

ICA-AP NEWSLETTER

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

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Cooperative Identity and Workers in the Value Chain



Towards
the World Cooperative Congress
(1-3 December 2021)

The ICA-AP regional office is bringing the perspective of Asia-Pacific members into the conversation around the 33rd Congress theme, *Deepening the Cooperative Identity*, through online consultations, events, articles, and interviews.

To mark International Workers' Day on 1st May and World Fairtrade Day on 8th May, the April issue on the theme, **Cooperative Identity and Strengthening Workers in the Value Chain**, focuses on how cooperative identity can help strengthen the labour and fairtrade movements in Asia and Pacific region.

The Labour movement advocates the protection of working people's rights by forming trade unions or collectives. Similarly, the Fairtrade movement advocates transparent and just trade across the value chain and ensures the rights of the marginalised producers and workers are secured. Both the movements are based on collective action and ensure the welfare of workers and members by promoting equity, justice, equity, and sustainable development. People with common problems and goals come together through these movements to make their voices heard.

Cooperatives, as defined in the Statement on the Cooperative Identity (SCI), are autonomous associations of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise. The cooperative values and principles strengthen these labour and fairtrade movements by providing a collective voice, enhancing cooperation among the workers, producers and consumers resulting in fair interactions and trade among these.

In this issue, we present an enriching conversation with Ms. Simel Esim, Programme Manager at the Cooperatives Unit of the International Labour Organisation (ILO COOP). She talks about how ILO engages with cooperatives and the strategies of ILO COOP in the changing world of work post the COVID-19 pandemic. We hear from Mr. Remeshan Palery who is the Chairperson of the Uralungal Labour Contract Co-operative Society (ULCCS) Ltd., India about how labour cooperatives promote the socio-economic interests of the labours/ workers. Ms. Juhee Lee, the International Team Manager of iCOOP, Korea shares an inspiring case of consumer cooperatives promoting an ethical food chain in Korea by securing the interests of both producers and consumers. We also bring the perspective of our members in Nepal on how the SCI is guiding their day-to-day operations.

We are glad to share with our readers that this year's theme for the International Day of Cooperatives has been announced. 2021 #COOPSDAY will be celebrated as **“Rebuild Better Together”** on **3rd July**.

In Conversation with Ms. Simel Esim, Programme Manager, ILO COOP



1. The services sector has been largely hit due to the COVID-19 pandemic. How does ILO COOP foresee a just recovery of the sector and what are some of its initiatives in that direction?

The mandatory shutdowns of non-essential businesses and the confinement of billions of people to their homes have been revamping societies and economies. The impact is unevenly distributed for households, workers, and businesses, further exacerbating inequalities that already exist. Service sectors have been among the hardest hit by the restrictions. Let us take the case of media and culture workers and businesses.

During the confinement, media and cultural products have been uplifting people through music, films, television and other art forms for entertainment, education, and cultural enrichment. At the same time live performances, recordings were severely restricted or discontinued. As a result, workers in the sector were among the hardest hit with unemployment. Even during normal times many of these workers were on part-time, on-demand and project-based agreements with high rates of informality among them.

With the global pandemic, their already limited access to social security benefits, such as paid sick leave and health care, have exposed them to heightened risk. The pandemic has also accelerated existing trends in the sector, challenging existing traditional business models, increasing the use of technologies. In the transition to normality, ad hoc measures and procedures must be tailored to address the specific needs of the subsectors so that work can be carried out safely. Health and safety considerations must be balanced with the economic needs.

Special support for the industry may be needed to address this very delicate balance. In this period, the culture sector has benefited from rescue packages adopted by some governments, aimed at ensuring the economic survival of businesses and access to social security benefits. Among the measures used are injecting liquidity and income support into the industry, the deferral of social security payments for both workers and employers; and indemnity funds (for redundancies).

The ILO has documented the situation and responses to relieve the workers and businesses in the culture and entertainment sectors. At ILO COOP we have highlighted the work of worker cooperatives in the cultural and entertainment sectors and how they have advocated with their governments so their members could benefit from rescue packages during the global pandemic. These include presentations featured in ILO webinars and symposia (e.g. [Doc Servizi in Italy](#)), videos and other features (e.g. [Wazo coop in Spain](#)).

2. Migrant workers were one of the worst affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. At ILO COOP, how do you see cooperative identity playing a role in safeguarding the interest of workers?

Tens of millions of migrant workers have been forced to return home because of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The labour markets in their countries of origin, already fragile before the outbreak, are further weakened by high levels of unemployment and serious business disruptions. In addition, their families suffer a financial loss of the remittances normally sent to them. At the same time, other migrant workers have found themselves stranded in host countries without access to social protection and little resources to sustain their basic survival needs.

Of the estimated 164 million migrant workers worldwide, nearly half of them are women, doing essential jobs in host societies during the pandemic, particularly in the care or agriculture sectors. Before the outbreak of the pandemic, cooperatives already played various roles in migrant women and men's lives. Host community cooperatives provided integration services to migrants, including training and job placement services. They also recruited them as workers and members. Migrant workers also formed cooperatives that provide services for themselves or their host communities.

During the pandemic, cooperatives of migrant workers have advocated for the inclusion of their members in national COVID-19 responses. They have also raised resources to support members who have lost their jobs and livelihoods. Although cooperatives might be reaching out to migrant workers across countries, their potential to improve the lives of the increasing number of people who are migrating is under-utilized and continues to be hampered by a lack of knowledge and understanding of the cooperative business model and how cooperatives can respond to the specific needs of migrants. In some destination countries, the continued limitations on the rights of migrant workers to form their businesses can have an impact on their ability to join and form cooperatives.

Even when the cooperative form of business is introduced to potential members, their promoters may often underestimate the need for capacity building, business management skills, and specific training in cooperative governance. Existing migrant education programmes for departing and returning workers, entrepreneurship education and business support services can explore the cooperative option. Mentorship and accompaniment programmes for migrant worker cooperative initiatives have also proven to be effective toward ensuring their operational and financial sustainability.

3. Cooperatives have been successfully contributing to SDG 8. How ILO engages with cooperatives and wider SSE enterprises to adapt to the changing world of work?

As outlined in the [brief produced by the Committee on the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives \(COPAC\) on SDG8](#), cooperative enterprises have the ability to both create and sustain jobs. Cooperatives can advance decent work by formalising the informal economy by creating economies of scale, collective voice, and negotiation power. They have the potential to create not only quality jobs but also space for people to pool their resources and skills to create their economic opportunities. Based on the cooperative principle of open and voluntary membership, they can also be inclusive enterprises that offer the chance to some of the most vulnerable groups, such as low-income women, unemployed youth, persons with disabilities, indigenous people, migrants, and refugees, to actively participate in the formal economy.

The ILO is the specialized agency of the UN with a mandate on social justice and decent work. It has had a [Cooperatives Unit](#) since 1920. It remains the only specialized agency of the United Nations with

an explicit mandate on cooperatives. The ILO views cooperatives as important in improving the living and working conditions of women and men globally, as well as making essential infrastructure and services available even in areas neglected by the state and investor-driven enterprises. The first ILO Director-General, Albert Thomas, was from the cooperative movement himself. Recognizing the importance of cooperatives, he established a Cooperative Service in the ILO in 1920. And cooperators are mentioned explicitly in Article 12 of the ILO constitution. As the representative of cooperatives worldwide, the International Cooperative Alliance holds a general consultative status at the ILO.

In 2002 an international standard, a [Recommendation on the promotion of cooperatives was adopted at the International Labour Conference](#). In 2018, the International Conference of Labour Statisticians adopted [guidelines concerning statistics of cooperatives](#) which sets a statistical standard toward achieving harmonized and internationally comparable data on cooperative enterprises. In the last decade, the ILO has expanded its support for cooperative development to the wider social and solidarity economy (SSE) through research, policy advisory and capacity building, and development projects and academies on specific topics that bring researchers, practitioners, and policymakers together. The 341st Governing Body of the ILO decided to place an item related to “[Social and Solidarity Economy \(SSE\) for a human-centred future of work](#)” on the agenda of the 110th Session (2022) of the International Labour Conference (ILC) for general discussion.

The ILO works with cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy organizations through a series of activities including legal and policy advisory services, training and capacity building, research, development cooperation projects and partnerships. In delivering on its mandate, the COOP unit at the ILO uses a three-pronged strategy:

- Encouraging and assisting with the integration of decent work agenda as a priority in the work of cooperatives and other SSE enterprises and organizations including through capacity building tools and strategies;
- Ensuring that specificities of cooperatives and other SSE enterprises and organizations are recognized in analysis, policy, and actions toward achieving decent work agenda and a sustainable future for all, by the ILO and its constituents; and
- Activating the potential of cooperatives and other SSE enterprises and organizations as economically, socially, and environmentally responsible and viable business options for a sustainable future of work.

4. Digitization has created new forms of work and working relationships. At ILO COOP, how do you see the values of cooperation in addressing these trends and in ensuring the future of workers in a digitized world?

New technologies are changing the way work is organized and governed. They are redefining the relationships between workers and employers especially in emerging sectors like the platform economy. Due to limited or non-existent national and/or international regulatory frameworks, there are significant risks of decent work non-compliance.

For the positive potential of technology to be realized, and its threats to be countered, new models of collective ownership and democratic governance could be used. Cooperatives and the wider SSE can help strengthen the voice and representation of workers in the platform economy. Platform cooperatives are being established in recent years by self-employed and gig economy workers.

Platform cooperatives are emerging as member-owned businesses that use a website, mobile application, or protocol to connect or to organize services. They use the cooperative model to have

more democratic ownership and control of digital platforms. They are being utilized by a range of workers and users. These include existing cooperatives of informal economy workers adopting online applications to bring the goods and services of their members to users in a way where they have more control; and freelancers, artists, technology workers, and others in the gig economy use them and often get support from trade unions in their sectors when doing so.

5. Young people have an important role to play in the economy but face challenges of unemployment, unsettled markets, and an uncertain future. Cooperatives provide youth entrepreneurial opportunities with values and principles. How does ILO COOP encourage and support youth in meeting their aspirations?

Even before the pandemic, young people faced a tough situation in the labour market. At the global level, young people were three times more likely to be unemployed compared with adults. And before the crisis, unemployment affected 67.6 million young women and men, 13.6% of the youth labour force. One-fifth of the world's youth were not in employment, nor were they in education or training. There was a gender dimension to this. Young women were more than twice as likely as young men to be unemployed or outside the labour force and not in education or training. More than three out of four of the world's young workers had informal jobs compared with 60% of adults.

The situation has become worse with the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has been hurting youth in many ways. First, with the disruptions to their education, training, and work-based learning. Second, through increased difficulties for young jobseekers, especially those seeking their first job. Third, through job and income losses, along with the deteriorating quality of employment. These challenges can have life-long repercussions for young people who graduate during crises. It is more evident than ever that the world needs innovative solutions.

Cooperatives are among the business models that can create work opportunities and better working conditions for them. They can help young people both to find work and to gain work experience, as well as offer opportunities for professional and vocational training. At the same time, young people can help modernize and energize cooperatives through their engagement in new sectors and economic activities.

Young people have contributed to the emergence of a new generation of cooperatives, with promising results. These include worker cooperatives of young graduates in cultural and creative sectors like music, theatre, and graphic design; platform cooperatives of young programmers in the technology sector, and freelancers who are delivery workers, bike messengers and taxi drivers; renewable energy cooperatives; organic and bio agricultural cooperatives; social cooperatives of care providers, social workers, educators; consumer cooperatives like university and student; and housing cooperatives.

At ILO COOP we have been supporting our colleagues in the field offices in delivering youth employment initiatives through cooperatives and a wider social and solidarity economy. These include support for research, policy reform, and capacity building initiatives. Two projects are worth mentioning - In one of the projects, we work with disadvantaged young people in rural areas in Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic who face specific challenges in accessing the labour market. For those in employment, many are in poor quality and low-paying jobs. The project aims to build institutional capacities to deliver innovative and value-added services with a special focus on employment readiness/ foundational skills empowerment and cooperative development for marginalized and at-risk youth.

The second initiative is to support Tunisian youth through social and solidarity entrepreneurship. The initiative is to create decent jobs for young men and women in disadvantaged regions through the

promotion of SSE and its organizations. To this end, the ILO works to improve the regional governance of the SSE through the establishment of a platform for coordinating SSE stakeholders. At the level of the target governorates, the initiative is providing technical and financial support to create SSE projects involving women and young people either as majority members of the SSE organizations or as direct beneficiaries of these projects.

Opinion Piece: Role of Cooperative Identity in Strengthening Labour Cooperatives



Cooperatives have a significant impact on citizen-oriented life-scale social advancement, especially in agrarian-based rural economy focusing on labour, construction, banking, schooling etc. The objects of the Cooperative shall be promoting the economic interests of the labourers of the Cooperative; to find suitable and profitable employment for them by obtaining contracts with the government, public and private bodies, or individuals, and by executing those contracts through or with the help of the members; and to encourage thrift, self-help, and cooperation among the members. It can pioneer in local-level alternative production, epitomising qualities of the solidarity economy such as democracy, equity, solidarity, reciprocity, and integrative networks. To do this, labour cooperatives must be pioneered as democratic workplace organisations with egalitarian redistribution, even in the context of a highly competitive sector dominated by large, profit-seeking contractors. In major construction works, an organizer, middlemen or contractor is inevitable. Labour Cooperatives are striving to substitute the intermediary profit-seeking contractors for executing public works. They aspire to provide more secure and satisfying work with better wages to its members. But the present contract system has degenerated and has become a whirlpool of corruption.

One of the best labour welfare centric approaches of the Uralungal Labour Contract Co-operative Society (ULCCS) Ltd. makes it unique in the world and marks it as an organization “of the workers, by the workers and for the workers”. The directors are the managers of the cooperative, which means that management is elected by the workers – in sharp contrast to capitalist corporations, where managers are appointed by an unelected leadership. The construction sites are led by site leaders chosen from among the workers, in a process through which only workers with proven managerial ability and those who enjoy widespread respect and trust are selected. Democratic processes are maintained through regular communication within the cooperative. Site leaders attend daily meetings with the board of directors. All site leaders, board members and technical staff including the highly skilled engineers of ULCCS attend weekly meetings while all worker-members participate in monthly meetings where new developments are reported and members can raise criticisms. Full financial statements are discussed at the annual general meetings. While all these meetings involve

time and energy, it also produces a sense of collective ownership, solidarity, and common mission, enhancing productivity.

ULCCS stands out as a global cooperative identity for workers' cooperatives by ensuring strict coordination and efficient production without the typical capitalist techniques of discipline and incentives and has developed a labour process that is both efficient and participatory.

Views expressed by the author, Mr. Remeshan Palery, Chairperson, ULCCS Ltd. are his own.

Case Study: How has cooperative identity helped consumer cooperatives promote ethical food chain in Korea?

The history of the modern consumer cooperative movement in urban areas of Korea started in the 1980s when the destruction of agriculture due to chemicals and pesticide took a toll on both farmers and consumers. As environmental problems such as pesticides, food additives, environmental hormones, and antibiotics became more serious, consumers stepped up and set up coops to trade directly with organic farms. Until now, the unique characteristics - the solidarity between farmers and consumers and the pursuit of eco-friendly food - have existed in the movement of consumer cooperatives.

iCOOP was established in 1997 as the federation of six small coops that were on the verge of bankruptcy. As of December 2020, it has grown to be 101 members cooperative with 300,000 members, 243 stores, and two industrial cluster complexes called [Natural Dream Park](#).

Since 1997, iCOOP has pursued "ethical consumerism" through solidarity and democratic participation from members, hoping to achieve food security, protect agriculture and the environment, and respect humans and labour. With the declaration of Ethical Consumerism in 2008, iCOOP started fairtrade with farmers in foreign countries, contributing to their economic independence and eco-friendly farming. Sales grew from KRW 3.1 billion in 2012 to KRW 10.2 billion in 2020 with diverse items.



Natural Dream store

In 2014 and 2018, iCOOP opened Gurye and Goesan Natural Dream Parks. The Park project is one of the commitments for social and economic community growth, focusing on collaboration with local governments suffering from a shrinking population. As 29 food factories and logistics are converged in the Parks, they serve as the foundation to provide iCOOP's 1,000 eco-friendly products to members at a reasonable price. For producers, the guarantee of income is realized since the Parks ensure sustainable production and consumption. Moreover, the Parks adopt environmentally sustainable policies on plastic packaging and energy. Lastly, community people enjoy 33 cultural facilities in the Parks such as sports centres or theatres, contributing to revitalizing the local economy and tourism with 200,000 visitors annually, as well as creating employment up to 1,200.



Gurye Natural Dream Park

For cooperatives, it is the [power of the members](#) that make all this possible. 2,500 active members lead iCOOP as the director of member coops and member leaders actively participate in coop activities and provide feedback. Members gather the necessary capital for their coops, fulfilling “Member Economic Participation”. Thanks to this culture of self-sufficiency substituted by the systems such as monthly membership dues, responsible investment, and an advance payment mechanism, iCOOP was able to construct infrastructures without borrowing money from banks.

In 2018, iCOOP declared ‘Healing and Restoring’ to treat lifestyle diseases through healthy food consumption and help members maintain a healthy lifecycle. To realize this, it opened a Healing centre and a medical clinic in Goesan Natural Dream Park and operates several programmes including “Healing School” that cures diabetes, high blood pressure and more. In line with this, in 2020, innovation was encouraged in the field of development of “foods that help to heal and restore”. It includes producing Healing Food (HF) brand, microplastic-free salt, gluten-free food and more.



Recycled plastic flower pots made by the recycling facility in Goesan Park

The value of healing and restoring has expanded to the [environmental sphere](#) and plastic reduction has become a priority now in business activities. iCOOP has developed alternatives or reduce plastics used in food packaging by replacing plastic trays, plastic handles with paper ones. PET Bottled water was changed into cartons and sugarcane-based vegetable lids. Moreover, unnecessary plastic and vinyl in packaging have been removed and used plastics are recycled in the facility of the Park.

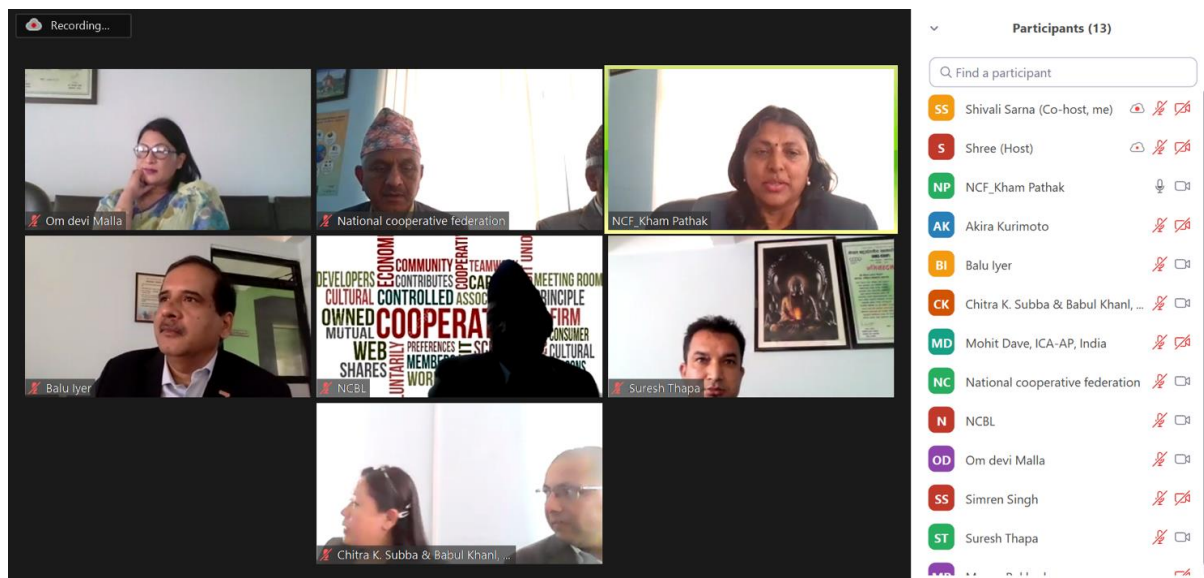


Water in cartons, Microplastic free salt and Healing Food product (from left)

For a bigger movement, consumer members set up a social society "Consumers' Climate Action" and resolved to urge consumers' actions to be incorporated into members' daily lifestyles in response to the climate crisis. These consumers aim to make a difference and extend their influence for a large-scale change. They believe sustainable consumption can drive innovation in production and bring changes in institutions and policies to benefit society.

As shared by Ms. Juhee Lee, International Team Manager, [iCOOP](#).

Consultation on Cooperative Identity with ICA Members in Nepal



The ICA-AP regional office continued with its series of consultations on Cooperative Identity. The consultation held online on 13th April with ICA members in Nepal discussed how the ICA Statement on Cooperative Identity (SCI) guides their day-to-day operations and how they put the cooperative principles into practice, and what progress or the lack thereof had been achieved as a result. Ms. Om Devi Malla, ICA Global Board member and member of the Congress Advisory Committee, and Prof. Akira Kurimoto, member of the ICA Principles Committee and Chair of ICA-AP Research Committee also joined to advise and guide the discussions.

Why Co-operative Identity Matters Now

- We witness the growing inequality, political and social divides, while we are threatened by the consequences of climate change and rampant pandemics. To succeed overcoming these challenges, we desperately need the co-operation and solidarity among people.
- In such a difficult time, we have to address such global issues relying on our basics, namely Co-operative Identity, crystalized in the ICA Statement on Co-operative Identity, agreed as the greatest common factor among worldwide co-operators in 1995.
- The ICA Statement was included in the UN Co-operative Guidelines (2001) and the ILO Recommendation 193 on Promotion of Co-operatives (2002).
- The ICA Principles Committee published the Guidance Notes of Co-operative Principles in 2015 to help understanding and practicing principles.

In Nepal, COVID-19 has put both lives and livelihood at risk. The National Cooperative Federation of Nepal (NCF) appealed to cooperatives at all levels to provide digital services to their members wherever possible to maintain social distance guidelines. The NCF has created a Corona Prevention Fund to support the Corona Control Cooperative Center and the Coronavirus Infection, Prevention, Control and Treatment Fund established by the Federal Government.

Nepal Agriculture Cooperative Central Federation Limited (NACCFL), an umbrella organization of agricultural cooperatives, has been involved in the marketing of vegetables produced in rural

areas. Before this pandemic, NACCFL had three outlets that were selling only non-perishable products (pulses, cereals, different flour, honey, butter, fruits etc.). Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, NACCFL has also initiated to market the vegetables. With the support of its member organizations, NACCFL has been selling fresh vegetable at 11 places in Kathmandu valley. Under the slogan “rural products in urban areas”, NACCFL is working in the front line trying to promote cooperative to cooperative (C2C) business.

Cooperatives are also providing ambulance services to COVID-19 infected patients and free PPEs to security personals in different provinces. Additionally, Nepal Federation of Savings and Credit Cooperative Union Ltd. (NEFSCUN), Nepal Multipurpose Central Cooperative Union Ltd. (NEMCCU), National Cooperative Bank Ltd. (NCBL), including other central and district level cooperative unions offered service delivery and support to their members. Members believe that if cooperatives exemplify values and principles in their operation and in projecting their brand, they can attract more and more young people into membership.

Cooperatives in Nepal function with the guiding philosophy of group principle, self-help development and institutionalization of networks at the grassroots level. Many financial cooperatives are reducing their interest rates to help members manage their finances during the pandemic. However, the services they offer are vulnerable. Withdrawal rates are high, and a significant number of small financial cooperatives are at risk because of the financial disparity. Financial cooperatives that do not offer online service platforms or ATMs are providing door-to-door services to members who need quick access to funds and are also offering more flexible terms for loans.

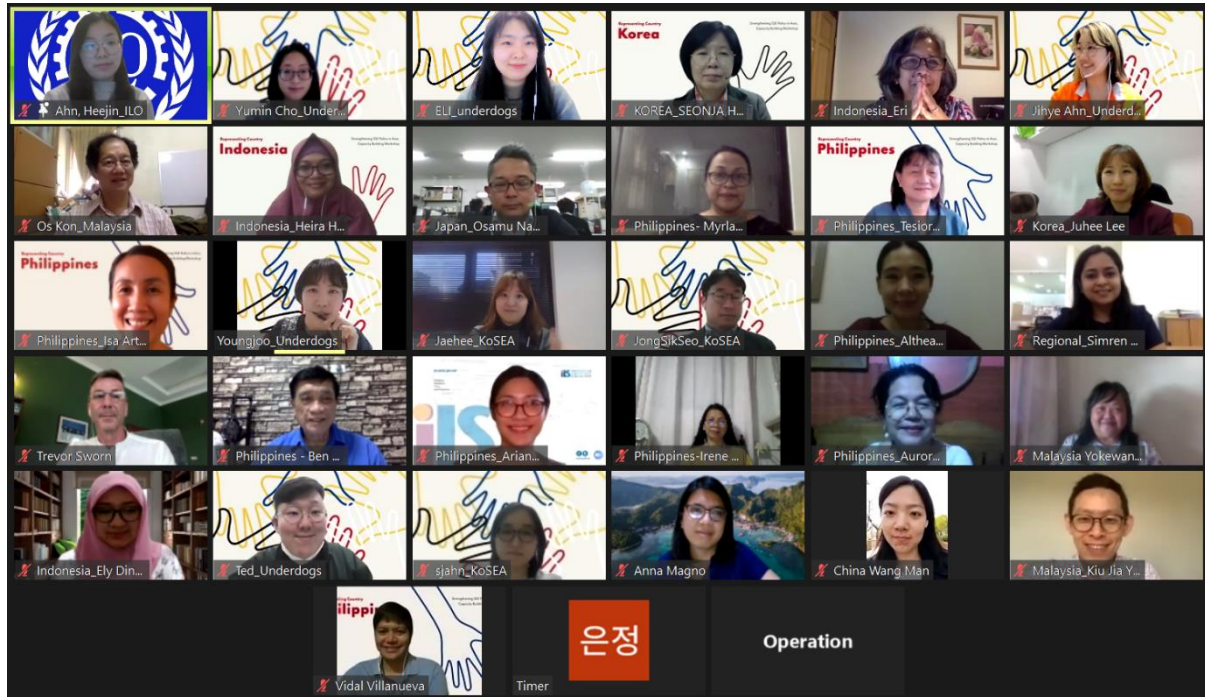
Nepal’s cooperative legislation is perceived well by the movement. The Cooperative Act, 2017 was made in consultation with the cooperative federations. Chapter 13 of the Act includes certain concessions and benefits provided to cooperatives and Section 2 of the act refers to the ICA principles of cooperative identity. However, provisions should be there to advance the cooperative model through the principle of self-regulation and not punishment. The Act needs to be amended to include social cooperatives as well.

Lastly, cooperative identity in Nepal is deemed to be not always apparent in practical application, for instance, in the business practices of cooperatives. They work for socio-economic development with the strong policy of being non-political and unbiased with no discrimination of any kind on religion, caste, and gender basis. Evidence suggests that the emphasis on “selling” cooperative products and services (eg. loans) and the accompanying benefits has led to members thinking of themselves more as borrowers rather than as responsible owners. If cooperatives follow the identity statement which emphasizes on “centrality of membership,” they can protect their membership in general and the most vulnerable among them, in particular.

The consultation was very 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 shown the relevance of the cooperative model. It has opened new areas for cooperatives to venture into, in service of existing members, and to attract new members. The input provided by members will be presented to the World Cooperative Congress and will be used to develop a plan of action.

ICA-AP Updates

Capacity Building Workshop on Strengthening Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) Policy in Asia



The International Labour Organisation (ILO), Ministry of Employment and Labour of the Republic of Korea (MoEL), Korea Social Enterprise Promotion Agency (KoSEA), and Underdogs organized the capacity building workshop on Strengthening Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) Policy in Asia from 29th – 31st March 2021. The workshop was held virtually as part of the second component of the first phase project on Strengthening SSE Policy in Asia (2019-2021) by the ILO and MoEL. The first component which concluded in 2020 comprised a research study to map SSE organisations in six Asian countries- China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, and South Korea.

The main objectives of the workshop were to raise awareness about the role of cooperatives and wider SSE in realising inclusive and sustainable development, in the post-COVID-19 recovery and beyond; and to promote dialogue among constituents and key SSE stakeholders and increase their capacity in developing and strengthening SSE policies.

The three-day workshop focused on strategies and tools to promote the transition from the informal to the formal economy, decent work in the rural economy, and SSE organisations' responses to the COVID-19 crisis and their role in the post-pandemic recovery. On the last day, participants engaged in an action planning exercise, where representatives from the six countries came together in national groups to develop concrete action plans on SSE tailored to their specific national contexts. The summary report of the workshop by the ILO can be accessed [here](#).

Participants in the workshop were representatives of employers, workers, governments, practitioners and leaders in the SSE movement, and researchers from six countries included in the first phase of the project. ICA-AP Regional Director Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer and Programme Officer Ms. Simren Singh

were joined in the workshop by Mr. Osamu Nakano from Japan Workers' Co-operative Union (JWCU) and Japan Co-operative Alliance (JCA), Japan; Ms. Juhee Lee from iCOOP, South Korea; Ms. Wang Man from the All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives (AFSMC), China; and Ms. Heira Hardiyanti from the Institute for Indonesian Cooperative Development Studies, Indonesia.

The second phase of the project on Strengthening SSE Policy in Asia will be launched in Thailand, Vietnam, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, and Cambodia later this year, according to the ILO.

Webinar: Opportunities for Cooperatives in Educational Institutions Post COVID-19



It was the first webinar from the ICEI webinar series this year. Over 70 people from different countries in Asia and Pacific participated in the webinar.

Dato Kamarudin Ismail, Deputy President of ANGKASA and ICA Global Board Member delivered the inaugural address. He noted that cooperatives have shown resilience during the pandemic and with changing times cooperatives need to adopt innovative and creative ways of doing business. He said that school cooperatives are a good way of reaching youth from an early age. School cooperative is a model that allows youth engagement, promotion of cooperative entrepreneurship, and involvement of young people in the cooperative movement. He congratulated the winners of the short film competition organised by the ICEI.

The three winning films of the short film competition organised by the ICEI late last year were screened. The winners were awarded prize money of USD 950, sponsored by ANGKASA. The first prize was won by students from Japan and the second and third prizes were won by students from Malaysia. The winning films can be viewed [here](#).

Dr. C. Pitchai, Professor and Head of Department of Cooperation, School of Management Studies, the Gandhigram Rural Institute (Deemed to be University), Gandhigram, India, noted that the sales of most of the university cooperatives in India were affected due to COVID-19 as university campuses were closed. The business in cooperatives in medical colleges such as that of [Madurai Medical College Students Cooperative](#) was relatively better as these cooperatives supply medical books and instruments which are not readily available in the market. He noted, “necessity is the mother of all inventions.” Due to COVID-19, demand for home delivery of essential supplies, medicines, food and water increased. Therefore, university cooperatives that earlier supplied stationery items only, have diversified their business. He shared the example of [Mangalore University Cooperative Society](#) which started accepting orders over the phone and commenced home delivery of groceries both for faculty

and staff living on the campus and for people within a radius of 1-2 km from the campus. The demand for their door-to-door grocery services increased during the pandemic and the cooperative plans to continue with these services and start online orders with digital payment methods.

Ms. Anahita Eslahpazir CEO, Rah – E – Roshd Cooperative Education Complex (RCEC), Iran said that one of the good things that have happened during the pandemic is that the state of public education has improved as students have relatively more access to education through distance or online classes. She said through technology, there is scope to provide education to those from deprived and low-income background as investment cost for infrastructure has reduced. Schools and educational institutions already have well-developed educational materials which can be used to teach children from poor and marginalised backgrounds. People involved in cooperatives have had special training in how to start a cooperative business, management strategies, practical experience in cooperation and collaboration. These experiences can be shared internationally as a way of providing universal education on cooperatives. RCEC conducts a Coop Talk program to engage in dialogues/ conversations on cooperatives at the international level. Usually held in-person, the pandemic provides an opportunity for such experience and knowledge sharing programmes to virtually reach out to many with a reduced cost. Cyberspace and digital platforms also allow cooperatives to showcase the model and present its advantages to those who are unaware of cooperatives.

Mr. Ichiro Nakamori, MD and CEO, National Federation of University Co-operative Associations (NFUCA), Japan and Vice-Chairperson of the ICEI; accompanied by Mr. Ryota Ishida Student Committee Member, NFUCA Japan shared the [survey results](#), conducted by NFUCA with students affected by the pandemic due to closure of university campuses in 2020. The results show that students are facing three types of crises of - livelihood, learning and community. The crisis of learning is being addressed through online and/or hybrid classes. Mr. Nakamori noted that in the situation where there are no students on campuses, managing university cooperatives can be very challenging. However, as a consumer cooperative whose mission is to create a better life for its members, they are committed to supporting students. Mr. Ishida shared how the Student Committee is using creative methods to address the crisis of learning and community among students. To ease new students' anxiety about university life and not having friends, they are organising online recreational activities where students can interact with each other and learn about the university and/or its courses from senior and fellow students. To address the crisis of livelihoods, student cooperatives in Japanese universities such as the [Ritsumeikan Co-op](#) is continuing to provide healthy meals to students thereby ensuring income opportunities for student members of the cooperative.

Prof. Dr. Wan Mohtar Wan Yusoff Chair, [Koperasi UNIKEB Berhad Malaysia](#) emphasised the importance of continued education on values of cooperation in adult life. He said that cooperative values and the meaning of being a true cooperator should be taught to people from an early age and adults should constantly self-educate and self-evaluate themselves. He noted that the pandemic has offered an opportunity to cooperators to constantly educate themselves by reflecting on the five M's of management. These are: 1) the purpose of a human being is to serve a larger community so cooperatives should be committed to serving their community 2) cooperatives should be aware of the sources and flow of their money (income) 3) cooperatives should try to make the best use of locally available resources/ materials 4) cooperatives should adopt indigenous methods and 5) cooperatives should adopt and update data management methods. He said informal education is as important as formal education and shared an example of a mentor-mentee network in cooperatives that can help guide and educate younger cooperators about the importance of cooperative principles and values.

Briefly, the guest speakers suggested:

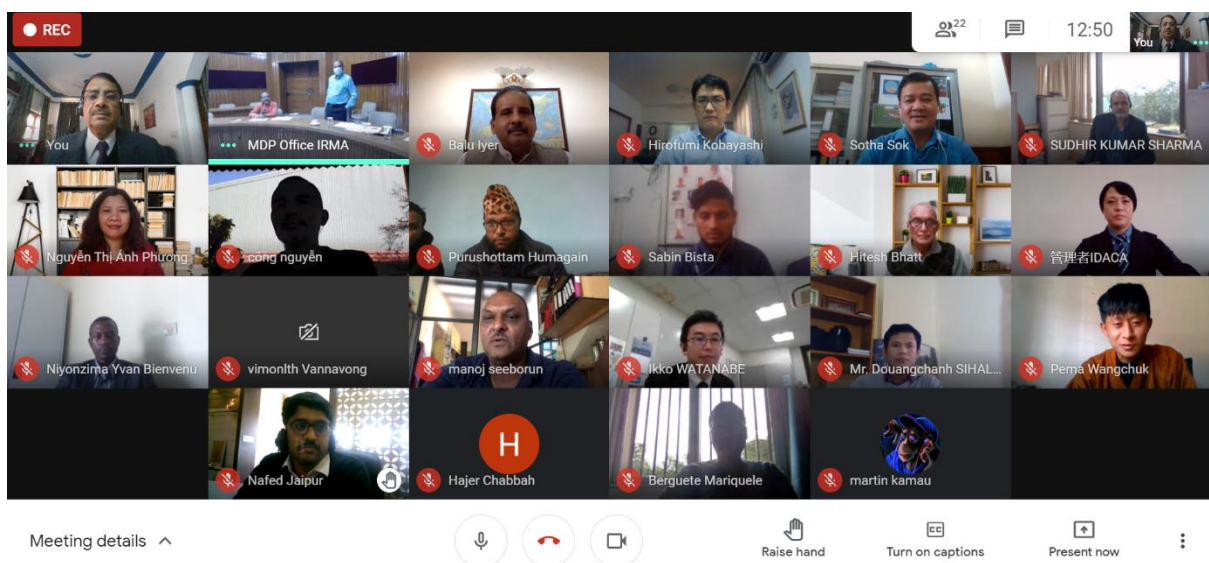
1. Diversification of business activities as per the needs of members and local customers like the supply of essential groceries, medicines, drinking water.
2. Providing door-to-door services and continuing business digitally.
3. Engaging in conversations/dialogues on cooperatives for exchange of information and best practices at national and international level.
4. Undertaking creative and recreational activities online. and
5. Orienting students online who cannot visit school/ university campuses.
6. Establishing mentor-mentee networks in cooperatives.
7. Introducing values of cooperation from an early age through informal educational methods.
8. Using digital technology and hybrid methods for education, training and transfer of knowledge.

Dr. Noraini Mohammad, General Manager of International Division, ANGKASA moderated the discussions which were followed by a brief Q&A session.

Dr. Mohd Azlan Yahya, ICEI Chairperson and Vice-President of ANGKASA thanked Dato Kamarudin Ismail, the distinguished guest speakers, ICEI Secretariat, and the participants for attending the webinar. Dr. Azlan informed the speakers and participants that it was the first webinar organised by the ICEI in 2021 and invited them to participate in the forthcoming webinars.

The webinar recording can be viewed [here](#).

ICA-MAFF Japan Capacity Building Project



The ICA and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) Government of Japan, Tokyo are implementing the **“Capacity Building Project for Farmers’ Organizations to Support the Development of Food Value Chain in Asia and Africa in FY-2020”** from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.

Updates from the Training Programme

As part of it, the training course on **“Strengthening Management and Development of Agricultural Cooperatives and Farmers’ Organizations in Asia and Africa-2020”** was organized online by ICA-AP in February and March 2021. It aimed to build capacities of leaders of the farmers’ organizations like agricultural cooperatives, who are expected to play central roles in the promotion of agricultural

cooperatives and the strengthening of organization and business management. This, in turn, enhances the competitiveness of agricultural products and income leading to the sustainable development of agricultural production.

The training was conducted by the ICA-AP in collaboration with the Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA), India and the Institute for the Development of Agricultural Cooperation in Asia (IDACA), Japan. The first part of the two-part training was held from 11th February to 02nd March. It was inaugurated by Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP who was joined by Mr. Ikko Watanabe, First Secretary, Embassy of Japan in India, Mr Hirofumi Kobayashi, Executive Director, IDACA, Mr. S.N. Biswas, Director of IRMA, Prof. Hitesh Bhatt, former Director of IRMA, Prof. Sudhir Sinha, MDP Chair, IRMA, Prof. Nakul Parameswar, Coordinator from IRMA and Mr A.K. Taneja, Project Coordinator, ICA-AP in the opening ceremony. There were 15 participants from Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, India, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Tunisia, and Vietnam. They attended technical sessions and learnt the experience of agricultural & dairy cooperatives in India.

The Part-II of the training was inaugurated on 11th March by Mr. Hirofumi Kobayashi, Executive Director, IDACA. He was joined by Mr. Taneja, concerned IDACA staff members, Mr. Usui Takeshi, Programme Coordinator for this part from IDACA and all the participants. The participants learned about the experience of agricultural cooperatives in Japan.

The training programme concluded with a closing ceremony held online on 30th March. The speakers - Mr. Kondo Takayoshi, Deputy Director of Emerging Economies Group, Bilateral Affairs Division, MAFF, Mr. Iyer, and Mr. Kobayashi addressed the participants. Mr. Baba Toshihiko, Sr. Executive Director, JA-Zenchu, shared his address through a pre-recorded video. Ms. Chabbah Hajer, a participant from Tunisia, presented the vote of thanks. Participation certificates were also distributed online by the Executive Director of IDACA to each participant.

Follow-up with Nepal and Bhutan

As part of the project, ICA-AP and IDACA, Japan conducted two follow-up assessments of actions plans implemented by the training participants. The first involves a questionnaire for participants and the second a follow-up visit. The questionnaire was sent to 66 participants from 25 countries in Asia (14) and Africa (10). The two countries chosen for follow-up visit were Bhutan and Nepal. Unfortunately, because of the COVID-19 imposed restrictions, the team was unable to travel and have in-person discussions and site visits. As with the training course, the follow-up process was moved online.

The follow-up for Bhutan and Nepal consisted of an assessment of the completed questionnaire and an online meeting. The online meeting included a video presentation by the host organization, a PowerPoint presentation of the Action Plan by participants, and a discussion with ICA and IDACA staff.



The online meeting with Bhutan included a video presentation of the cooperative sector. 51.1% of the population (total 0.76 million) is engaged in farming. Renewable and Natural Resources contributes to 17% of GDP, making it a driving sector of the GDP. Farmer Groups (FGs) and cooperatives are not alien to Bhutan as working together (religious and social) has been a part of the social fabric. The Department of Agricultural Marketing and Cooperatives (DAMC) within the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests plays a key role in developing, coordinating and promoting cooperatives. Starting with 18 FGs and 5 cooperatives in 2010, there are now 611 registered FGs and 94 cooperatives.

Type	RNR			Non RNR
	Agriculture	Livestock	Forestry	
Cooperatives	17	58	4	15
Farmer Groups	358	204	43	6

	Female	Male	Total
Cooperatives	1725	1982	3707
Farmer groups	6143	5594	11737

The Co-operatives (Amendment) Act of Bhutan (2009) facilitates the development of cooperatives as a sustainable pillar of growth within the private sector. It directs the Royal Government of Bhutan to promote cooperatives for the well-being of members and communities. The Act provides for five types of cooperatives i.e., farmers' group, primary cooperatives, federation of cooperatives, union of cooperatives and special types of cooperatives. The legal environment of Bhutan is quite "cooperative friendly" as it provides a conducive environment to people to form cooperatives and work towards the realization of their common aspiration to become economically self-reliant.

Ms. Sonam Lhaki Zam and Ms. Tshering Wangmo presented the action plan implementation. Both were part of the training course 'Fostering Leaders for Management and Development of Agricultural Cooperatives in Asia' in FY-2018 and FY-2019 respectively.

Ms. Zam's action plan was to 'Promote and strengthen additional saving and credit cooperatives in Western Bhutan'. This was to be done by sensitizing farmers on the importance and benefits of saving

and credit (increase income and uplift socio-economic status) and to promote and strengthen cooperatives by building their capacity to carry out saving and credit functions. 11 savings and credit groups were formed and registered in Western Bhutan from 2019 to date. The groups were provided training on saving in groups and maintaining a good book of accounts. Through group savings the members can take care of their immediate needs (children’s education, illness and death); access credit services; use groups savings for recreational activities; and procure farming equipment/machines for the groups. Ms. Sonam was able to share her experience with colleagues, relate ideas and information to FGs/Coops in Bhutan (packaging/grading/marketing strategies), and share success stories of credit cooperatives in Thailand and Japan.



Ms. Wangmo’s action plan was to ‘Introduce the system of increasing share capital among the members of cooperatives in Bhutan to ensure sound management of share capital; improve accounting system in cooperatives and improve governance’. Ms. Wangmo has updated the information in the modules and associated awareness presentations relating to group formation and mobilization, bookkeeping, good governance and leadership. The DAMC is collaborating with the Royal Monetary Authority of Bhutan towards developing guidelines for savings and credit in cooperatives and farmer groups. Due to the covid-19 pandemic planned activities have not taken place. So far, an awareness programme and three days of training on bookkeeping have been conducted.

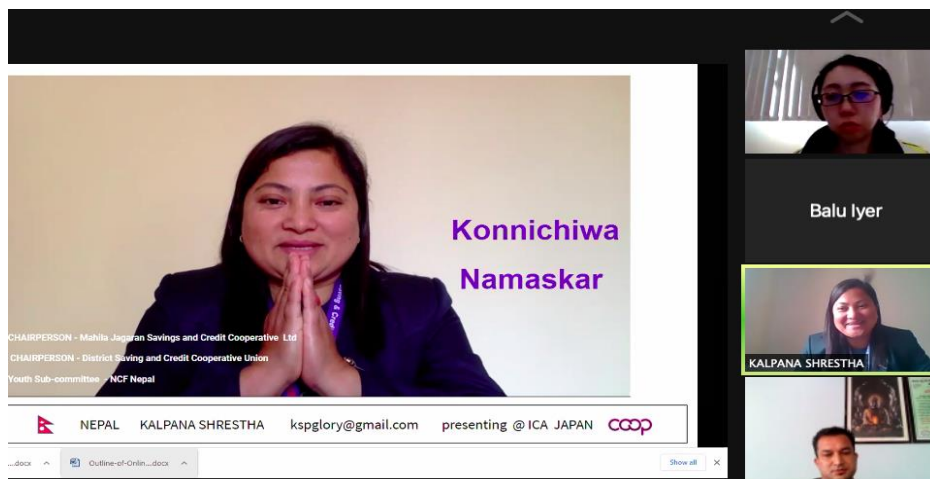


The Constitution of Nepal (2015) recognizes cooperatives as an important base of the national economy. It stipulates that the economic objective of the state shall be to achieve sustainable economic development, while achieving rapid economic growth, by way of maximum mobilization of the available means and resources through participation and development of public, private and cooperatives. Cooperatives are present across diverse sectors including agricultural, financial and savings, consumer, multipurpose, electricity and health, among others. The Cooperative Act (2017) is

a general law for all types of mutual cooperatives. The cooperative movement is focused on poverty alleviation while promoting women’s participation in cooperatives in membership and leadership roles. As of 2019, ICA members represented 34,837 cooperatives in Nepal with 6.5 million members and 68,400 employees. The current covid-19 pandemic has reduced the migration of youth to foreign countries and the lack of jobs in urban centres has forced them to go back to their villages. This has increased the interest in agricultural cooperatives.



Ms. Kalpana Shreshta, Mr. Prem Prasad Jaisi and Mr. Suresh Thapa presented the status of their action plan implementation. Prem Prasad and Suresh Thapa were part of ‘Fostering Leaders for Management and Development of Agricultural Cooperatives in Asia’ in FY-2018 and FY-2019 respectively, while Kalpana Shreshta was part of the ‘Empowering Women in Business and Management of Agricultural Coops’ in FY 2019.



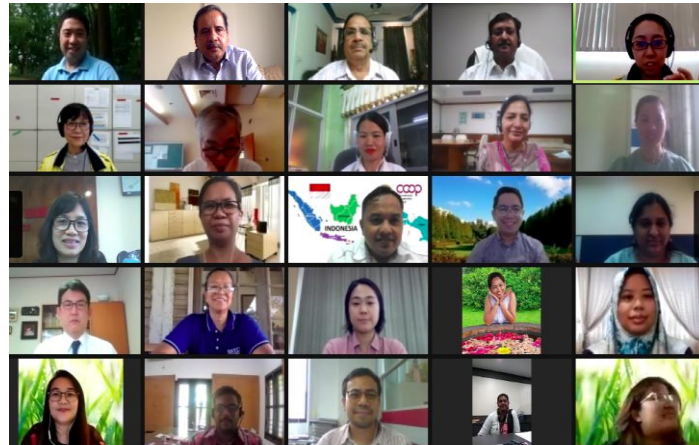
Ms. Shreshta’s action plan was to ‘Create a Direct Market Platform of Agricultural Products’ which would help increase profit from direct sales and promote the growth of local speciality products. Her action plan has been put in place and during the current covid times, the emphasis has been on door-to-door delivery.

Mr. Jaisi’s action plan was on ‘Market intervention to ensure farmers are connected directly to markets.’ His plan was implemented in the Banke area where he formed a farmers group, engage the local government to provide funds, and put in place collective contracts. Along with regular farming, the interventions took place in dairy and riverbed farming. At the policy level, efforts are underway to reduce the fragmentation of land.

Mr. Thapa's action plan was on 'Revitalization of coop dairy business in Panauti municipality for the supply chain management.' The plan is to set up five dairy cooperatives with around 150 direct participants and 500 members being benefited. Right when the implementation was to start, the pandemic hit, delaying the start. However, Mr. Thapa has been in touch online with members, local government, and stakeholders to keep the conversation going.

Presentations on Best Practices

A new intervention this time was the presentation of best practices. From among the filled-up questionnaires, the team from ICA-AP and IDACA identified three best practices from each of the training programmes: 1) Fostering Leaders, 2) Food Value Chain and 3) Women leaders.



On 13th April, the discussion was with three participants from Ghana, Morocco, and Kyrgyzstan who attended the 'Fostering Leaders for Management and Development of Agricultural Cooperatives' course. 14th April was devoted to three participants from Indonesia, Myanmar, and Vietnam who attended the 'Empowering Women in Business and Management of Agricultural Cooperatives' course. On 15th April, three participants from India and the Philippines, who attended 'Fostering Coordinators to Build Food Value Chain' in FY-2019 and 'Strengthening of Marketing through Improvement of Quality Produce and Expansion of Marketing Channels' in FY2020.

The online discussion involved the presentation of best practices and sharing opinion on the training course by member organizations.

Member Updates

New ICA Member from Philippines



The [Network Consolidated Cooperative Bank](#) (NCCB) from the **Philippines** joined ICA in April. NCCB was formed through the merger of six cooperative banks - the Cooperative Bank of Agusan del Sur, Cooperative Bank of Camarines Norte, Cooperative Bank of Leyte, Capiz Settlers Cooperative Rural Bank, Sorsogon Provincial Cooperative Bank, and the Southern Leyte Cooperative Bank, with support from the National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO).

With 907,599 individual members and 175 active member societies, the bank provides services such as deposit-taking, loans and trade finance for primary members and other clients. It has joined the ICA to be part of the global cooperative movement and contribute to the ICA Asia-Pacific Banking Committee to exchange knowledge with other banking or financial cooperatives.

We now have **110 members from 31 countries** of the Asia and Pacific region.

Members' Response to COVID-19 Pandemic



It has been more than a year of fighting the deadly Coronavirus. India recently witnessed a huge surge in COVID-19 cases with the second wave of infection making the country worst affected in the world.

India is facing an acute shortage of oxygen supply for COVID-19 affected patients and the healthcare system difficulties in managing the more than 3 lakh cases daily. In this dire situation, cooperatives in India have come forward to support the healthcare system.

IFFCO is Building Oxygen Plants

The Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative (IFFCO) is spending Rs 30 crore (£2.9m) to build four plants in Kalol (Gujarat), Aonla and Phulpur (Uttar Pradesh) and at Paradeep (Odisha) for oxygen supply to the health sector for free. Dr. US Awasthi, Managing Director, IFFCO said that the coop will fill up the oxygen cylinders free of cost for hospitals given they get own cylinders for a refill. IFFCO will also provide oxygen cylinders with a security deposit to avoid hoarding of oxygen. More information can be found [here](#).

NCDC Provides Support to Boost Health Infrastructure

The National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) has pledged credit support of Rs 10,000 crore (£962m) to cooperatives. Mr. Sundeep Nayak, Managing Director, NCDC said, “Under the Ayushman Sahakar scheme, NCDC stands committed to lend Rs 10,000 crore [£962m] to cooperatives either to set up new healthcare facilities or to upgrade the existing ones.”

The scheme was launched by the NCDC last October in response to the pandemic, to upgrade India’s health infrastructure. It is looking to increase the number of beds in the country’s 51 cooperative hospitals – with the current tally standing at 5,000. More information can be found [here](#).

Information Sources: Coop News and Outlook India

JCCU Celebrates its 70th Anniversary



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Consumer coops in Japan were established by intellectuals in the Meiji era (1868-1912) and developed under the liberal movement. However, these Consumer coops were devastated during the Pacific War, and were re-established and newly organized in the post-war reconstruction period. In 1948, the Consumers’ Livelihood Cooperative Society Law was enacted and enforced, and the Japanese Consumers’ Co-operative Union (JCCU) was established in 1951.

JCCU launched its first CO-OP Brand Product, “CO-OP Butter,” to break through manufacturer-controlled pricing, in 1960. This is the first private brand product in Japan. In 1970, the “Fukushima Conclusion” was adopted at the JCCU’s 20th General Assembly, which emphasized the importance of developing member-centred activities, learning from the failure of the rapid growth strategy by rushing to open new stores rather than establishing member organizations. This led to many consumer co-ops developing member-centred activities in the joint purchasing system and supporting the upsurge of the co-op movement. In the 1980s, JCCU stepped up efforts to develop CO-OP products and established its product policy which formally focused on quality control and links CO-OP products with member activities. In the 2000s, in the face of severe incidents of CO-OP products, JCCU formulated the "Plan to Rebuild the Quality Assurance System for Co-op Brand Products". Currently, JCCU supplies about 4,000 CO-OP products and the sales including other businesses achieved, amount to 440 billion JPY (4.3billion USD) in the 2020 fiscal year.

In addition to these product businesses, JCCU has also been involved in peace movements such as Peace Action in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and fundraising campaigns for UNICEF as activities of coop

members. In 1988, JCCU was awarded the title of "Peace Messenger" by the United Nations for its contribution to peacebuilding and international friendship.

In 2017, JCCU launched a new initiative to promote ethical consumption, and the "Co-op Action Plan for SDGs" was adopted at the 68th JCCU General Assembly to take a new step toward 2030. JCCU will promote the renovation of the home delivery business and digital transformation utilizing ICT to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and further improving the efficiency of the businesses.

JCCU has had a continuous working relationship with the ICA Asia-Pacific since the opening of the ICA's Regional Office and Education Center in 1960. JCCU has collaborated with ICA Asia-Pacific in the work of the Asia Pacific Sub-Committee and the Committee on Consumer Cooperation since their beginning, and later the Youth and Women's Committee. In addition, JCCU has been supporting ICA Regional Office with staffing over the past quarter-century and working together with the ICA members and RO staff.

In commemoration of the 70th anniversary, JCCU has created a commemorative logo mark expressing our feelings on the 70th anniversary under the themes of "Appreciation", "Inheritance" and "Development", and registered 30th July as the "Consumers Co-operative Day", the commemorative day of consumer cooperatives in Japan. JCCU is also preparing to publish the book on the history of Japanese consumer cooperatives, open the special page on the JCCU website and hold a commemorative lecture. A short video on this can be watched [here](#).

ANGKASA Celebrates 50th Anniversary



Golden Jubilee Celebration 2021 "Championing Cooperative Aspiration" CSR COOPCARE 1Million Tree Project

The Malaysian National Cooperative Movement (ANGKASA) is the apex body recognized by the government to represent the Malaysian cooperative movement at the national and international

levels. ANGKASA was established through consensus achieved at the 2nd Malaysian Cooperative Congress and was officially registered on 12th May 1971.

ANGKASA's core service is the Salary Deduction System - a system to organize automated mandatory repayments of loans, subscriptions, or insurance premium, provided to cooperative members, clubs, and mutual organizations among others. It is a trusted system that is beneficial to members as it ensures very minimal non-performing loans and secures the repayments of borrowers. ANGKASA implements business transformation and cooperative entrepreneurship programmes in high impact business sectors such as Banking and Finance, Agriculture and Agro-based Industry, Wholesale and Retail, Tourism, Personal and Health Care, Plantation, Real Estate and Construction Industry, Innovation and Technology and Community Development.

As of June 2020, ANGKASA represents 14,668 cooperatives nationwide with an individual membership of about 6.1 million people. As of December 2019, it recorded a share capital of RM15.4billion, total assets of RM146.8billion and a turnover of RM45.8billion.

ANGKASA became a member of the ICA in April 1972. Even before ANGKASA as an organization became a member, Malaysia was already among the first member countries within the ICA Asia and Pacific (ICA-AP). ANGKASA not only actively participates in ICA's activities but also contributes to policymaking by having elected representatives in the ICA Global Board, the ICA-AP Regional Board as well as the global and regional sectoral committees of the ICA. Each year, ANGKASA also hosts and co-organises numerous programmes of ICA Global and ICA-AP including strategic events like the ICA-AP Regional Assembly in 1996, the Asia Pacific Ministers' Conference in 2007, the 1st Asia Pacific Registrars' Conference in 2013, the ICA Global Conference and General Assembly 2017, and the Global Youth Forum in 2020.

In 2012, ANGKASA offered Malaysia to host the International Cooperative Alliance – Asia Pacific Malaysia Business Office (MBO) which has strategic objectives to increase business interactions and exchanges between cooperatives and to promote cooperative to cooperative (C-2-C) trade in the region. It is registered as a society under the name ICA-AP Malaysia Branch but is widely known as the MBO.

This year, ANGKASA is celebrating its 50th anniversary which is a big milestone for the Malaysian cooperative movement. The momentous Golden Jubilee achievement is being celebrated with a cooperative-identity-centric theme; "Championing Cooperative Aspiration". A line of events has been planned under the flagship of CSR COOPCARE throughout the year. COOPCARE is an ongoing 'community care' and 'an environmental conservation' programme to create awareness in line with achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Malaysian Government through the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources has launched 'Our Trees, Our Life' Campaign in January 2021 to make Malaysia a green nation. The Making Malaysia Green Program is aimed to increase awareness on the importance of green cover areas and forests for the well-being and better quality of life as well as efforts to improve Malaysia's ecosystem and biodiversity. This campaign aims to plant 100 million trees in five years from 2021 to 2025. Participating in this programme, ANGKASA has launched the CSR COOPCARE 1Million Trees project. The project is the cooperative movement's commitment to integrating SDG13 – Climate Action and SDG 15 – Life on Land in support of UN's Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021 – 2030 as part of ANGKASA's Golden Jubilee initiative.

On 16th March 2021, ANGKASA and the National University of Malaysia (UKM) have agreed to collaborate in developing the Training of Trainers (ToT) module to be implemented at university

cooperatives, community cooperatives and school cooperatives across Malaysia to provide basic education on types, physiology, and concept of crops as well as tree care and maintenance methods. This collaboration also includes partnering with the State of Selangor Forestry Department to implement tree plantation in 20 acres of degraded forest area to address the problem of carbon emissions that are increasing every year and as a restoration activity for cooperative members. Community members, private businesses and government agencies may also participate through 'Adopt A Tree' sponsorship packages which will be offered online.

ANGKASA aims to implement more community engagement programmes to increase community and agency's involvement through cooperatives to plant a million trees. Through this project, cooperative movement in Malaysia will assist the government's efforts in preserving the environment whereby the government aims to increase at least 20% of terrestrial and inland water forest area in Malaysia within 10 years. ANGKASA is committed to continuing the project even when its targeted 1million trees have been planted. Therefore, the cooperative movement's effort to protect, preserve and value the country's biodiversity will be perennial.

Mr. Alireza Banaeifar, Vice-Chairperson, ICYC Talks about Youth in Cooperatives



Mr. Alireza Banaeifar is the International Affairs Manager at Iran Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC) and the Vice-Chairperson of the International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific Committee on Youth Cooperation (ICYC).

Having an academic background in Business Administration, he believes that a cooperative economy is most effective and sustainable due to its attention to the need of the society and because of the solidarity among its members. He spoke to the Nepal Press about the role of youth in cooperatives.

Read the full conversation [here](#).

Obituary



Dr. Gopal N. Saxena, ex-Chairperson of the ICA-AP Committee on Cooperative Research

We are saddened with the demise of Dr. Gopal N. Saxena, ex-Chairperson of the ICA-AP Committee on Cooperative Research has passed away on 25th April in Delhi. Our heartfelt condolences to his family and friends!

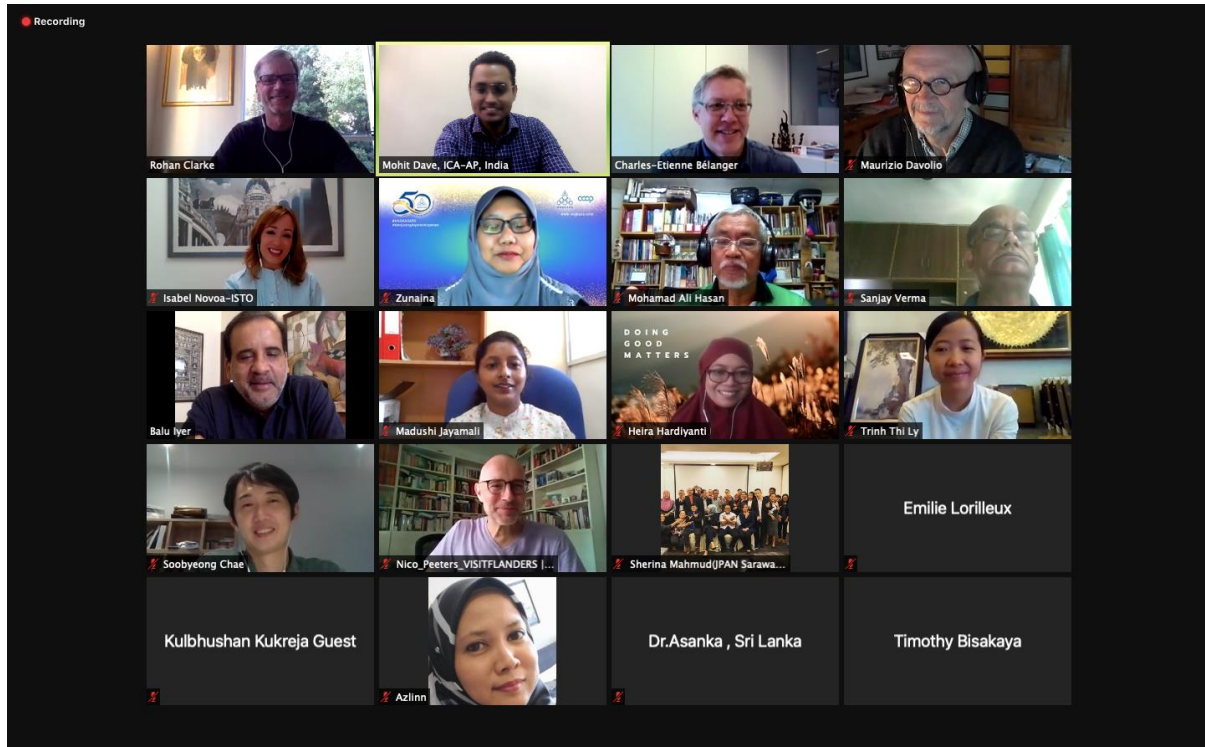
Dr. Saxena joined India's largest farmers' cooperative, IFFCO as a junior statistician and retired as Director of Cooperative Development after a career spanning 43 years. He was closely associated with the ICA-AP Research Committee for over a decade until he retired in 2016. He was unanimously elected as the Chairperson of the Committee at the 2008 and 2012 Research Conferences held in Hanoi and Kobe, respectively.

He would often say that research helps to solve human problems! His dedication and commitment have been an integral part of the committee's success and growth. He was part of several important initiatives such as annual research conferences and young researcher awards. A knowledgeable person about cooperative laws and acts, cooperators from different sectors would reach out to him to seek clarity on complicated issues.

Rest in peace, Dr. Saxena! You will be dearly missed!

ICA-EU Updates

Webinar: Cooperative Tourism and the Covid-19 crisis

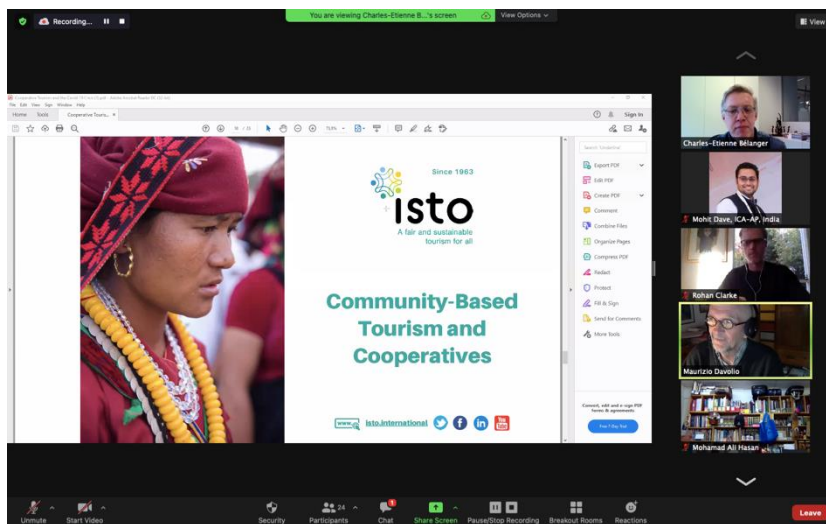


ICA-AP and the ICA-EU Partnership in collaboration with International Social Tourism Organisation (ISTO) and Wayfairer.coop organized a webinar on "Cooperative Tourism and the Covid-19 crisis – Sustainable Recovery Measures to Support the Tourism Sector in the Asia-Pacific" on 29th April 2021.

The webinar brought together 27 participants from 10 countries to identify and evaluate the cooperative advantage in promoting the interests and scope of the tourism industry.

Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP welcomed the participants and shared his opening remarks. As the entire tourism ecosystem experiences the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, reopening and rebuilding destinations requires a collaborative approach. Ongoing support to the travel and tourism economy needs to be supplemented with more coordinated efforts, utilizing this crisis as an opportunity to rethink tourism for the future. This includes the areas of digitalization, supporting the transition to low carbon, and promoting structural transformation with responsible, sustainable, and regenerative tourism.

Mr. Mohamad Ali Bin Hasan from ANGKASA, Malaysia shared how ANGKASA is contributing to the development of cooperatives in business and entrepreneurship through the tourism sector. Development of School Cooperative Tourism (PKS) and the branding CoopISTAC, creating a network of services and businesses for cooperative spa, hotel, homestay etc. were some of the activities discussed.



Ms. Isabel Novoa, Mr. Maurizio Davolio and Mr. Charles-E. Bélanger represented ISTO which brings together stakeholders from the social, sustainable, and solidarity tourism sectors from all over the world. They shared the economic significance of cooperative tourism in terms of regional cooperation, trade, MSME support, job creation, skills enhancement, innovation, and the development of ICT.

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. The main content is a slide titled "Wayfairer.coop" with the text "...where revenue is shared". The slide explains that with Wayfairer, the guest pays the same as on other platforms, but the booking fees are split 50% between operating costs and tourism projects. A diagram titled "REVENUE SHARING MODEL" shows "Where booking fees" being split into "50% WAYFAIRER.COOP Operating costs" and "50% WAYFAIRER FOUNDATION Tourism projects". On the right, a "Participants (27)" list is visible, showing names and status icons.

Mr. Rohan Clarke from the Wayfairer.coop, a regenerative tourism cooperative in Australia, presented how it builds community wealth when travellers book a holiday. It aims to help communities to realise the value of their tourism assets by returning capital earned from those assets to the community. The cooperative is owned by tourism boards, councils, and its employees.

Ms. Madushi Jayamali from the Cooperative Tourism Promotion Bureau, established by the National Co-operative Council of Sri Lanka (NCCSL) discussed how the Bureau is providing a new experience for the cooperative movement in Sri Lanka. The Bureau plans to launch cooperative development promotional activities in Sri Lanka as well as programmes for foreign cooperators and tourists providing them with innovative tourism experiences linked to the local cooperative movement.

Mr. Iyer in his closing remarks thanked all the participants for sharing their experiences. He stressed the importance of cooperative tourism which embraces cooperative principles of tourism development in destination management. Community-based tourism organizations have a close affinity with their host communities in rural settings and work together to derive the common economic interest of their members; most often working along cooperative lines. Such cooperatives have played an important role in national development and perceive cooperative tourism as an effective tool for socio-economic development, creating employment and job opportunities for local people, promoting local culture, preserving the environment, and earning foreign currency.

Coopedia: An Open-Source Knowledge Base for Cooperative Entrepreneurship

The graphic features the Coopedia logo, which consists of an orange circle with a green dot inside, followed by the text "coopedia knowledge base". Below the logo, it says "BUILDING A GLOBAL COMMUNITY AROUND COOPERATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP". On the right, a smartphone displays the Coopedia app interface, showing a welcome message and a search bar. At the bottom, there are logos for #coops4dev, COOP, and the European Union.

Coopedia Knowledge Base is a collaborative search engine listing resources (guides, videos, reports, and much more) on cooperative entrepreneurship.

It aims to give entrepreneurs worldwide the support and tools they need to set up cooperative businesses, and to provide learning and introduction to students and actors interested in the cooperative business model. It allows them to find various types of materials, in a variety of languages, based on their topics of interest.

Access to Coopedia [here](#)

Learn more about Coopedia [here](#)

The Coopedia Knowledge Base was launched on 8th September 2020 by Cooperatives Europe. The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and its regional offices have now started a global campaign on 21st April to expand the use of Coopedia Knowledge Base and invite interested organisations to install their own version of this innovative tool in their online platforms.

How can you get involved?

- Visit Coopedia and the new info page to get to know better about this innovative tool.
- Join us in the follow-up campaign on social media.
- Be part of the Coopedia community and become a Contributor! Share your resources on cooperative entrepreneurship in any language. Coopedia grows with collective power!
- If you are an organisation with a key interest in cooperative entrepreneurship, install Coopedia Knowledge Base on your own website! Discover all advantages you can gain in the communication material available in this toolkit. *Please get in touch with us if you want to learn more about what it would mean to install Coopedia.*

If you are interested in participating in this global campaign, read more about it [here](#) and use the [campaign toolkit](#) for hassle-free process.

Publications

Annual Activities Report 2020



We are glad to present the ICA-AP 2020 Annual Activities Report. ICA completed 60 years in the Asia and Pacific region in 2020. It was a challenging year with the COVID-19 pandemic affecting people

across the globe. The cooperative movement in the region supported governments with donations in cash and kind, provided assistance to their members and engaged with the community to promote social campaigns.

Due to the travel and movement restrictions, a lot of scheduled events got either postponed or cancelled and we adjusted to the new normal like everyone in the world. The regular office and the event shifted online. We are thankful to the cooperative movement in the region for being part of this journey. Read the full report here.

Country Reports on Status of Consumer Cooperatives in Asia and Pacific



The ICA-AP Committee on Consumer is studying the Status of Consumer Cooperatives in the region. It has released eight [country-specific reports](#) including India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. The study aims to collect information on the active consumer cooperatives in the Asia and Pacific region and prepare a status paper on the same for further action. The reports have been compiled based on the study visits, annual reports, information available from the published materials and websites, and the information provided by the apex bodies of consumer cooperatives in the respective countries/ cooperative organizations.

14th ICA-AP Research Conference Report



The ICA-AP Committee on Cooperative Research (CCR) in collaboration with the University of Newcastle (UoN) and with support from the ICA-EU Partnership (#Coops4Dev) and Young Scholars Initiative (YSI) had organized the 14th ICA-AP Cooperative Research Conference on “Cooperation among Cooperatives and Mutuals in the Asia-Pacific region” at the Faculty of Business and Law, the University of Newcastle, Australia in December 2019.

More than 100 participants from 12 countries viz. Australia (60), Fiji (1), India (19), Indonesia (2), Japan (2), Kiribati (2), South Korea (2), Malaysia (2), Nepal (4), New Zealand (4), Timore Leste (1) and United Kingdom (2) attended the conference. These included researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and students, who shared their experiences on issues related to cooperation among cooperatives and mutuals and developed new networks and partnerships around cooperative research and education.

The research sessions provided an opportunity for academia to present over 52 papers to the delegates. The presentations showcased the vast diversity of research on cooperatives in the Asia Pacific region.

The research proceedings have been published and are available [here](#).

Announcements

Asia Pacific Cooperative Youth Summit 3.0

The [International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific \(ICA-AP\)](#) in collaboration with the ICA-EU Partnership - [coops4dev](#), the [ICA-AP Committee on Youth Cooperation \(ICYC\)](#), and the ICA-Domus Trust have the pleasure to invite you all to the third edition of **Asia Pacific Cooperative Youth Summit (APCYS 3.0)**. This time, it will be a virtual event from **22nd June to 24th June 2021!**

APCYS aims to bring together youth from different parts of the region and expose them to the culture of cooperativism. APCYS 1.0 was held in Bali, Indonesia in 2016 and 70 young people from 17 countries participated in the Summit, *“Youth Cooperatives and the Power of Entrepreneurship and Innovation.”* [APCYS 2.0](#) was organized in Cebu, Philippines and 147 young cooperators from 17 countries participated in the summit focused on *“Creative Skills, Cooperative Entrepreneurship, and Sustainable Development.”* The summits provided a platform for youth in the region to interact with each other, hear stories from young coop entrepreneurs, engage in team activities, and make friends from the cooperative movement.

This year, **APCYS 3.0, “Celebrating Youth as Torchbearers of the Cooperative Identity”** will be a virtual event to celebrate the role played by youth in cooperatives, showcase youth entrepreneurs, get ideas from youth about new forms of cooperatives, and excite them about cooperatives and their role in it.

APCYS 3.0 will provide a platform for youth to

1. Shine spotlight on youth who are at the forefront of starting new cooperatives to address needs in their communities.
2. Explore how we make the cooperative identity a competitive advantage in attracting the young and in exploring new opportunities.
3. Create an environment for youth to be engaged in work driven by passion and empathy towards others as well as cooperative values and principles, rather than competition and profit-making.
4. Hear from youth, the new and sustainable enterprise ideas on cooperatives that cater to the needs and aspirations of the youth in their country, through Coop Pitch Competition.

Registrations for the **APCYS 3.0** will opening soon and interested participants can register online.

More details and information can be found at www.apyouthsummit.coop.

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

Consumer Cooperative 2021 Webinar: Contribution to Local Communities

The ICA-AP Consumer Committee is organizing the Consumer Cooperative 2021 Webinar on 'Contribution to Local Communities' on Wednesday, 2nd June at 16:00 Japanese Standard Time (UTC +9 hours).

The webinar will be hosted in collaboration with the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU). It will focus on the contribution of cooperatives to local communities.

The tentative panelists include,

1. Mr. Junichi Tanno, Director & Development and Sales Manager, Tohoku Cooperative Business Development Co., Ltd. (a subsidiary of Co-op Miyagi), Japan
2. Ms. Juhee Lee, International Team Manager, SAPENet Development Center, iCOOP, Korea
3. Mr. Dudz Samson, Brand Consultant of C&S Co-op Supermart, Victo National, Philippines
4. Mr. Surendra Shridhar Karhade, General Manager, Sahakari Bhandar, India

The discussions will lead to the conversations on "Deepening our Cooperative Identity" at the 33rd ICA World Cooperative Congress to be held in December 2021.

For more information, contact Mr. Sungjoon Kang, Secretary, ICA-AP Consumer Committee at e-mail: sungjoon.kang@icaap.coop and Tel: +60 17 801 8629.

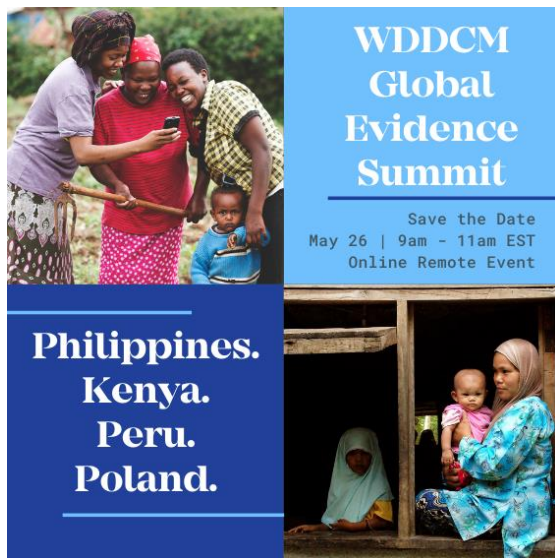
Webinar: Sharing Digitization Strategies Among Credit Unions and Cooperative Banks

International Cooperative Banking Association (ICBA) of ICA and World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU) are organising a webinar for their members to learn about establishing the digitization of back-office operations and customer-facing online and mobile services from each other. This webinar will also exchange 'Digitalisation Best Practices in Cooperative Financial Institutions'.

This webinar will take place via Zoom on 25th May at 05:30 pm IST (07:00 am US CDT) and will feature presentations from:

1. **Carey Price**, Senior Vice President, Digital Strategy and Delivery, Baxter Credit Union (US)
2. **Dr. G.R. Chintala**, Chairman, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (India)
3. **Dohun Kim**, IT Platform Quality Assurance officer, National Credit Union Federation of Korea
4. **Mieczyslaw Skiba**, President of the Board of SGB-Bank (Poland)
5. **Mr. Błażej Mika**, Vice-President of the Board of Directors of SGB-Bank S.A. (Poland)

WDDCM Global Evidence Summit



The International Cooperative Research Group of U.S. Overseas Cooperative Development Council (OCDC) has undertaken a research on “What Difference Do Cooperatives Make (WDDCM)?” focused on countries like the Philippines, Kenya, Peru, and Poland. It is organising an online event – WDDCM Global Evidence Summit, to share the research outcomes on 26th May 2021 from 9 AM to 11 AM EST. If you are interested in this summit and want to receive more updates, keep following [OCDC](#) or sign up to receive their communication [here](#).

International Day of Cooperatives 2021



This year, the International Day of Cooperatives (#CoopsDay) will be celebrated as **“Rebuild better together”** on **3rd July**. Cooperatives around the world will showcase how they are meeting the COVID-19 pandemic crisis with solidarity and resilience and offering communities a **people-centred and environmentally just recovery**.

“In the last year, we have witnessed how the cooperative model has been working towards the well-being of people and respect for the planet, underscoring what the cooperative movement stands for. We will indeed rebuild better together, and I’m confident that we will see many stories of how the cooperative movement can help communities become stronger in the post-pandemic world”, declared Bruno Roelants, Director General of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA).

#CoopsDay will spread the word about how a human-centred business model, sustained by the cooperative values of self-help and solidarity and the ethical values of social responsibility and concern for community, can reduce inequality, create shared prosperity, and respond to the immediate impacts of COVID-19. The ICA calls on cooperators and partners around the world to get ready to celebrate #CoopsDay on 3rd July and to show the world how we can Rebuild better together.

The **2021 #Coopsday actions' pack** including the logo, key messages and other digital resources will be available soon [here](#).

ICA 33rd World Cooperative Congress

The ICA 33rd World Cooperative Congress will be held in Seoul, the Republic of Korea and online from 1st to 3rd 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 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
- Discuss how cooperatives can significantly contribute to the global economic, social, and environmental reconstruction.

The Congress will consist of pre-events from 28th to 30th November, followed by the conference itself from 1st to 3rd 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.



UPCOMING EVENTS

- Consultation on Cooperative Identity for countries in the Middle East – 25th May 2021 (TBC)
- Webinar: Sharing Digitization Strategies Among Credit Unions and Cooperative Banks by ICBA and WOCCU – 25th May 2021
- Consumer Cooperative 2021 Webinar: Contribution to Local Communities – 2nd June 2021
- Online ICA-AP Youth Summit 3.0 – 22nd to 24th June 2021 (TBC)
- ICA-AP Regional Board Meeting, Seoul, Korea – 29th November 2021 (TBC)
- ICA-AP Regional Assembly and Board Elections, Seoul, Korea – 30th November 2021 (TBC)
- ICA 33rd World Cooperative Congress, Seoul, Korea – 1st to 3rd December 2021