

# ICA-AP NEWSLETTER

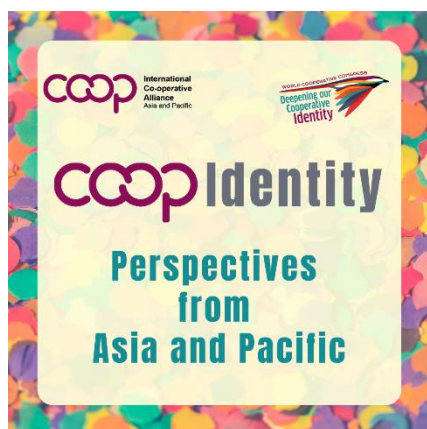
News from members, ICA-AP activities,  
ICA-EU Partnership update & more!

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# Cooperative Identity and New Dimensions of Cooperatives

## Introduction



The [33<sup>rd</sup> ICA World Cooperative Congress](#) in December 2021 with the theme, *Deepening the Cooperative Identity*, will celebrate and deepen the understanding of the Statement on the Cooperative Identity (SCI) and the profound social and economic impact of cooperatives worldwide. The ICA [Statement on the Cooperative Identity](#) provides a common definition of cooperatives, a specific commitment to cooperative and ethical values, and clarity on the operational principles that differentiate us from other forms of businesses.

The ICA-AP regional office is bringing the perspective of Asia-Pacific members into the conversation through online consultation, events, articles and interviews.

For this issue, the theme is **“Cooperative Identity and New Dimensions of Cooperatives”** where, we focus on entrepreneurship and technology. Youth today are involved in traditional and non-traditional businesses which are facilitated by technology. A global study on [Youth Cooperative Entrepreneurship by CICOPA](#) shows that in a changing world of work, “cooperatives can be a concrete tool in the hands of young people for improving their work and entrepreneurship conditions.” According to the Study, “cooperatives can “inject” democracy and participation inside the digital economy, by giving ownership and control of power to the people who use and work through online platforms.” Cooperatives can play a huge role in giving a new dimension to these new-age start-ups.

In the Asia-Pacific we are seeing innovative initiatives by youth and cooperatives. **In** Indonesia, Innocircle Initiative, is a start-up coop incubator and collaboration space for innovation, creativity, and new initiatives. In Singapore, NTUC Learning Hub provides high quality, innovative products and affordable learning to enhance the employability of Singapore’s workforce. Coopathon, by ICA-AP and Creathon by Singapore National Cooperative Federation (SNCF) are steps to foster innovation and entrepreneurship among youth while following the cooperative values and principles.

In this issue, we hear perspectives from Mr. Tarun Bhargava, Chairperson of ICA’s International Cooperative Entrepreneurship Think Tank (ICETT) and the Joint General Manager of Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Ltd. (IFFCO) on cooperative entrepreneurship. Mr. Moses Sam Paul, a Technology and Public Policy professional who is in the process of setting up TheThirdPillar - a labour market "research" and "do" foundation how the cooperative identity can bring avenues for gig workers going digital. We highlight the case study of Creathon, a cooperative business challenge for

youth, to come up with innovative solutions to address social and economic challenges facing Singapore. We bring perspectives on the online consultation of the Statement of Cooperative Identity held with members in the Philippines.

### In Conversation with Tarun Bharagava, ICETT Chairperson



#### **1. Please share your views on Cooperative Entrepreneurship.**

Cooperative Entrepreneurship is a phenomenon when people (entrepreneurs) come together to pool their skills to set up an enterprise voluntarily and democratically. This includes small businesses, scalable start-ups, large cooperatives, and social enterprises.

This is prevalent in several cooperatives around the world. Cooperatives are unique enterprises where members drive the business and profits/ returns are also distributed amongst its members. Cooperatives also provide opportunities to the people in a wide spectrum of sectors i.e Agriculture, Housing, Health, Banking, Travel, Worker, Fisheries, Social etc.

Cooperative Entrepreneurship at various levels is a special way of doing business wherein Cooperation among Cooperatives is a key factor and can be scaled to higher levels. It needs to be further articulated and looked into as a promising alternative. The idea needs further dissemination especially amongst youth as it has the potential to grow with a special focus on the emerging sectors of the economy. Globally, the movement has seen a steady evolution in the last 100 years.

Cooperative Entrepreneurship can be considered as a vehicle to achieve sustainable development goals and empower the weaker sections of the society. All stakeholders must discuss several topics including Cooperative Entrepreneurship in the context of the growing number of challenges for our socio-economic and cultural aspects of life. I feel that promoting Cooperative Entrepreneurship shall open more avenues to the entrepreneurs of the world.

#### **2. How have cooperatives pursued entrepreneurial innovation while embodying cooperative values?**

What is entrepreneurial innovation? To me, the idea of setting up cooperatives itself is an innovation. Different sectors and different cooperators have different contexts that need different treatment as far as innovation is concerned. The collective effort of the members in a cooperative provides a platform to synergize and innovate.

Cooperative values embody some of the basic ethics, that if followed by the corporate community, will result in large scale change in protecting the planet and its people.

IFFCO fosters entrepreneurship intending to lift people out of unemployment; in this regard, intending to stop social problems through innovation and technology for the socio-economic betterment of its members by embodying cooperative values. These include an advanced IT infrastructure to keep transparency and promote voluntary and open membership, without gender, social, political, racial, or religious discrimination. As the result, today, around more than 35,000 cooperatives societies are members of IFFCO and are managed with the '*one member, one vote*' rule.

Practising the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cooperative Principle, IFFCO has ensured members' economic participation and has disbursed a 20% dividend to them for the last 19 years in addition to providing its products to the members at affordable prices. IFFCO through its subsidiary IFFCO eBAZAR, provides an attractive franchisee model scheme to the partner for women entrepreneurs of rural India with modern retail experience through the delivery of agri-input and services to the farming community under one roof at around 1200 retail outlets, along with an e-commerce platform [iffcobazar.in](http://iffcobazar.in).

The 5<sup>th</sup> Principle has further encouraged us to organize Programs, Farmers Meetings, Crop Seminars, Field Demonstrations, Sale Point Personnel Training, Agricultural and Social Campaigns, etc. to educate farmers and cooperative societies to enhance crop productivity through balanced use of nutrients. It was through its Entrepreneurial Innovation only that IFFCO was able to support 550,000 people in remote areas of the country at 1,400 locations in various innovative ways including 'Break the Corona Chain' in challenging times to fight COVID-19.

Under the visionary leadership of its Managing Director, Dr. U. S. Awasthi, IFFCO added one more feather to its cap by introducing NANO Urea, a nanotechnology-based agri-input to the world. This is an innovative product that will be a game-changer in the global market and will also help in fighting climate change.

This a true example of Cooperative Entrepreneurship put into action on a strong foundation of Cooperative Values and Principles.

### **3. How can the Statement on the Cooperative Identity effectively stimulate Cooperative Entrepreneurship?**

The statement on the cooperative identity sums up the business method of a cooperative enterprise which is people-centred. The cooperatives have given the power to their members to grow, diversify, and create value for society. When members get maximum benefits out of the growth of a cooperative, they see a ray of hope and develop trust in the cooperative model of business. This can effectively stimulate only those enterprises that wish to comply with a self mandated promise of doing business ethically and equitably. Large scale implementation of the cooperative principles and values with facilitation from the legislative and policy environment will help all stakeholders to effectively contribute towards Cooperative Entrepreneurship.

It also empowers the cooperatives to build capital, one of the important pillar of entrepreneurship. Again, I will present the example of IFFCO, which started as a small group of just 50 cooperatives and has grown into a giant of 35,327 cooperative societies. The edge of being a cooperative has provided it a solid base of membership and a reach of 40 million farmers in the country. The desire to serve farmers as its members has stimulated the minds to diversify in fields of Insurance, Rural Telephony, Rural Finance, Agro Chemicals, Farm Forestry and recently Nanotechnology-based Agri Inputs. The desire to excel has also inspired IFFCO to set up plants overseas in Oman, Jordan, and Dubai. The pride of these achievements is experienced first by all the members themselves, which further strengthens the facet of Cooperative Identity.

### **4. What challenges must cooperatives overcome to become successful future businesses?**

Cooperatives are already successful in present-day businesses. Cooperatives face challenges from the lack of awareness among policymakers and the other actors of the private sector about the uniqueness of this business model. This unawareness often leads to unfavourable policies and regulations that affect members and the true nature of cooperatives. Cooperatives have to overcome the following Challenges to become successful in future:

- a. **Government Interference:** Cooperative institutions were initially set up with government investment and assistance. Thus, they were treated as if these were part and parcel of the administrative set up of the government. Government interference thus became essential elements in the working of these institutions. With changing business scenario and the emergence of new government policies, independence and self-reliance must be encouraged in the movement.
- b. **Lack of Purposeful Visionary Leadership and Manipulation:** The essence of the cooperative movement is that it gives the members the status of shareholders and economic participation. Over the years, this truly democratic idea got corrupted with vested interests of a few, this has altered the power structure of the cooperatives and changed the direction of leadership causing hurdles in the growth and development of cooperatives.
- c. **Lack of Awareness:** People are not well informed about the objectives of the movement, the contributions they can make in rebuilding society and the rules and regulations of cooperative institutions.
- d. **Functional Weakness:** The cooperative movement has suffered from the inadequacy of trained personnel right from its inception. Lack of trained personnel has been caused by two major factors. In the first place, there has been a lack of institutions for this purpose of training personnel.
- e. **Lack of Digital Infrastructures:** Cooperatives, particularly those with a membership that includes employees or suppliers need computerisation and extensive use of Information Technology for their growth. Without adopting digitalisation and the latest information and technology, it will be difficult to fight corruption.

A comprehensive and multi-dimensional working research on regulatory and access related issues will also help us understand what the challenges are and how cooperatives can benefit each other at an international level. The two solutions to these issues I see are effective Inter cooperation and Enabling Environment.

## **5. How ICETT foresees encouraging cooperative entrepreneurship model amongst youth?**

The ICETT hasn't discussed the cooperative entrepreneurship model from the youth's perspective yet, however, it is fully cognizant of the roles youth have played and will continue to play in cooperatives, given the greatly liberalized economies we all have become. The contribution of youth to the cooperative movement has become more important and crucial for the benefit of both youth and cooperatives. This has always been true, however, as I said, the changed situation of the 21st century warrants a careful look and impetus to young people creating and maintaining cooperatives and at the same time other cooperatives assisting them, while there being a seamless connection between the two facilitated by the state.

ICETT is a group of large cooperatives under the ICA umbrella and is a platform for these cooperatives to share best practices and help each other in implementing human-centred ideas of cooperation while maintaining their leadership as value-driven conglomerates of cooperatives. Firstly, we need to inform youth that "scale and sage" both are possible together. Just the top 300 large cooperatives are monitored by the ICA to generate interest and curiosity among stakeholders... this includes the state, private sector, civil society, and hopefully young entrepreneurs. So, the ICETT, with its sub-mandate on supporting the World Cooperative Monitor, has also the implied responsibility to think, and think quick on developing youth-centred cooperative enterprises, and that not only at the local level but

also at the international level. This is simply because cooperatives are not just part of an international movement, but also are themselves international entities. I have planned to propose to the ICETT, to help the ICA in raising funds and scholarships for young cooperators in developing countries. Let us see how my fellow members of ICETT react!

Opinion: How cooperative identity can bring bright avenues for gig workers going digital?



The definition of a gig worker in India according to the Labour Code 2019 bill, is “a person who performs work or participates in a work arrangement and earns from such activities outside of traditional employer-employee relationship(1)”. It goes on to categorise work into crowd-driven work that is focused on a large number of individuals doing small-tasks (eg: Mechanical Turks); or on work-on-demand offerings such as those offered by platforms like Swiggy and Urban Company. The challenge here is that it focuses on the nature of the contract and employee-employer relationship instead of the skills they possess. This means that when we assess the gig economy — we may vastly miss out on individuals who hold multiple jobs, with varying nature of contracts and different skill-sets. This can be driven in favour of the gig worker with a unified platform built on the pre-verified **skill identity of the gig worker**. Some work may be seasonal, some could be based on demand at a firm; while some could even be project-oriented. The [International Labor Organization](#) recognises this.

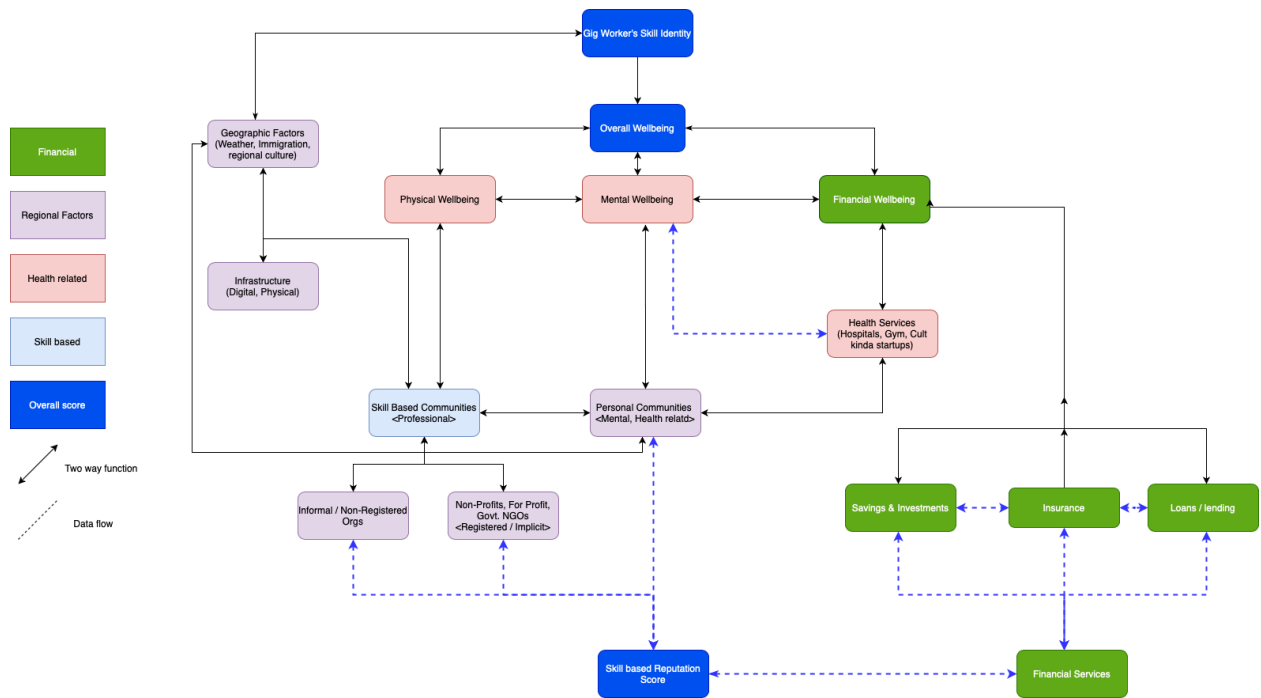
#### Evolution of Skill Identities:

As hunters and gatherers, our skill representation was marked on our skin and later it was represented through badges and eventually, resumes came into existence.

But there are a few issues with the resumes/ digital resumes.

- India Inc. it seems, is sitting on a fake CV time bomb that’s set to explode - [The Economic Times](#)
- 58% of employers have caught a lie on a resume - [Nation Search](#)
- 86% have uncovered misrepresentations post-screening - [Career Builder](#)

This leads to frictions in the labour market which in turn leads to unemployment in an economy. ([MARKETS WITH SEARCH FRICTIONS](#)). Apart from the impact on a Nation’s labour market, Digital resumes (Skill based Gig worker’s identity) don’t necessarily reflect the wellbeing of a gig worker. A better way to represent a gig worker digitally would be to consider the wellbeing of a gig worker.



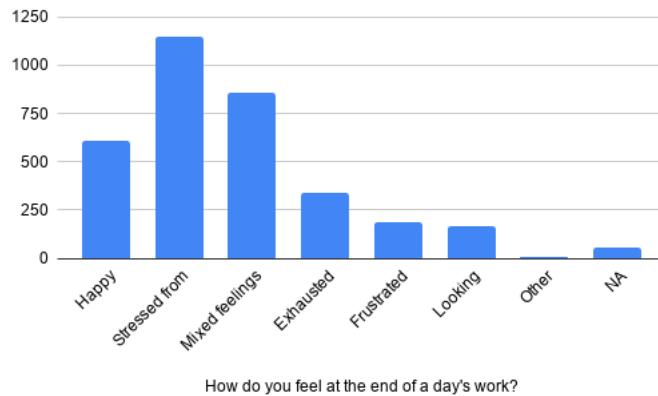
Source: [Modelling the wellbeing of a gig worker](#)

Who owns this data is a multi-trillion \$ question isn't it? We believe, at the core of it all is **"Data Ownership"**. [Our research at Bharat Inclusion](#) is based on the hypothesis that if the gig worker has data ownership he/she/they can optimise for his/her/their well-being. But throughout our research, we've realised the need for cooperatives that can put the data to work as most gig workers may not know how to make the data work for them.

We strongly believe in the idea that a cooperative identity is a representation of the gig workers who make up the cooperative. From our research of interviewing 4,000 gig workers and building a few cooperatives/ collectives, we see three clear advantages of a cooperative identity from a gig worker's perspective :

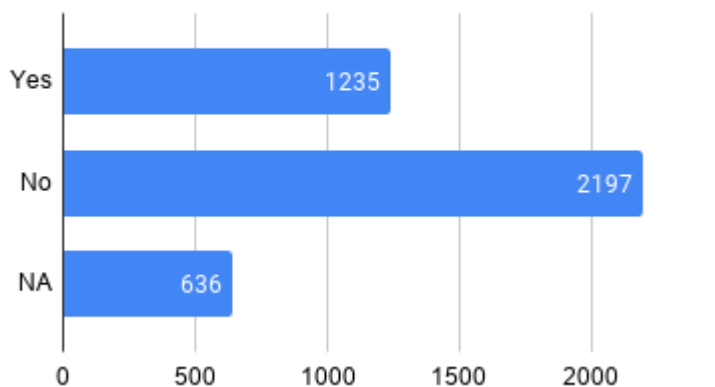
- 1) **Improved Bargaining Power:** Anxiety for the next job and no recourse against unlawful activities is unleashed on them. This anxiety stems from losing Bargaining Power. Unions worry that industry changes are dismantling their traditional bargaining responsibilities, and this is most evident in their fears over the right to organize and bargain for the new workforce, much of which is freelance, often multi-tasking, and working in precarious conditions.

"There is a serious challenge for us to ensure that governments recognize the right of the new workforce to be represented by a union and that the union can bargain for rates for them," says [Johannes Studinger of UNI-MEI](#). Co-ops have a significant role to play as the arbitrator between the employer and the employee. Cooperative identity significantly improves the bargaining power of the gig workers.



Source: Primary Research of 4000 gig workers across 8 cities in India for Bharat Inclusion

Incase of wrongful termination do you think you, / anyone of your peers have a voice to stand against the organisation



Source: Primary Research of 4000 gig workers across 8 cities in India for Bharat Inclusion

- 2) **Skill & Well-being Transaction Validator:** If the macro-level labour market frictions are to be fixed then the veracity of a gig worker's skill and well-being movements need to be validated by Coops. This Coops' role as Skill Validators is sacrosanct. The role of cooperatives is also to make sure the skill transaction and wellbeing transactions that are carried out within the cooperative are validated. Thus, after making the identity of a gig-worker, a rich data set for the cooperatives is available, they can put the data to work on behalf of the gig worker.
- 3) **Data Manager:** As mentioned earlier, the cooperatives' main role is to put the data of the gig workers to work. The key aspects of the data cooperative are
  - a. Individual members own and control their personal data [4]
  - b. Fiduciary obligations to members: The data cooperative has a legal fiduciary obligation first and foremost to its members [5]. The organisation is member-owned and member-run, and it must be governed by rules (bylaws) agreed to by all the members.
  - c. Direct benefit to members: The goal of the data cooperative is to benefit its members first and foremost. The goal is not to 'monetise' their data, but instead to perform on-going analytics to understand the needs of the members better and to share insights among the members. [6]



Here's an overview of the data cooperative ecosystem [7]

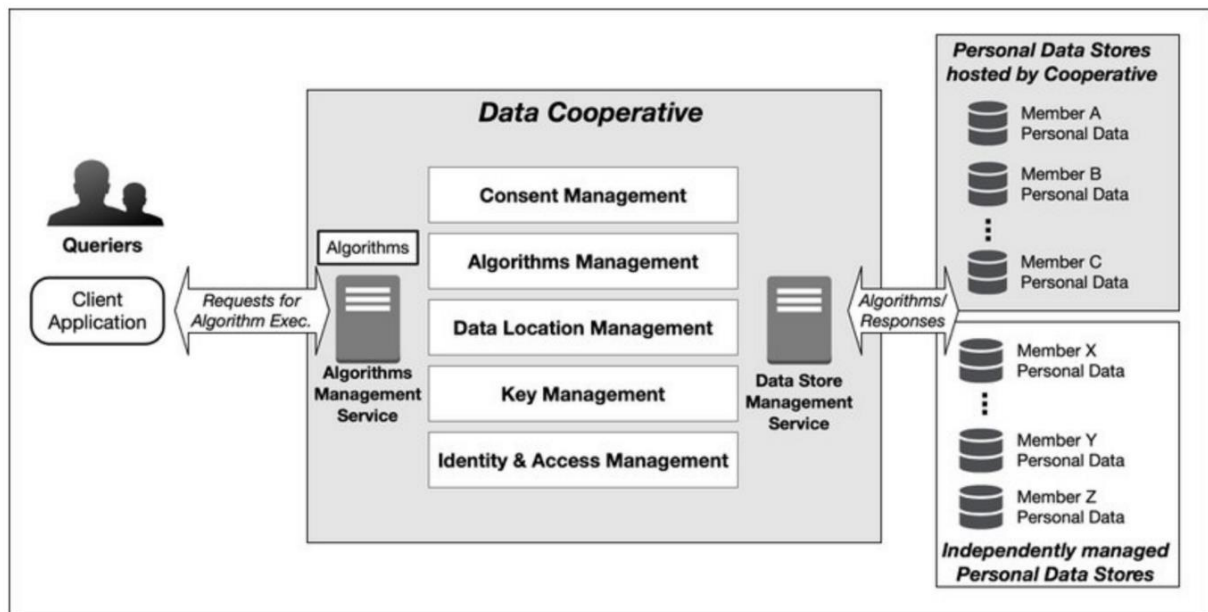
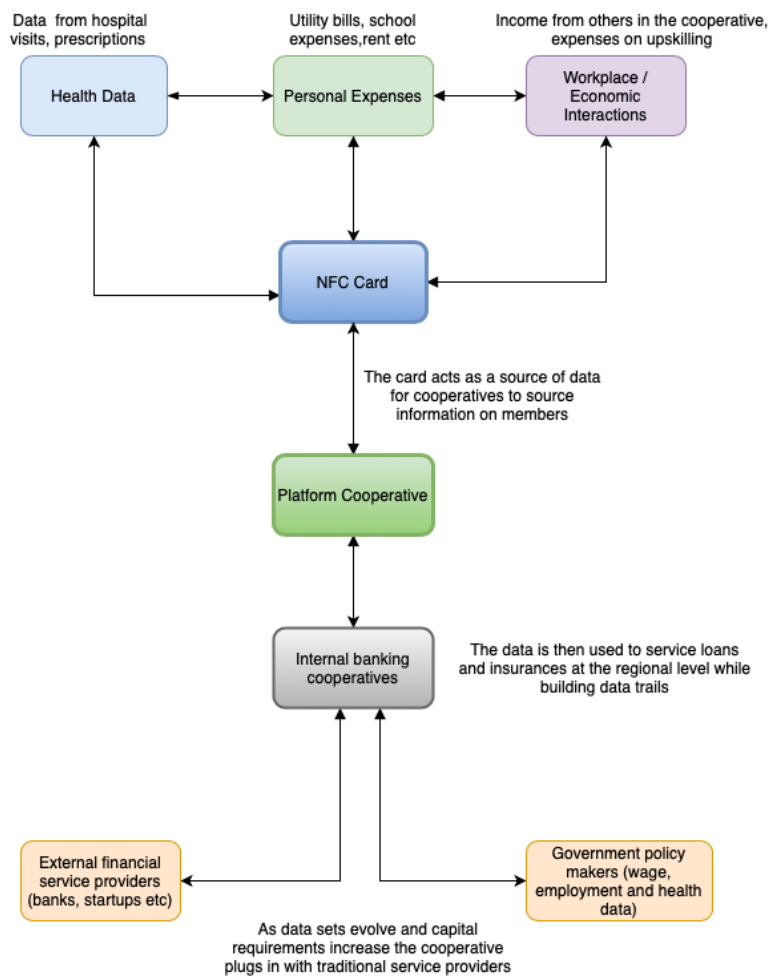


Figure 1: Overview of the Data Cooperative Ecosystem

This skill and wellbeing transaction log validated by the cooperative identity of a gig worker will unlock the financial services like never before. Insurance, Credit and Micro savings, and lending within cooperative banking will help the gig worker optimise for his/her/their wellbeing. Here's a representation of how the NFC card that holds the skill and well-being transactions of a gig worker can be architected in terms of data flow.



Source: <https://medium.com/bharatinclusion/cooperatives-as-data-fiduciaries-83184a915721>

We note that the nature of financial services that can be offered can scale up by working with platform cooperatives as on-boards. Especially in last-mile instances where traditional fintech entities cannot cater today. Initially, they will be serviced through a cooperative banking model where the platform cooperative that brings these workers together will offer the initial services of lending and insurances.

**Well-being focussed Gig worker Identity with built-in Data Ownership Distributed across Cooperatives who act as a Data Manager of this richer Data leads to a Productive and Well Labour Force.**

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## A Case Study on Genesis & Impact of Creathon



The Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF), a member organization of ICA-AP, constantly tailors its programmes to align with youth trends. In 2017, SNCF incorporated augmented reality in its SCOOP Trail, an amazing race-style event, to enable youth to appreciate and understand more about cooperatives. With the growing trend and interest from youth to participate in Hackathons, SNCF introduced Creathon, which replaced the Digital Business Challenge and SCOOP Trail, in 2020.

Creathon, a cooperative business challenge for youth, aims to impart entrepreneurship and a cooperative mindset in youth while enabling them to collectively come up with innovative solutions to address social and economic challenges facing Singapore today, while following the cooperative principles. Creathon also offers participants access to talks, workshops, and mentorships with SNCF affiliated cooperatives where they gain entrepreneurial and business advice as well as knowledge of the cooperative movement. Through Creathon, SNCF hopes to foster a strong interest among youth and in particular, the social entrepreneurs towards cooperatives, and in the process, develop future leaders for the cooperative movement.

At Creathon, participants compete in teams of five, as the minimum membership requirement to form a cooperative is five. In addition to the existing School Category for secondary school students, and the Open Category for youth aged between 17 and 35, this year, SNCF introduced a new category, Institute of Higher Learning (IHL) to attract interested youth from Junior Colleges, Polytechnics, and Institute of Technical Education. The winner of the Open Category receives the top prize of S\$4,000 and funding of S\$10,000 if their application as a cooperative is successful.



Participants are asked to present their business ideas to a professional jury comprising of established cooperators, entrepreneurs, and social enterprise founders. They are required to understand the structure and mandate of a cooperative as they must use the cooperative model to create a sustainable enterprise that can deliver a positive impact on society.

In 2021, SNCF shifted Creathon to an online format due to COVID-19. It attracted more than 500 participants competing across three categories with a record participation of 104 teams, up from just 40 teams last year.

It is inspiring to see participants at both Creathon events so motivated to finding sound solutions to social issues that are close to their hearts. These include looking after the mental wellness of youth, eliminating food and paper wastage, providing affordable tuition resources to address education inequality, and creating job opportunities for the vulnerable groups like elderly, people with disabilities, ex-offenders, and single mothers.

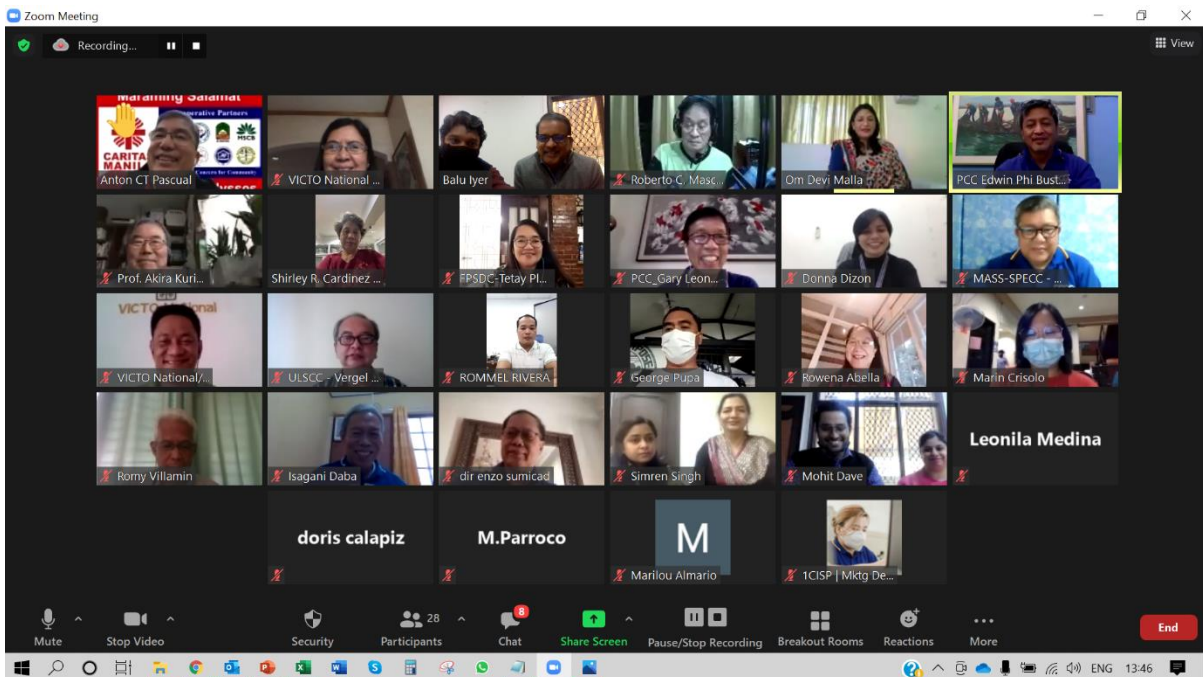
*STEP* won the top prize in Creathon 2020 Open Category with its cooperative idea that brings together heartland businesses with tourism providers through a community-based business-to-business (B2B) online portal. Their solution aims to provide unique cultural experiences for tourists; and at the same time, increase visitor traffic for local businesses. As the tourism industry has been severely hit by COVID-19, and international travel is unlikely to resume to pre-pandemic levels anytime soon, they have deferred their plans. *NCom* (previously *Enigma*) from the Raffles Girls' School was the winner of the School Category. The 15-year-old girls presented a cooperative model in which teachers and students can join as a member, to provide affordable tuition resources and student care services to students in need. This would help level the playing field.

At Creathon 2021, *Urban Origins* with its social mission is to fortify local food sources for the future of our food security emerged as the winner of the Open Category. Its business plan revolves around a cooperative platform dedicated to all local food sources in Singapore by being a marketplace that aggregates local urban farm produce, agri-food tech products, upcycled food, alternative protein and home-based food and beverage businesses, for consumers. The winning idea in the IHL Category came from ITE College Central, *Life Changers* who presented their plans to create a mobile app platform to support ex-offenders by connecting them with job opportunities and offering them free IT and resume writing workshops that are conducted by volunteers and counselling services. *Fortino* from Raffles Girls' School emerged the winner in the School Category. The team presented the idea of a food delivery service that aims to alleviate the food waste problem by using soon-to-expire ingredients and turning them into affordable, nutritious meals.



Although Creathon is a relatively new venture, it provides an avenue for youth and young entrepreneurs to share their ideas and meet like-minded individuals. It also provides them with an opportunity to know more about cooperatives as viable businesses with strong social missions, and to adopt the cooperative business model for their new business ventures. Through Creathon, SNCF hopes to ensure that the cooperative identity will strengthen and contribute to the growth of young businesses and the entrepreneurship landscape in Singapore.

### Consultation on Cooperative Identity with Philippines



The ICA celebrated its 125th anniversary and the 25th anniversary of the Statement of Cooperative Identity in 2020. Both these landmark achievements were to be celebrated with enthusiasm at the 33rd World Congress in Seoul in 2020. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic derailed the plans. The ICA now plans to celebrate the World Congress in 2021 with the theme, 'Deepening the Cooperative Identity'.

At the ICA-AP regional office, we are holding a series of consultations in 2021, with members to reflect on how the Cooperative Identity guides day-to-day operations (practical challenges and strategies to overcome them); how it is used to evaluate cooperatives (how it sets cooperatives apart from other membership and value-based business enterprises); how it fosters member interest and

responsibilities; how it enhances the effective ‘cooperativeness’ of their organizations; and how it helps relationships with government and stakeholders. The inputs derived from these consultations will be presented at the Congress and will be used to develop a plan of action. We are delighted to have Ms. Om Devi Malla, ICA Global Board member as well as a member of the Congress Advisory Committee, and Prof. Akira Kurimoto, member of the ICA Principles Committee and Chair of ICA-AP Research Committee to advise and guide us during the discussions.

The first consultation was held online on 16th February with members in the Philippines. Many cooperatives in the Philippines display the Statement of Cooperative Identity (SCI) in their offices. However, SCI is not always apparent in the business practices of these cooperatives. Prospective members are required to go through the pre-membership education seminar (PMES) before being accepted as members. SCI is usually included in the PMES. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the emphasis on “selling” cooperative products and services (eg. loans) and the accompanying benefits during the PMES has led to members thinking of themselves more as borrowers rather than as responsible owners. If cooperatives follow the SCI which emphasizes on “centrality of membership,” they can protect their membership in general and the most vulnerable among them, in particular.

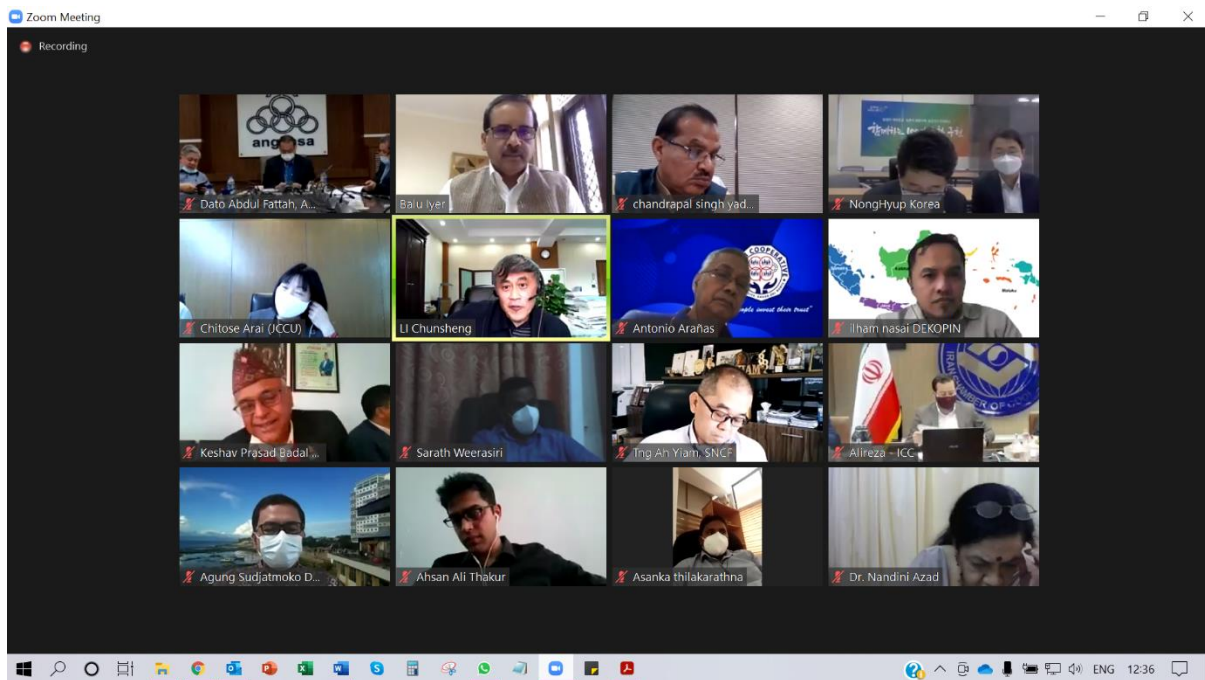
Consistency in the application of SCI was a persistent challenge identified by the members. Cooperatives, consciously or unconsciously, are “selective” in their application of SCI in their operations and their relationship with other cooperatives. One glaring example is the prevailing competition among cooperatives, which is justified as a normal way of doing business, rather than “cooperation among cooperatives.” Likewise, some organizations are registered as cooperatives but operate like for-profit companies. By being tolerated by the government, these ‘cooperatives’ somehow acquire legitimacy.

Members believe that millennials and Generation Z are attracted to values-driven organizations. If cooperatives exemplify values and principles in their operation and project their brand, then they can attract more and more young people. In the Philippines, the younger generation makes up a small proportion (average of 10%) of current coop membership. The Philippine Cooperatives Code of 2008 sees cooperatives as practical vehicles “for promoting self-reliance and harnessing people power towards the attainment of economic development and social justice.” Members argued that it is only when cooperatives stick to their essence (by exemplifying SCI) that they can truly fulfil this mandate – and gain the respect of government and the public in general.

The consultation was useful to get a perspective on the application of the SCI, the challenges seen in practice, and the directions going forward. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the need for models which strengthen the real economy and show the relevance of the cooperative model. It has opened up new areas for cooperatives to venture into, in service of existing members and to attract new members. As one of the members mentioned, the new mantra going forward is Enthuse, Enlist, Engage!

# ICA-AP Updates

## Regional Board Meeting



The ICA-AP held its Regional Board Meeting online on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021. The Board began by observing a minute silence in the memory of Mr. Kwek Kok Kwong (Singapore) and Royal Professor Ungku A. Aziz (Malaysia) whom we lost in November 2020.

The board ratified the nomination of Mr Tng Ah Yiam, Chairman, Singapore National Cooperative Federation (SNCF). Mr Tng Ah Yiam introduced himself and said that he is honored to join the Board as SNCF's nominee and looking forward to continuing Mr. Kwek's efforts.

The key agenda for the meeting included discussions on – deconsolidation of ICA-AP financial accounts, sub-regional office for Arab countries, and the status of subscription fees. Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP presented the discussions that had taken place at the ICA Global Board on the deconsolidation of ICA Africa accounts. The Global Board postponed the decision as it needed more time to consider the issue. Mr. Iyer said that this provided the opportunity for the AP board to also present its views. The Board deliberated on the letter circulated by Mr. Li Chunsheng on the issue, the proposal written by the Director General and the presentation made by the Regional Director. While deconsolidation is an accounting issue, there are implications on regional finances, board oversight and nature of relation with ICA. The Board decided to form a five-member committee to look into the issue and its implications on the region and present its findings at the next board meeting.

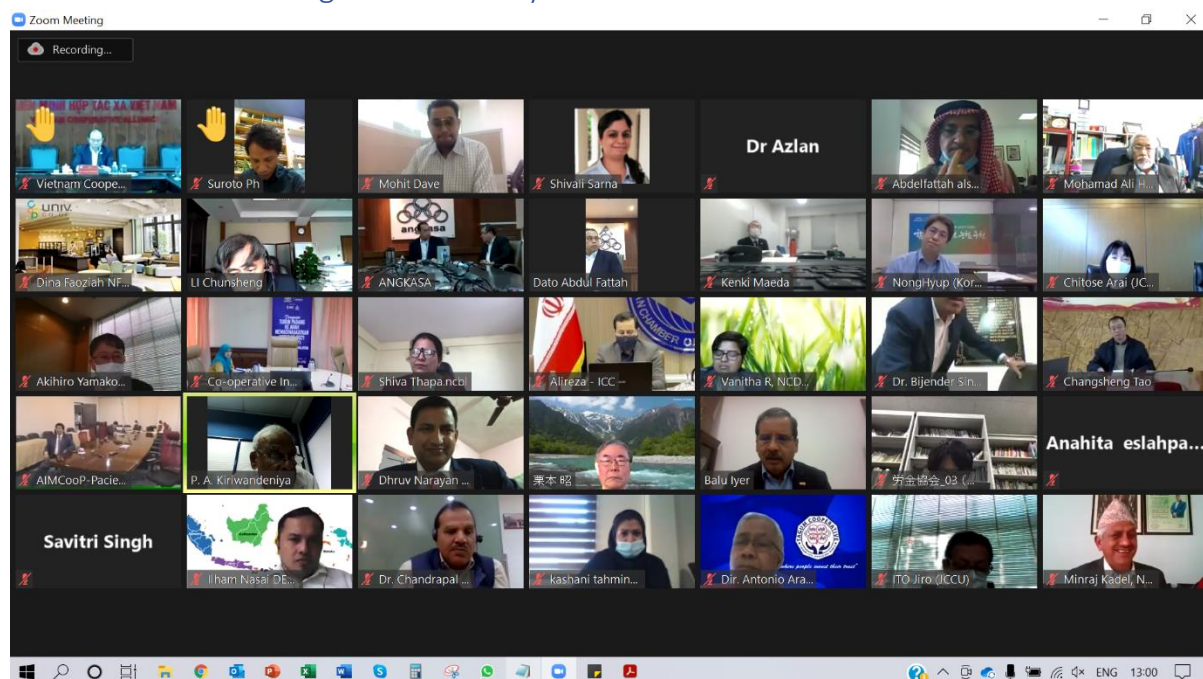
The ICA Africa office as part of its strategy, plans to open a sub-regional office with its member, General Authority of Construction and Housing Cooperatives (CHC) in Cairo, Egypt to cover North Africa. Mr. Iyer said that preliminary discussions have been held to cover Arab Countries Region (ACR, according to Arab League) in Africa & Asia. The 22 ACR countries have a shared culture, heritage, language, and history. The ACR countries is a region where more work needs to be done in terms of increasing members and retaining members. The benefits of a sub-regional office would be to: promote ICA in the ACR, help communicate and act as information hub, explore joint activities and programs, and advocate with governments and regional bodies. The Board agreed in principle and requested the office to start pilot activities to see how the relationship works and to better understand the terms of relationship.

Mr. Iyer presented the current membership and subscription fee situation. ICA-AP currently has 111 members from 32 countries. He thanked the members for paying the fee despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and requested members who had not, to pay their subscription fee on time.

The Chairperson of the Women's Committee, Dr. Nandini Azad, presented the newsletter and highlighted the activities carried out by the committee in 2020. The Chairperson of the Youth Committee, Mr. Ahsan, also presented a brief activity report and informed the board about the certificate distribution ceremony being held for the Go-Green Campaign participants. Mr. Alireza from ICC shared a few highlights of 2020. The efforts of both the committees were much appreciated by Mr Li Chunsheng.

Mr. Iyer invited the board members to the 14<sup>th</sup> ICA-AP Regional Assembly and informed them about the agenda of the assembly. The next Regional Board Meeting will be held in-person on November 29, 2021 in Seoul.

### 14th ICA-AP Online Regional Assembly



The 14<sup>th</sup> Regional Assembly was held online on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021 to consider administrative issues and approve the postponement of the ICA-AP Regional Board elections. The online assembly was attended by more than 110 participants from 18 countries – Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Palestine, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Mr. Li Chunsheng, President of ICAAP, Chaired the assembly and extended a warm welcome to all the members. He asked for the approval of the agenda which was unanimously approved. The minutes of the 13<sup>th</sup> ICA-AP Regional Assembly held in Tehran were confirmed by the members.

The members observed one-minute silence in the memory of Mr. Sethu Madhavan, Dr. T. Paranjothi, Mr. Prem Kumar, Mr. Kwek Kok Kwong, and Royal Professor Ungku A. Aziz whom we lost in 2020.



Mr. Li asked for comments on the minutes of the four Regional Board meetings held since the last Regional Assembly, which were sent in advance to all the members. There were no further comments made by the members and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP highlighted the key activities carried out since the last Regional Assembly in Tehran - the ICA-MAFF Japan Training Project; ICA-EU Project trainings, seminars and exchanges; training and workshops carried out through the MBO and with support from members; 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia Pacific Cooperatives Registrars' Forum in 2019 in Vietnam; efforts to expand the membership in the Pacific, Central Asia and Middle East Asia regions; and celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He thanked members for supporting these events in their countries and said, "this is a reflection of cooperation among cooperatives". He also presented the ICA-AP financial report of 2018 and 2019, and the membership situation.

The Regional Assembly approved the postponement of the Regional Board elections. The election had to be postponed due to COVID-19 imposed travel restrictions in 2020 and could only take place in-person as per ICA rules. The Regional Assembly will convene in-person to conduct the Regional Board elections, in conjunction with the ICA World Cooperative Congress in Seoul, Korea on 30<sup>th</sup> November.

Mr. Mohit Dave, Programme Manager, presented the progress report of the ICA-EU Partnership Project. ICA-AP President, Mr. Li, said, "ICA-EU project is an outstanding example of promoting cooperatives development". This was followed by the presentations from Mr. Amano Haruyoshi, Chair of the Consumer Committee; Mr. Ravindran from the Credit and Banking Committee; Ms. Simren Singh, Secretary, Education Committee; Prof. Akira Kurimoto, Chair of the Research Committee; Mr. Nasir Khan from the Trade and Business Committee; Dr. Nandini Azad, Chair of the Women Committee; and Mr. Ahsan Ali Thakur, Chair of the Youth Committee. Mr. Iyer presented a brief report on the Malaysia Business Office (MBO) and its activities. He concluded the meeting by thanking all the members and inviting them to the next Regional Assembly in Seoul in November.

### Global Conclave (virtual) – Structural Changes Required for Innovative Agriculture Value Chain Opportunities Ahead for Collectives



The Vaikunth Mehta National Institute of Cooperative Management (VAMNICOM) in collaboration with the Confederation of NGOs of Rural India (CNRI) and support of the National Cooperative Union on India (NCUI) organized a conclave, "**Export Market for Agriculture Commodity through Collaboration**" on February 12 and 13.

Recent developments in international trade and alterations in India's foreign trade policies have far-reaching implications for India's agricultural sector in general and agricultural exports in particular. In the case of exports of many agricultural commodities, India has been losing its competitive advantages to other countries due to lower productivity levels and low modernization of the agricultural sector. Despite this, India has a distinct competitive advantage in several agricultural commodities. It is among the top three producers in the world for several agricultural commodities, but the share of world exports in agricultural commodities is barely 1%. Traditionally, the core of India's agricultural development has been to achieve self-sufficiency in food grains and major non-food crops. With the

rapidly changing global economic environment, it is now necessary to shift the focus from self-sufficiency to export orientation. The objectives of the conclave were to:

- To identify the market potential of select Agro commodities post COVID-19 in foreign markets.
- To create awareness and provide the platform to all the stakeholders to learn the standard practices and procedures related to Agricultural International trade.
- To brainstorm the current export measures specific to commodity and identify the gaps and propose intervention for capability development of appropriate stakeholders.

ICA-AP Regional Director, Balasubramanian Iyer, chaired the session on Export Market for Agriculture Commodity through Collaboration. The panellists were, Dr. Hema Yadav, Director, Chaudhary Charan Singh National Institute of Agricultural Marketing; Shri Rishi Nathany, Business Leader in Financial Services, Multi Commodity Exchange of India; Dr. Sushansu, Secretary, Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority; and Dr. Ruchir Tiwari Senior Director, Jubilant Ingrenia. The focus of the session was on how agriculture can move from self-sufficiency to export orientation and the need for agriculture to generate an exportable surplus of food grains and non-food grains after meeting the domestic demand at the world prices.

Mr. Iyer in his remarks mentioned that Collectives which include Cooperatives, Farmers Organizations, Farmer Producer Organizations act as the link between farmers and other stakeholders are important constituent. The recent COVID-19 pandemic and the three farm laws in India have put agriculture at the centre of discussion – reforms needed to improve the lives and livelihoods (capabilities, assets, income and activities required to secure the necessities of life) of farmers. The impact of climate change also necessitates urgent action on resilience and mitigation efforts. Also, reforms should not ignore the needs of women who constitute a significant workforce in agriculture and allied activities (dairy, beekeeping, .....). Collectives of women also play an important part.

ICA each year comes out with the World Cooperative Monitor, which ranks the Top 300 Cooperatives in the world. The 2020 edition of the Monitor which came out recently, has the top 300 Cooperatives having a turnover of 2.14 trillion USD. IFFCO ranks as the number one cooperative in terms of turnover/ GDP per capita. Agriculture cooperatives (104, 34.7%) and wholesale and retail (57, 19%) account for 53.7% turnover; and agriculture cooperatives (97, 32.3%) and wholesale and retail (64, 21.3%) account for 53.6% when we take the ratio of turnover over GDP per capita (correct the bias in calculating the effect of different levels of national economic context). The data shows that cooperatives are big when we take production and consumption together.

But, while cooperative agricultural production has kept up with global growth, its share of retail and wholesale is declining, and this is where the real added value lies. Cooperative-produced agricultural products represent a sizeable opportunity but with the share of coops in global retail shrinking, producers are likely to pursue a diversified client base. Trade between cooperatives accounts for one-quarter of one per cent of global agricultural trade and cooperatives trading with other kinds of enterprises are well represented in global agricultural trade with a 15% share of the total.

There is an opportunity to grow the share in these as agriculture has a higher potential for export growth than other sectors. Agricultural cooperatives are particularly well placed to increase their participation in global trade, due to the nature of trade in agricultural goods as trade regulations tend to be less restrictive on agriculture than other sectors involving cooperatives. For example, insurance, banking, goods, unlike many services, are mobile across borders; and agricultural commodities (and to a lesser extent processed agricultural goods) are not subject to significant variation in specifications

by market. However, there are barriers along the value chain that inhibit trade. These related to production, harvesting, aggregation (insufficient, small scale); sorting, processing and merchandising (inconsistent quality, compliance); trade and wholesale distribution (regulating and logistics); retail and consumption (resources and awareness); and cross-cutting issues relating to managerial and capital requirements. Despite the challenges, cooperatives in a number of countries are engaged in exports and cross-country collaborations.

### Women Micro-Entrepreneurs Honoured by WWF-ICNW



The Working Women’s Forum (WWF) and Indian Cooperative Network for Women (ICNW) Chennai, bestowed the, ‘Best-poor women entrepreneur’ awards to nine women micro-entrepreneurs on February 8, 2021. The award ceremony was held on the 89<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of the legendary Indian cooperator and social worker Late Dr. Jaya Arunachalam.

For over forty years, WWF and ICNW have been working in many states of South India to enhance the social and financial independence of poor women, providing low-interest loans and encouraging women’s entrepreneurship and growth.

Dr. Nandini Azad, Chairperson of ICA Asia and Pacific Committee on Women and President of ICNW and WWF said, “the recipients of the awards were recognised as COVID-19 warriors and heroines. These women are members of WWF-ICNW who stood strong and fought their way through the pandemic that resulted in the loss of livelihood and income for many.”,

The awards were given to nine women micro-entrepreneurs aged between 48-69 years with an average literacy of 10<sup>th</sup> standard. Some were widows, some have handicapped husbands, and the large majority are the sole bread-earners for the family. These women micro-entrepreneurs have received loans up to Rs. 3,50,000 – Rs. 5,00,000 in 10-35 loan cycles/years which they repaid without default, even during the Covid-19 pandemic. They are engaged in diverse micro-businesses including idli-making, xerox shop, lamination shops, petty shop or kirana, etc. Many of the women micro-entrepreneurs have taken loans to invest in their children’s education (particularly girls) who are pursuing courses such as engineers, management, ITI, nursing, etc.

The winners were selected from 1,500 nominations, who qualified the criteria of timely payments and no defaults. They also took the highest number of loans and have been members of WWF for a long time. The CEOs of each branch of WWF-ICNW were involved in shortlisting the nominees and the final winners were selected by Dr. Azad based on the socio-economic criteria of the nominees.

The awards were sponsored by local Indian banks. Dr. Azad during the award ceremony noted that “it is important for both the formal and informal sector to work shoulder to shoulder to enable

empowerment and work for such causes. We are looking at a future where the informal sector cooperatives thrive and get the needed attention.”

Courtesy: WWF, ICNW and indiancooperative.com <https://www.indiancooperative.com/from-states/nandini-to-honour-poor-women-entrepreneurs-on-jayas-bday/>

## Member Updates

### Webinar on Collective Entrepreneurship through Cooperatives by ICC



The Iran Chamber of Cooperatives organized the International Webinar on “Collective Entrepreneurship through Cooperatives” on February 9, 2021. Prominent speakers and cooperators from Iran and other countries including Spain, Japan, China, India, and Kenya participated in the webinar to share experiences from the fields of cooperatives and entrepreneurship.

The speakers included, Mr. Li Chunsheng, Chairman of ICA-AP; Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director of ICA-AP; Ms. Sifa, Regional Director of ICA-Africa; Mr. Bahman Abdollahi, President of Iran Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC); Mr. Hosseininia, Head of Faculty of Entrepreneurship, Tehran University; Mr. Rezaeinejad, CEO of Pishgaman Cooperative Group, Iran; Mr. Tarun Bhargava, IFFCO, India; Mr. Etxeberria-Otadui, Mondragon, Spain; and Mr. Osamu Nakano, JWCU, Japan.

The webinar was attended by more than 190 foreign and domestic audiences. It focused on the capacities of the cooperative movement and the cooperative business model for entrepreneurship and employment promotion and ultimately sustainable economic growth and development in the world.

Mr. Bahman Abdollahi concluded the webinar with the presentation of strategies for the development of entrepreneurship and job creation in the Iranian Cooperative Movement and other communities.

## ICA-EU Updates

### Online Roundtable Discussion on Worker Cooperative Legislation: Experiences from Japan



ICA Asia and Pacific and the ICA-EU Partnership ([#coops4dev](#)) in collaboration with CICOPA (International Organisation of Industrial and Service Cooperatives) organised an online roundtable discussion on Worker Cooperative Legislation with the Japanese Worker Cooperative Union (JWCU). The discussion brought together around 30 participants from Australia, Belgium, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, and Singapore to share experiences in worker cooperative development.

Mr. Balasubramanian (Balu) Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP welcomed the participants and delivered the opening remarks on the relevance and importance of worker cooperatives in the region. He said that ICA-AP had organised an International Conference on ‘Cooperatives in the Changing World of Work’ and developed a response to highlight the role of cooperatives and collectives in addressing the challenges of Future of Work. Recently, it had also organized a discussion on worker cooperative buyouts on the theme, “Strengthening workers in the COVID-19 crisis”. The discussion gave an opportunity to know demonstrated interest, enabling environment, and the need for adequate funds and a pool of human resources to explore the worker buyout and other initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region.

Ms. Francesca Zaganelli, Membership Coordinator, CICOPA, made a presentation on the industrial and service cooperatives in Asia and the Pacific, highlighting the key recommendations made in the research work undertaken within the #Coops4Dev programme. The research was in close collaboration with local partners from different backgrounds (ICA member organisations, research institutes, individual cooperatives, and individual researchers) and was also fed by the previous collaboration between ICA-AP and CICOPA which allowed to conduct field research in India, Sri Lanka and Malaysia.

Mr. Osamu Nakano, International Relations Director, JWCU, talked about the unanimous adoption of the worker cooperative law by the Diet on 4 December 2020. The law will enable businesses to register

as worker cooperatives. Prior to its adoption, Japan had no specific legal form for worker cooperatives, which had to register either as non-profit organisations or small and medium enterprises. This historic development paves the way for revitalisation of worker cooperatives and grants a new kind of autonomy to workers in Japan who are now empowered to invest and manage their own cooperative enterprises. Several industries key for Japan, including ageing, childcare and support industries to agriculture and forestry, will be directly benefited.

The newly passed Act consists of 171 articles and was written with a high level of labour standards in mind. Its main ambition is to provide the necessary legislation to worker cooperatives. By having proper recognition, they can promote employment opportunities through the cooperative principles including democratic member control and member economic participation. This in turn, will enable the newly established cooperatives to meet diverse demands in local communities, which ultimately contribute to their development and growth.

The common need which came across from the discussion was to introduce conducive public policies for cooperatives in industrial and service sectors. ICA-AP under the #Coops4Dev program shall continue to support such endeavours by sharing information through discussions touching upon topics of interest from across different countries. The discussion highlighted the need to undertake a pilot assignment to get the ground experience in one or two countries in the region. The participants also showed interest to make a stronger network of such co-ops in the region, giving fillip to the interest in 'work'. The roundtable stressed upon the importance of data and research to build upon some of the work which has been accomplished.

### Young people and cooperatives: A new Youth Research Report



[#coops4dev](#) has released its latest global research report – [“Young people and cooperatives: a perfect match?”](#) on March 3. It is co-produced by all ICA regional offices with the support of the [Co-operative College](#), UK and input from the [ICA Youth Network](#), presenting research and analysis based upon the direct input of young people in 20 countries.

Organised into five chapters and presenting several practical examples of youth cooperation, the report identifies ways that support between young people and cooperatives can be improved. 420 responses from young people were collected and analysed for the research, which surveyed both young cooperators and young people less familiar with the cooperative model.

The report demonstrates that cooperatives can play a crucial role in solving the challenges of young people, whilst also contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), including SDG 8 on decent work and SDG 4 on quality education. Its five key focus areas are employment, education, inequalities, engagement and civic participation, and entrepreneurship. The report also highlights ways in which cooperatives can improve their support and engagement towards young people.

By improving knowledge of cooperatives, communicating their benefits effectively, and by developing democratic and inclusive cultures of cooperation, the cooperative business model can be a truly viable alternative for solving the challenges facing young people, which have been amplified against a new backdrop of insecurity and inequality emerging since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Erinch Sahan, Chief Executive of the World Fair Trade Organization, highlighted the role of cooperatives for youth employment, noting: “cooperatives are the shining alternative. Naturally embedded in their communities, they are geared to spread wealth and opportunity far and wide. As the pioneers of economic democracy, they are needed now more than ever”.

ICA Director General, Bruno Roelants, acknowledged the value of the report for the cooperative movement by stating that “this study is a mind-opener, and its conclusions and recommendations provide essential food for thought to us all within the cooperative movement on how to promote youth cooperatives, youth employment and participation in cooperatives, as well as education on cooperatives”.

ICA-AP Regional Director, Balasubramanian Iyer, highlighted the role of youth to promote cooperative identity and said, “Youth play a critical role given their sheer numbers and the central role they will play in all walks of life. Cooperative principles of openness, democracy, ownership, concern for community, economic and social well-being, resonate with what youth want. But there is a gap in reaching out and getting them engaged. This research helps in bridging the gap by reaching out directly to the young, within and outside cooperatives, understanding their issues, gaining their insight into how the cooperative movement can respond.”

## [Global Youth Forum 2021](#)



The second edition of the Global Youth Forum - Cooperative Entrepreneurship (GYF) will take place virtually on 25-26 March.

The International Cooperative Alliance in collaboration with the [ICA Youth Network](#) is organising GYF21 within the framework of ICA-EU Partnership ([#coops4dev](#)) to bring together young entrepreneurs and professionals from across the world.

The two-day event will feature a range of training sessions on a variety of topics such as cooperative identity, gender equality, digital tools for coop entrepreneurship, policy, and more. These will not be typical online sessions: participants will have the opportunity to share their opinion and interact with the panellists!

Last year, for the first edition of the Global Youth Forum - Cooperative Entrepreneurship ([GYF20](#)), more than 180 participants from 50 countries met in Kuching, Malaysia.

[Click here to discover the GYF21 provisional agenda.](#)

[Register to attend the GYF21.](#)

## COOPATHON 3.0 Second Runner-up: Design for Impact

ICA-AP organised Coopathon 3.0 – a Cooperative Hackathon virtually from 11<sup>th</sup> December to 14<sup>th</sup> December. Coopathon 3.0 aimed to identify and solve contemporary problems and pressing challenges in the social and service sectors through an amalgamation of youth energy, technology integrations, and cooperative values & principles.

**Design for Impact**, a group of five multidisciplinary designers studying human-centred design and visual communication, from India was awarded the 2<sup>nd</sup> runner-up prize. To bring in design thinking and mindset in the contemporary education system, the team has developed the concept of **Learn, Earn, and Invest**. With an aim to channelise the young minds into solving real-world problems through design thinking, the team wants to establish a platform for youngsters to learn design and creative skills; utilise those skills to earn through gigs; and invest a proportion of their income in learning further.

Coopathon helped them get more insights into their model and solidified the base for their future business. “The hackathon model helped us expedite the development process and was great international exposure for us”, said Ravi, the team leader. They are now working to conduct a pilot 2.0 to validate their concept, refine their business model by testing, and develop the platform for scaling-up.

Watch the team explain how they see design as an instrument to bring change and express their joy after the win here.

## Research Watch

### 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.

Three national reports on key figures for Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam were completed and are available on the [#coops4dev](#) website. Overall, mapping reports for 17 countries are available on the [#coops4dev](#) website including the reports for Australia, China, New Zealand, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Myanmar, Nepal, PNG, Vanuatu, Iran and the Philippines.

## Announcements

### International Women’s Day 2021



ICA Asia and Pacific wishes all women cooperators in the region a Very Happy Women’s Day!

This year the UN Women has announced, ‘Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world’ as the theme of [International Women’s Day \(IWD21\)](#) to be celebrated on March 8.



It “celebrates the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Women have been at the forefront to fight the hardships brought by the COVID-19 pandemic; be it in their businesses, homes, or communities.

Women across all levels of cooperatives, have shouldered equal responsibility in fighting the pandemic. Women as members, workers, employees, and leaders of cooperatives have been involved in ensuring the survival of cooperative businesses and contributed equally to the response actions undertaken by their cooperatives (charity, donations, relief work, etc). At the same time, women have had to face disproportionate burdens triggered by the pandemic - domestic violence and unequal burden of household care and responsibility.

The theme of this year’s IWD reiterates the crucial role of women in the post-pandemic world. Moving forward, it is important that women continue to engage in decision-making and bring to table their needs, experiences, perspectives, and expertise. It is also important that gender-mixed cooperatives (that is, cooperatives that have both women and men as members, staff, etc.) create attractive opportunities and develop a friendly, safe, and encouraging environment for women.

### **How are you celebrating IWD21?**

The ICA Asia and Pacific Office invites all members (especially women!) to submit articles and photos/videos\* on the theme ‘Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world’.

You may send article(s)\* and photo(s)/video(s)\* on the following topics.

1. Thoughts/ suggestions to create an equal future for women in the cooperative movement.
2. Case studies/ stories about today’s women leaders in the cooperative movement.
3. Inspiring decisions/ actions taken by women cooperators for the benefit of business/ community during the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Impactful initiatives/ activities undertaken by your cooperative to support women during the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. Your activities to observe the IWD.
6. Initiatives/ activities that your cooperative plans to undertake with women in 2021 that may encourage other cooperatives in your country and in the region to follow.

\*Maximum word limit for an article is 500 words. \*Photos/ videos must have captions (max 100 words).

Send your article and photos/ videos to [shivali.sarna@icaap.coop](mailto:shivali.sarna@icaap.coop) latest by March 25, 2021.

### **Role of women in leadership for a just recovery!**

The ICA is celebrating IWD21 by having a month-long campaign [#coops4women](https://www.instagram.com/coops4women) on social media led by the ICA Gender Equality Committee (GEC). The campaign will showcase the important role of women in leadership of cooperatives for a just recovery.

ICA GEC will release a short **publication** showcasing the **regional best-case practices** around the theme of “Women in leadership and COVID-19.” It will feature two-three case studies each from all the regions of ICA.

On 8<sup>th</sup> March, GEC will share a **Declaration** for the **International Day of Women**. On 18<sup>th</sup> March at 15:00 CET, GEC will organise a webinar on “Women in leadership and just recovery” with the support of the [#coops4dev](#) team. It will be divided into two parts. The first part will focus on “Regional updates from the GEC regional representatives” where Dr. Nandini Azad, Chairperson, ICA-AP Women’s Committee will represent the Asia and Pacific region. The second part will be on “Policy & Sustainable Development perspectives”.

To register for the webinar, click [here](#).

To participate in the campaign on social media, use **#coops4women**.

## Winners of #COOPSF2020 Announced



ICA-AP’s Committee on Cooperatives in Educational Institutions (ICEI) initiated the first-ever regional cooperative short film competition in September 2020. The entries were invited from students, faculty, and staff from schools, colleges, and training institutes from countries in the Asia and Pacific region. ICEI received 10 entries from Malaysia (5), Japan (2), Sri Lanka (1), Palestine (1), and China (1).

The first prize of US\$500 was awarded to Yudai Yazama and team from the National Federation of University Cooperatives (NFUCA), Japan for their “Survey with students affected by COVID-19.” The second prize of US\$ 300 was awarded to Ellysa Ezyanee and team from Mara Junior Science College Batu Pahat School Cooperative, Batu Pahat, Johor Darul Takzim, Malaysia for their video, “Cooperative charity during COVID-19.” The third prize of \$150 was awarded to Ellysa Ezyanee and team, Mara Junior Science College Batu Pahat School Cooperative, Batu Pahat, Johor Darul Takzim, Malaysia for their video, “Cooperative charity during COVID-19.” The award money was sponsored by ANGKASA. Special recognition certificates will be awarded to the other five best entries and participation certificates to all participants. A felicitation ceremony for the winners of the short film competition on cooperatives will be organized by ICEI and ANGKASA in the first week of April (dates TBC).

## Regional Forum for Cooperative Housing Organizations



ICA-AP in collaboration with Cooperative Housing International (CHI) is organizing an online regional forum on Tuesday, March 9, 2021 with cooperative housing organisations in the Asia and Pacific region.

This networking and information exchange aims to strengthen the cooperative housing movement across the region while introducing them to the work of CHI and of the ICA-AP. You will learn about cooperative housing in the Philippines, Malaysia, Pakistan, Australia, and others followed by an open forum for housing groups to have engaging discussions. Join us to learn more about the growing coop housing movement and be inspired to bring some new housing solutions into your community.

### Featured Speakers:

Ms. Errum Sharif Bhaiji (Pakistan) – Karachi Housing Union

Ms. Eugenie Stockmann (Australia) – [Co-operation Housing](#)

Ms. Sam Subida (Philippines) – [Federation of Peoples' Sustainable Development Cooperative](#)

Mr. Mohamad Ali Hassan (Malaysia) – [ANGKASA](#)

Ms. Jessica Santos (Philippines) – [WeEffect](#)

[Asian Coalition of Housing Rights](#) (ACHR)

[Arkompot](#) (Indonesia)

### Hosts:

Ms. Julie LaPalme - [Cooperative Housing International](#)

Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer - [ICA Asia-Pacific](#)

To attend the webinar, [register here](#).

World Cooperative Congress



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 33<sup>rd</sup> World Cooperative Congress will now be held in Seoul, the Republic of Korea and online from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021.

The theme for the Congress is, “**Deepening our Cooperative Identity**” to strengthen the cooperative movement’s role in addressing global challenges and explore avenues to improve lives at the local and global levels.

Within this, four themes will explore how cooperatives examine, strengthen, commit to, and live the cooperative identity. [Read more on these themes in future ‘Destination Congress’ newsletters!](#)

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 event 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 Congress will consist of pre-events on 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> November, followed by the conference itself from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> December. Details of the Congress will be available

at <https://ICAWorldCoopCongress.coop>. The World Cooperative Congress will be held at the Grand Walkerhill Hotel, in Seoul: <https://www.walkerhill.com/grandwalkerhillseoul/en/>.

*Find out more about the ICA World Cooperative Congress – and register your interest – [HERE](#).*

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

### Seeking Project Evaluation Consultant

The International Cooperative Alliance is looking for a consultant to evaluate the Framework Partnership Agreement between the International Cooperative Alliance and the European Commission ([#coop4dev](#)).

The consultant, in collaboration with the Strategy Unit, as well as the staff assigned on the ICA- EU Partnership program (Coordination Unit and Program Units, will review the governance structure, coordination, activity implementation, outputs and results of the program 2016-2021.

More details and job description can be viewed [here](#).

## Upcoming Events

- Consultation on Identity with Iran – **7<sup>th</sup> March 2021**
- Regional Forum for Cooperative Housing Organisations in Asia and Pacific – **9<sup>th</sup> March 2021**
- Consultation on Identity with ACO countries – **25<sup>th</sup> March 2021**
- Virtual Global Youth Forum (GYF) 2021 – **25<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> March 2021**
- ICA-AP Regional Board Meeting, Seoul, Korea – **29<sup>th</sup> November 2021 (TBC)**
- ICA-AP Regional Assembly and Board Elections, Seoul, Korea - **30<sup>th</sup> November 2021 (TBC)**
- ICA 33rd World Cooperative Congress, Seoul, Korea – **1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021**