886934542?pwd=MW52b0VXOExOWGN0aHVFNmZrSXlTdz09>

Meeting ID: 93886934542

Passcode: 639004

ICA-AP ACTIVITIES

ICA-AP Conducts 2nd Virtual Regional Board Meeting



The ICA-AP held its Regional Board Meeting online on 27th October 2020 from 11:00 to 14:00 (IST). The physical meeting was moved online due to the continuing COVID-19 crisis.

Mr. Li Chunsheng, Chairperson of the Regional Board extended a warm welcome to all the 36 members who joined from the eight countries – Nepal, Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Japan, Korea, Sri Lanka, and China. The Board also observed a one-minute silence in the memory of Mr Sethu Madhavan and Dr. T. Paranjothi whom we lost in the month of September 2020.

The key agenda for the meeting included discussions on – the date, venue, and mode of the 14th ICA-AP Regional Assembly and the upcoming Board elections, the activities and financial report of ICA-AP for the period January to August 2020, the draft activities and budget plan of ICA-AP for 2021, the membership situation, and the status of 2020 subscription fees.

The Board members from National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI), Malaysian National Cooperative Movement (ANGKASA), and Japanese Consumers' Cooperative Union (JCCU) shared the updates on the situation and response work of COVID-19 in their respective countries. The Chairpersons of the education and youth committees of ICA-AP also shared their respective updates. The online ToT conducted by the Women's Committee for grassroots women trainers and the Go-Green campaign organized by the Youth Committee were much appreciated by Mr Li Chunsheng.

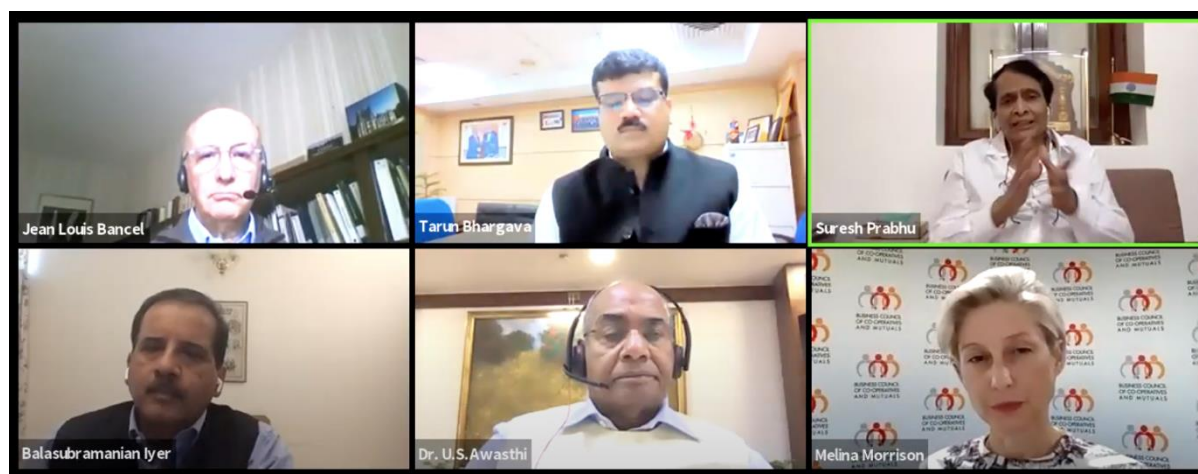
The Board, after much deliberation, decided to conduct a hybrid assembly wherein the 14th ICA-AP Regional Assembly will be held online in February 2021 and the board elections, will be held in-person during the 33rd World Cooperative Congress in December 2021 in Seoul, Republic of Korea.

Mr Balu, Regional Director, ICA-AP presented the activities and financial report for the period January-August 2020, which was approved by the Board. He also presented the current membership (at

present ICA-AP has 109 members from 32 countries) and subscription fee situation; he further requested and encouraged the Board to follow-up with the members from their respective countries for the due subscription fee. The Board also approved ICA-APs draft work plan and budget projections for the year 2021.

Mr Balu informed the Board about the 60th anniversary celebrations of ICA-AP and invited everyone to be a part of it. The next Regional Board was decided to be held online in February 2020 before the Regional Assembly. The Regional Director was authorised to fix the date in consultation with the ICA-AP President.

Webinar: Engagement of Cooperatives in the G20



ICA Asia-Pacific (ICA-AP) in collaboration with Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative (IFFCO) organized a webinar on “Engagement of Cooperatives in the G20” on 28th September 2020.

Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP moderated the discussion and explained how the Asia-Pacific is well represented in the G20, with seven countries – Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, and Saudi Arabia. The ICA and its members have been participating in the G20 Engagement Groups since 2014 (when the G20 Summit was held in Australia) and have highlighted the role of cooperatives in addressing the challenges facing small and medium businesses, employment, insurance, and education and inclusion of cooperatives in policy papers providing recommendations to G20 governments.

Mr. Suresh Prabhu, Member of Parliament in the Upper House (Rajya Sabha) of India and India’s Sherpa to the G7 and G20 said that G20 countries account for 86% of the world’s GDP. Post the pandemic, governments are working to grow their economies; here the current global governance (globalization, reliance on markets, food security, disparity) is being called into question. Cooperatives with their ability to bring people together from the bottom-up and through their socio-economic-environmental emphasis, have an important role to play. The world is awash with liquidity, ‘too much money at no cost’; it is important to pay attention on deployment. Cooperative banks can play an important role in mobilizing resources and channelizing them in an equitable way to the credit needy countries and in socio-economic improvement. He mentioned that the G20 will host its 2022 Summit

in New Delhi, and he looks forward to work with the cooperative movement to be well represented in this dialogue.

Ms. Melina Morrison, CEO of the Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals (BCCM) highlighted on the contribution of cooperative businesses in the Australian economy. She said that cooperatives can show their relevance to G20 leaders by virtue of their resilience, model of inclusion, work on food security, and promotion of free trade.

Mr. Jean Louis Bancel, President of Cooperatives Europe has worked in different taskforces and sub-groups to ensure cooperatives were mentioned as key 'solutions' contributors to the challenges facing the financial sector. In the C20 International Financial Architecture policy paper, the recommendations for Financial Regulation and Financial Inclusion contain a directive for G20 countries to agree on "standards that promote a more diverse banking system in all countries that include state-owned and development banks at the regional and local levels, as well as cooperatives, savings, and ethical banks and non-profit institutions." He said that cooperatives need to understand the interest of the G20 leader's agenda; align their own interests in SDGs, climate action, and social justice.

Dr. U.S. Awasthi, Managing Director, IFFCO stressed upon the point that given the size and importance of the cooperative movement, cooperatives have a lot to offer in terms of the economy, society, and environment. Cooperatives are sustainable enterprises that are owned and run by their membership, and are built on values that encourage cooperation, empowerment and solidarity, rather than just profits. He said that in considering the GDP, we should not just look at the economic, but also the social and environmental dimension. Among the areas to prioritize were sustainable food production, clean water, and agriculture infrastructure. He stressed on the need for digitization to provide knowledge to those left behind. He mentioned about the work that IFFCO had done during the pandemic to educate farmers on social distancing and ensure their needs were met. He said that the G20 Platform provides immense opportunities to contribute and collaborate with global players. He called on cooperatives to commit to work collaboratively towards ending hunger and promoting sustainable agriculture in line with the SDGs. The video recording from the webinar can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_RX-zZ7CQs.

Webinar: Cooperatives in the ICA, "Bracing for Greater Changes under the New Normal"

On 10th October 2020, the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) participated in an online forum organized by the Philippine Cooperative Center (PCC) to discuss how cooperatives have been supporting and can further support the five overlapping themes of the International Cooperative Alliance's Blueprint Strategy, particularly in the context of the current pandemic. The forum presented yet another timely session that will help determine where the Philippine cooperative movement is headed; most especially in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the five pillars of the ICA Blueprint - participation, sustainability, capital, identity, and legal framework—deeply embedded among members and stakeholders in the movement, the main concern is how to redefine and reinforce these pillars in these times of uncertainty.

It saw the online participation of ICA President Ariel Guarco from Argentina and, from India, ICA Regional Director-Asia-Pacific Balu Iyer. The event had a live feed courtesy of RTVM, wherein Philippine Cooperative Centre CEO Edwin Bustillos, and PCC Board Member Zenaida Novabos, who co-anchored, expressed their heartfelt thanks to PCOO Secretary Martin Andanar for his support.

Zenaida Novabos cited it as ‘a priority for PCC, ICA, and the cooperative sector to get together and work together, with so much to do’, while FPSDC CEO Christie Rowena ‘Teta’ Plantilla cheerfully called it truly “empowering and engaging”. She further stated – “such that even as the movement faces so many challenges, let us be guided by the ICA blueprint which is proactive and positive. If we work together on these five pillars, the cooperative community can move forward in its pursuit of a second cooperative decade, from 2020 to 2030 for which ICA has the lead role to play. It can be meaningful if we, as cooperatives indeed cooperate, engage, and work together”.

The summary of the discussions can be read [here](#).

Webinar: Impact of COVID-19 on Education and Cooperatives in Educational Institutions in Asia and Pacific

The poster features a teal header with the word 'WEBINAR' in white. Below the header, the title 'IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION AND COOPERATIVES IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN ASIA AND PACIFIC' is written in white. The background is a light grey grid. On the right side, there is an illustration of a stack of books and a pencil. At the bottom, there are logos for the International Co-operative Alliance Asia and Pacific and social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

November 5, 2020

13:30-15:00 Hours Indian Standard Time (IST)

Registration
open till 14:00 Hours IST, November 4, 2020
<https://bit.ly/2Hz3MAq>

Organiser
ICA Asia and Pacific Committee on Cooperatives in Educational Institutions (ICEI)

Speakers

Dr. Mohd. Azlan Yahya
Vice-President, ANGKASA, Malaysia

Mr. Shinichi Maita
MD and CEO, National Federation of University Co-operative Associations (NFUCA), Japan

Mr. Kim Jong-weon
President, Korea Federation of University Co-operatives (KFUC), South Korea

Mr. Sim Seng Huat
Senior Manager (Campus and youth), Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF), Singapore

International Co-operative Alliance Asia and Pacific

ICAAsiaAndPacific ICAAPAC ICAAsiaPacific

COVID-19 has majorly disrupted educational services around the world. With extended stay-at-home orders; schools and universities shut for more than six months; online education with minimum in-person interaction, and uncertainty looming large over every sphere of life, education remains one of the seriously affected sectors in this pandemic. Cooperatives in educational institutions as economic enterprises are facing the brunt of the pandemic due to their inability to operate offline and serve its members on campuses. They are not only facing revenue losses but are also unable to support those whose livelihoods may solely depend on them.

To discuss the impact of COVID-19 on cooperatives in educational institutions, ICA-AP’s Committee on Cooperatives in Educational Institutions (ICEI) is organizing a webinar on 5th November 2020. In this

webinar, four speakers from Malaysia, Japan, South Korea and Singapore will discuss the impact of COVID-19 on university and school education in their countries. As a result of disrupted education, they will discuss the challenges of campus cooperatives in schools and universities in their countries and measures being taken to address them.

Registration for the webinar can be done [here](#).

MAFF Training Course

The ICA and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) of the Government of Japan, Tokyo signed an agreement for the implementation of the “**Capacity Building Project for Farmers’ Organizations to Support the Development of Food Value Chain in Asia and Africa in FY-2020**” for the period from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021, which comprises the four programs as follows:

1. **Program-1:** Training Course on Strengthening Management and Development of Agricultural Cooperatives and Farmers’ Organizations in Asia and Africa.
2. **Program-2:** Training Course on Empowering of Rural Women for Improvement of their Leadership and Business and Management.
3. **Program-3:** Training Course on Strengthening of Marketing through Improvement of Quality of Farm Produce and Expansion of Marketing Channels.
4. **Program-4:** Follow-up Guidance and Survey of Ex-participants.

Given the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing restrictions on travel, the three trainings are to be held online. The first training on “Strengthening of Marketing through Improvement of Quality Farm Produce and Expansion of Marketing Channels” will take place from 05th to 24th November 2020. 13 participants from eight Asian countries (Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, and Sri Lanka) have been invited to participate in the training program.

NEWS FROM MEMBERS

Ang Hin Kee Appointed as CEO of Singapore National Co-operative Federation



Seasoned unionist Ang Hin Kee will from 1st November 2020 be the Chief Executive of the Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF), succeeding Ms Dolly Goh. Mr Ang's appointment will be concurrent with his current roles as the Assistant Director-General of the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), and its Director of Operations and Mobilisation.

Mr Ang brings to SNCF more than 15 years' experience in working closely with the ground to ease employment and employability concerns. Most recently, from May 2011 till June 2020, he was the Member of Parliament in the Ang Mo Kio Group Representation Constituency. In taking over the SNCF baton, he will be steering a co-operative movement that has been rooted in Singapore for more than 95 years, and whose resilience and adaptability is yet again being tested by the sudden, widespread changes from COVID-19. Brick by brick, the co-operative movement has helped build the nation by providing affordable daily essentials, education and training, healthcare, financial services, recreation, and employment opportunities, as well as increase inclusion of the less advantaged, such as the elderly and vulnerable.

Mr Ang said, "Co-operatives exist to benefit members and help to improve lives. COVID-19 underscores the social role of co-operatives in helping members tide over difficult times from holding prices of everyday essentials to providing special loans, monetary and other forms of donations. In sharing a common set of values and principles to enhance the cohesiveness of society, co-operatives have shown again and again the power of Singaporeans working together to ride out the fiercest storms. COVID-19 has disrupted the old ways, changing the way people live, work and play. It also presents opportunities for the co-operative movement to help build a new normal that is more caring and inclusive. I am humbled to have this fresh opportunity to steer the co-operative sector to help businesses and individuals to adapt and thrive in these volatile times. I also look forward to working closely with our co-operatives to strengthen their businesses so that they can better serve the interests of their members and meet the needs of the broader community."

ICA-EU Partnership: Updates



Coopathon 3.0 – Registrations Open for 3rd Edition of Cooperative Hackathon



Coopathon 3.0 is a cooperative hackathon being organised by the International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific (ICA-AP) in collaboration with the ICA-EU partnership and its partners. The initiative is aimed at sourcing sustainable, innovative and technologically enabled solutions to address challenges in the social and service sectors that are in line with cooperative values and principles.

Centered around **Technology and Cooperative Identity**, this is the third of its kind in a series of similar events organised to encourage technology infusion, innovative models of collective-entrepreneurship and youth participation within the cooperative ecosystem. The earlier two events were held at Indian Institute of Management-Kozhikode (IIM-K) in the year 2018 and at the National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI), New Delhi in the year 2019 respectively. The third edition of the Coopathon will be a fully online hackathon event, for participants across the Asia and Pacific region from 11th December 2020 (Friday) - 14th December 2020 (Monday). This is the first time we are organising an online Coopathon and at an international level. More information about the earlier events can be viewed here: [Coopathon 1.0](#) and [Coopathon 2.0](#).

[Coopathon 3.0](#) envisages the use of technology as a tool for digital transformation to establish people-centred business collectives such as cooperatives for solving global problems. Cooperatives across the globe are led by a common sense of identity which was imbibed in the '[Statement of Cooperative Identity](#)', adopted in the year 1995.

Furthermore, this holds particular relevance in the time of the global pandemic and economic crisis that the world is currently going through. The essence of how collective enterprises can be explored as a resilient alternative to traditional business models, due to their democratic economic structure, sustainable and community-first approach to development is a model that innovators and entrepreneurs should explore. The solutions from the hackathon would be encouraged and mentored to develop as Minimum Viable Products (MVPs) or working prototypes, that may be taken up for testing and thereafter if viable, encouraged for commercialisation.

The Coopathon initiative also resonates with several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 8 (Decent work & economic growth), SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities) and also highlights the importance of newer and innovative structures that align with the cooperative identity. This year also marks twenty-five years since the [cooperative identity statement](#) had been adopted.

Registrations for the Coopathon 3.0 are now open and teams can register online. More details and information can be found at www.coopathon.coop.

We encourage you to spread the word about **Coopathon 3.0** widely among your networks and promote **#Coopathon** on all your social media channels.

Research Updates

Legal Framework Analysis

The national reports of 14 countries including Australia, Bhutan, Fiji, India, Japan, Jordan, Kiribati, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Palestine, Republic of Korea, Vanuatu, and Vietnam are now available on the website and can be accessed at [#coops4dev](#).

Mapping of Cooperatives

The mapping research aims at collecting and publicizing exhaustive and up-to-date statistics of cooperative organisations in different countries to showcase the cooperative impact and provide data for advocacy.

National reports for Australia and New Zealand were completed and will be available on the [#coops4dev](#) website soon. Overall, mapping reports for 11 countries have been completed and nine national reports are available on the [#coops4dev](#) website including the reports for Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Myanmar, Nepal, PNG, Vanuatu, Iran and the Philippines. National reports for South Korea and Sri Lanka will be made available soon.

Country Snapshots

The country snapshots of 19 countries are now available on the [ICA-AP website](#) for public view. These include snapshots for Australia, China, Fiji, Indonesia, Iran Japan, Kiribati, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Philippines, PNG, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, and Vanuatu.

Global Thematic Research on Environment

The second global thematic research on environment has been launched under the #coops4dev project.

This research aims to provide an innovative overview on how cooperatives are acting to protect the environment, as well as mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. It seeks to elaborate on the links between cooperatives and principle seven on concern for community, including the access and management of natural habitats and resources through cooperative approaches (such as water, energy, etc.). The research will draw upon existing literature and resources in order to highlight a select number of case studies, with the intention to showcase a range of innovative practices from cooperative enterprises.

The collection of secondary literature for this research has begun in all regional offices. The Asia and Pacific regional office has started collecting secondary information on cooperatives working on SDG 14 (Life below water) and SDG 15 (Life on land) for the purpose of developing case studies on them.

Opinion

Why It's Essential to Empower Women Farmers in Agribusiness Value Chains

An opinion piece by Dr Abhilaksh Likhi, Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India; originally published in [Outlookindia.com](https://www.outlookindia.com), dated 12th October 2020.

Views expressed by the author are personal and do not represent ICA-AP.

As per the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), 75% of the rural women are farmers and produce approximately 60%-80% of the food and 90% of dairy products in India. It is important to include women farmers equally in the agribusiness value chain to enhance their voice in financial decision making and their ability to drive collective action.

'Wingreen Farms' is an example of an entity that has empowered 400 women farmers and given them a means of livelihood in the largely arid and backward region of Nuh District in Haryana. It has enabled them to grow agricultural commodities that are used to make dips and sauces at its manufacturing facilities on the outskirts of Gurgaon. These include basil, peppermint, lemongrass, peanuts, chickpeas, broccoli, spinach, and garlic. The Company retails over 103 products through its website, grocery stores and also co-brands its dips with organizations such as Fab India in over 200 cities. Steady growth in the Company's revenues has fostered financial independence for women farmers working with the Company. More importantly, their income of approximately Rs 15,000-30,000 a month has earned them respect among their family members.

As per the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), 75% of the rural women are farmers and produce approximately 60%-80% of the food and 90% of dairy products in India. The Report on Doubling Farmers Income (DFI), 2017 observes that women participate in most of the farm-related activities such as seed preparation for sowing, raising nurseries for transplanting, preparation as well as the application of fertilizers, grading, shifting of produce to the threshing floor, cleaning, and processing of grain, etc. The Report further adds that women work either as cultivators (doing labour

on their land) or as managers of certain aspects of agricultural production and post-harvest operations or even as paid labourers on other farms.

Prof. Prabhu Pingali's book 'Transforming Food Systems in a Rising India' (2019), points out that the increasing demand for diversified foods has led to a growing emphasis on grades and standards to ensure quality, health, safety, and differentiation of products based on tastes and preferences. He further adds, that due to such a demand we see the rise of organized retail outlets. This necessitates making the farm-retail linkage efficient and effective. India's retail sector, according to him, was valued at 641 billion USD in 2017.

In this context, the ecosystem of capacity building and empowering of women farmers by entities such as Wingreen Farms is need of the hour. The government of India has set the target to double farmers' income by 2022. One of the key instruments to achieve this target is strengthening of the agribusiness value chain from farm to retail – input provision/use, production, post-harvest processing/ storage, and transportation/marketing/sales through requisite investments.

What is more critical, however, is to consider the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) 'gender-responsive solutions.' In other words, including women farmers equally in the agribusiness value chain to enhance their voice in financial decision making and the ability to drive collective action. Gender mainstreaming through the modes of earmarked allocation and enhanced rates of subsidy for women farmers is already being ensured by the Government of India and the State Governments. Flagship schemes of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare in areas of food security, agricultural mechanization, organic farming, micro-irrigation, extension, seed and planting material, marketing storage, etc. provide for structural, functional, and institutional measures to empower women, farmers.

Outside the fold of the Government, in the dairy sector too almost 5 million women farmers are active members of milk cooperatives. Besides, programmes implemented countrywide through the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) also focus on livelihood and value chain interventions for women farmers. Such interventions have also been fostered through support for setting up of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) either through the Companies Act or the Cooperative Acts.

Experts opine that agribusiness value chains are complex and highly variable both by region and commodity. Therefore, the constraints that women farmers face in India vary according to the geography and local context, they add. Nevertheless, at a broader level, firstly, women farmers have less access to high-quality inputs, equipment, technology, and an essential package of practices on appropriate farm usage. Secondly, many times these constraints are interlinked with lack of land titles and collateral leading to their limited access to finance. Thirdly, their role in post-harvest processing and storage activities is more likely to take place as members of larger firms/organizations and where such activities are not mechanized. Fourthly, women farmers are less likely to participate in activities of transportation and marketing on account of limited freedom of movement, low access to infrastructure, information, and networks.

UNDP's 'Disha Project', rolled out across states of Delhi, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Telangana, aims at addressing two significant challenges to overcome the constraints mentioned above. One, low participation of women farmers in demand management roles in rural markets and the consequent inability of women farmer-led institutions to access the private sector organized market. And second, lack of information on post-harvest management activities amongst women farmers. The Project with the assistance of State Governments has been able to unlock the demand side of skilling for women farmers as either 'sourcing and business managers'. The critical skills imparted through training of trainer modules of 8-14 days include quality, cost, time, and risk management through tools such as milestone checklists, etc.

After the completion of training women farmers are expected to be able to create awareness on procurement grades and standards, manage pack houses for grading, sorting, coordinate logistics, analyze price trends, maintain inventories as well as record and manage business operations of FPOs.

Experts also highlight the need for partnership with and investment from the private sector along the agribusiness value chain. International Finance Corporation (IFC) brings forth the case of 'Primus', a European fashion retail entity that wanted to ensure that all the Cotton in its supply chain is sustainably sourced. Therefore, Primus brought together 'Cotton Connect' a global group of agricultural professionals, Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a reputed nongovernmental organization to create its Sustainable Cotton Program in the State of Gujarat. The program initially created to train over 1200 women farmers has now been extended to reach an additional 10,000 such farmers.

The Program provides these farmers access to formal training, empowers them to narrow the gender inequality gap, and enables the adoption of sustainable farming methods such as efficient water usage and reduction in fertilizer use.

Across the board, access to finance for women farmers and strengthening their collective bargaining power through FPOs is a must for enhancing gender equality. In this regard, two initiatives of the Government of India that will bolster the above objectives are noteworthy. A dedicated Central Sector Scheme for the formation and promotion of 10,000 FPOs across the country has been recently launched. It provides handholding and support to FPOs through equity grants and credit guarantee up to five years. Besides, the Agricultural Infrastructural Fund (AIF) provides effective instruments of funding for supply chain services, FPOs, and e-marketing platforms.

Internship Experience



Pragati Soni joined ICA-AP in August 2020 for a two-month internship. She shares her experience with the Regional Office in a candid post below:

Recently, I was selected for a 2-month research internship at ICA-AP region for August and September 2020. During this period, I got exposure to an altogether new concept of cooperatives which I just came across as a term during school days.

Under the leadership and mentoring of Ms Simren Singh, I explored and researched on youth cooperatives in Asia-Pacific and fisheries cooperatives in India. While researching and exploring the area of Cooperatives, I realised that awareness about cooperatives and its significance is still missing among the millennials. Lack of understanding and discussion about the same at the primary level of schooling is one of the major reasons why youth is not able to broaden their mindset and think of developing their careers in cooperatives.

The power and significance that cooperatives hold is visible through the success of Amul, a Dairy Cooperative. But as per my understanding and discussion with peers, the youth still considers cooperatives to be limited to agriculture and farming. It's high time that we undertake steps by introducing cooperative learning at the school level and motivate students to take these as their professional subjects during higher education degrees and PhD.

By raising awareness, encouraging participation, appreciating and recognising their efforts, we can help achieve the empowerment of cooperatives in our society and visualise the growing number of cooperatives at the national and international level.

Publications

Report of the Committee on the Standalone Microinsurance Company

Report of the Committee on Standalone Microinsurance Company



Insurance Regulatory and Development
Authority of India (IRDAI)

AUGUST 2020

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) released a report of the Committee on the Standalone Microinsurance Company in August 2020. The Committee, chaired by Mirai Chatterjee, Director SEWA Social Security, was set up by the IRDAI in February 2020 to study the feasibility of standalone microinsurance through cooperatives, mutual or companies, and with reduced capital requirement and appropriate legal and regulatory changes.

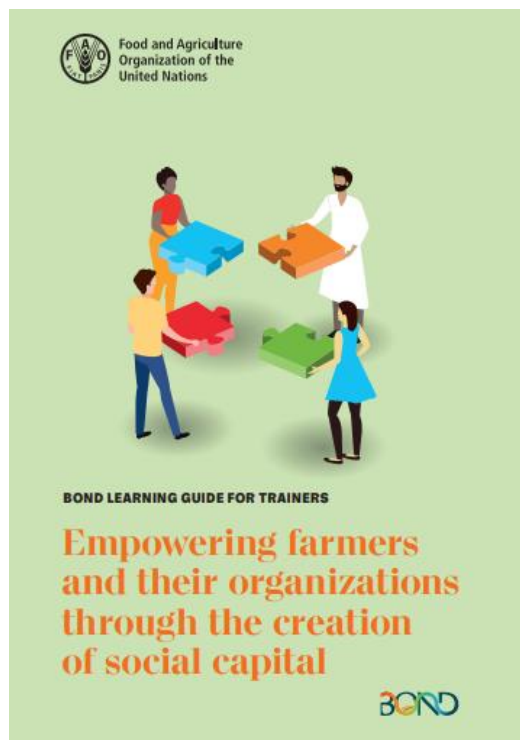
The press statement said – “After studying both national and international models of microinsurance, the Committee has concluded that significant changes in regulatory framework and especially in reducing the capital requirement are essential for the spread of microinsurance in India.” The key recommendations are

1. Reduction in entry-level capital requirement to Rs 20 Crore from the current Rs 100 Crore.
2. A risk-based capital approach while maintaining the highest prudential standards.
3. Cooperatives, mutual and companies be allowed to act as composite microinsurers, transacting both life and non-life business through a single entity.
4. Amending the Insurance Act 1938 to bring standalone microinsurance under its purview, including defining microinsurance, microinsurers, and reducing the capital requirement and/or vesting the powers to do so with the IRDAI.
5. End-to-end digital technology for transparency, accountability and monitoring.
6. Reinsurance by existing reinsurance or insurance companies, facilitated by the IRDAI.

7. The Committee was careful to note that the highest prudential standards should be maintained when developing regulations and has recommended that these be done in consultation with those already undertaking microinsurance to ensure that they are appropriate and practical.

The detailed report is available for public view and can be read [here](#).

BOND Learning Guide for Trainers “Empowering Farmers and Their Organizations through the Creation of Social Capital”



Developed by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the tool builds and consolidates on FAO’s methodologies and practice implemented with producer organizations and cooperatives over the years in North Africa, East-Asia (Nepal and Bangladesh), and in Europe; which were further developed and tested in collaboration with the BOND project partners.

This work is in the framework of the UN Decade of Family Farming (pillar 4: on strengthening organizations) and is an outcome of the implementation of the EU project on “Bringing Organizations & Network Development to higher levels in the farming sector in Europe (BOND)” in which FAO’s unit has been involved. The development of the Guide has been possible with funding received from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme.

The BOND Learning Guide for Trainers focuses on empowering farmers through the creation of social capital and recognizing the fundamental role that social capital plays for healthy and sustainable organizations. Encouraging farmers and their groups to cooperate, form associations, or build

alliances with different actors, enhances their capacities to learn from each other, exchange reliable information, access markets, better manage natural resources, and advocate for common causes.

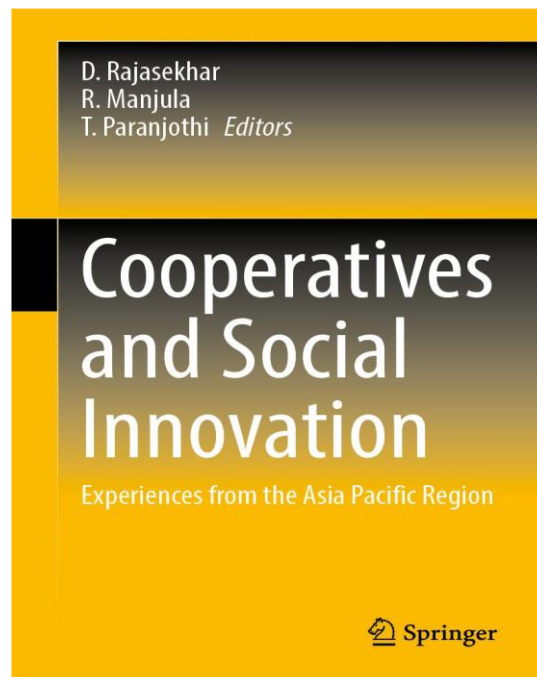
This tool can support the design and facilitation of learning events, meetings, and workshops led by farmer leaders and managers. However, its scope goes beyond the facilitation of events. It can also be applied to young or more mature groups or organizations, as they support the strengthening of good governance practices and for internal reflection of groups and organizations to start a change process.

The Learning Guide is divided into two main parts:

1. PART 1 focuses on the design of the training events, providing information on how to identify the target group and the learning objectives, details the training methodology, and provides indication on how to structure the training.
2. PART 2 focuses on the topics for empowering farmers and their organizations. It is composed of 16 sessions. Key topics covered in the guide are group dynamics, self-confidence, management and leadership, conflict management, building a common vision, developing strategies and action plans, analysis of organizational performance, service orientation, communication for collaborative action, networking, dialogue, advocacy and negotiation.

It is an effective tool to foster the creation of social capital and to strengthen it in the various forms it can take. The detailed guide can be accessed [here](#).

Cooperatives and Social Innovation



The authors dedicate this book to Dr. T. Paranjothi.

The book, *Cooperatives and Social Innovation*, edited by Dr. T. Paranjothi, Dr. Rajasekhar, and Dr. R. Manjula, discusses social innovations by cooperatives from the Asia and Pacific region. Social innovations emerge when the state and market in developing countries find it difficult to solve problems such as poverty, hunger, ill-health, poor education systems, inadequate drinking water and poor sanitation. These countries also face barriers to economic growth such as climate change, poor governance, unequal opportunities and social exclusion. This volume, therefore, addresses the following questions. What are the distinctive features of social innovations by cooperatives? How social innovations bring in changes in the process and outcome of development?

After presenting theories of social innovation and a critical review of cooperatives and social innovation, the book presents 15 chapters on social innovations by cooperatives in the Asia Pacific region. These social innovations are related to health insurance, community-based tourism, disaster response, climate-smart agriculture, use of social media for youth empowerment, training for the emergence of second-line leaders in cooperatives, social inclusion through innovative finance, profitable marketing of organic produce to strengthen economic status of small farmers, digital auction and value addition for income security of farmer members, a collaboration between cooperative members and workers for the mutual benefit, worker cooperatives, women leadership and participation, building a union-cooperative partnership in finance and rating of cooperatives to promote transparency and accountability. A chapter on innovative services of cooperatives during the time of Covid19 is also included.

This volume will be quite significant for co-operators, researchers, teachers, practitioners and policymakers at the global level. The theme is relevant for international development community and national cooperatives with concern for their communities, which is the seventh cooperative principle of International Cooperative Alliance and the Sustainable Development Goal of the UN. *Source: Springer*

The book is available on Springer and can be ordered [here](#).

Announcements

Postponement of World Cooperative Congress



ICA 33rd World Cooperative Congress to be held in Seoul, the Republic of Korea from 1-3 December 2021

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) Global Board has postponed the 33rd World Cooperative Congress. The ICA has announced that the event will be held in Seoul, the Republic of Korea from 1st to 3rd December 2021. The theme for this event will be “Deepening our Cooperative Identity” to strengthen the cooperative movement’s role in addressing global challenges and also explore avenues to improve lives at the local and global levels.

The Congress will consist of pre-events from 28-30 November followed by the conference itself from 1-3 December. More details of the schedule are available at <https://ICAWorldCoopCongress.coop>

The 33rd 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 event will now 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 World Cooperative Congress 2021 will be held at the Grand Walkerhill Hotel, in Seoul: <https://www.walkerhill.com/grandwalkerhillseoul/en/>

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

Register for the global 
marque and a .COOP domain
at www.identity.coop



UPCOMING EVENTS

- Regional Consultation Meeting on UN Decade of Family Farming: *Formulating Strategies and Action Plan to Strengthen Smallholder Family Farmers in South Asia* – **5th and 6th November 2020** (Virtual)
- Asia-Pacific Regional Webinar: *Impact of COVID-19 on Education and Cooperatives in Educational Institutions in Asia and Pacific* – **5th November 2020**
- Online Event: *60th Anniversary Celebrations of ICA in Asia and Pacific* – **13th November 2020**
- Remote ROM Review mission on *Cooperatives in Development People-centred Businesses in Action* – **16th – 20th November 2020**
- Online Training: *Strengthening of Marketing through Improvement of Quality Farm Produce and Expansion of Marketing Channels* – **4th – 25th November 2020**
- Online Cooperative Hackathon - *Coopathon 3.0* – **11th – 14th December 2020**
- 15th ICA-AP Cooperative Research Conference will be held in Trivandrum, India at the Agricultural Cooperative Staff Training Institute (ACSTI) – **17th – 18th December 2020** (Virtual)
- Online Training: *Empowerment of Rural Women for Improvement of their Leadership and Business Management in Asia and Africa* - **December 2020 – January 2021**
- Online Training: *Strengthening Management and Development of Agricultural Cooperatives and Farmers' Organisations in Asia & Africa* - **February – March 2021**
- 14th ICA-AP Virtual Regional Assembly – **February 2021** (TBC)
- ICA 33rd World Cooperative Congress to be held in Seoul, the Republic of Korea – **1st – 3rd December 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.