

ICA-AP NEWSLETTER

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

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Cooperatives for Ecosystem Restoration

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.

The UN World Environment Day to be celebrated on June 5, calls for urgent action to revive our damaged ecosystems. Ecosystems are defined as the interaction between living organisms (plants, animals, people) and nature and human-made systems (cities, farms). We all depend on [healthy ecosystems](#) for our survival.

To mark the World Environment Day, this issue focuses on **Cooperatives for Ecosystem Restoration**.

Cooperatives as people-centred businesses actively advocate for Climate Action and Restoration of Ecosystems. The ICA's 30th Congress in Tokyo in 1992 discussed the issue of sustainable development as a main theme and passed a Declaration on Environment and Sustainable Development. It asked national and Sectoral Organizations to formulate the "Cooperative Agenda 21" in line with the Earth Summit 1992 Agenda 21 and the Rio Statement. The 7th Cooperative Principle – Concern for Community, was agreed at the 31st Congress in 1995 in the context of the international debate in the United Nations about setting sustainable development goals. The ICA Congress resolution on sustainable human development reaffirmed the view that cooperatives should ensure that both their institutional performance and their member education programmes gave environmental issues high priority¹.

This year the International Day of Cooperatives (#CoopsDay) is being celebrated as **"Rebuild better together"** to showcase how cooperative are meeting the COVID-19 pandemic crisis with solidarity and resilience and offering communities **people-centred and environmentally just recovery**.

In this issue, we present an encouraging conversation with Mr. Jack Sim, founder of the Restroom Association of Singapore, the World Toilet Organization, the World Toilet Day Initiative and Bottom of the Pyramid Hub. He talks about his journey of being the 'Toilet Man' and the 'Hero of Environment'. We hear from Mr. S.P. Singh, Managing Director and Dr. H.C. Gena, Chief Project Manager, Indian Farm Forestry Development Cooperative Limited, about how cooperatives in India are contributing to ecosystem restoration. We also bring a snapshot of the Lassana (Beautiful Sri Lanka) Project by SANASA Federation Limited that led to the development of smart green villages with a vision to make Sri Lanka a green economy.

Article: IFFDC's Efforts towards Restoring Ecosystem for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

Global warming and corresponding climate change are disturbing ecosystems across the world and adversely impacting human existence. The Indian Farm Forestry Development Cooperative Limited (IFFDC) is playing an important role in the restoration of the ecosystem to mitigate and develop resilience to climate change at the community level.

IFFDC, an initiative of Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO), since its inception, has undertaken eco-restoration and wasteland development through farm forestry in the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan. IFFDC has diversified portfolio activities such as Watershed Management, Nutritional and Economic Security, Livelihoods, Seed Production, Agri-Input

¹ Guidance Notes on the Cooperative Principles - <https://www.ica.coop/sites/default/files/publication-files/ica-guidance-notes-en-310629900.pdf>

Supply, and CSR initiatives which it carries out through cross-cutting Interventions i.e., Women Empowerment, Community Institution Building, Capacity Building, and Income Generative Activities. These are carried out by adopting participatory approaches that cater to the emerging and evolving needs of the community.

Farm Forestry Development

Through its flagship programme of Farm Forestry, IFFDC develops participatory forestry on waste and marginalised lands of individual farmers, village panchayats (local governance bodies) and the Government. The concerned communities are organised into Primary Farm Forestry Cooperative Societies (PFFCS), designed as gender-focused community institutions to manage and maintain the community forests sustainably. IFFDC supports the PFFCS with technical, financial, capacity building, networking, marketing, and financial resources. Women have 38% membership in PFFCS and at the decision-making level, there are 20 women are Chairpersons in the PFFCS. Two elected women Directors from the member cooperatives are on the Board of IFFDC.

IFFDC's interventions have resulted in the restoration and conversion of 29,421-hectares of wasteland in more than 500 villages to multi-purpose and bio-diverse forests. The economic returns from these forests are presently restricted to selective felling, grasses and Minor Forest Produce (MFPs). However, the environmental services/ benefits to the community are intangible.

Agro-forestry on farmland achieve the twin goals of sustainable development of forests and enhance the income of the farmers. For five years, IFFDC has been encouraging farmers to undertake Agro-forestry and Agro-horticulture on their farmland with trees like *Melia composita*, *Bambusa bambos*, *Moringa oleifera*, *Carica papaya*, *Musa acuminata*, etc, which have growing commercial value. 0.57 million plants of *Melia composita* have been planted under the program.

IFFDC has made efforts to conserve more than 100 indigenous species of trees that are on the verge of extinction by developing the "Golden Jubilee Traditional Garden" on 30 hectares of land at IFFCO Aonla. It introduced the "Miyawaki Method" (a Japanese technique) for faster development of indigenous species. IFFDC has distributed more than 2.90 million Neem (*Azadirachta indica*) saplings to IFFCO for plantation across the country to increase tree cover and minimize air pollution.

IFFDC, as part of its R&D efforts, has undertaken four research trials of 153 Genotypes and established a Gene bank of different 44 progenies of Neem (*Azadirachta indica*) with the support of IFFCO and technical guidance of Forest Research Institute (FRI), Dehradun. Under its CSR initiatives, IFFDC contributed to a research trial to study the adaptability of 11 varieties of *Melia Composita* (Burma Neem) in the Semi-Arid region, conducted by FRI, Dehradun.

The forests developed under the programme take carbon and reduce soil erosion by 134,000 tonnes each year. The forests also cater to fuelwood, fodder, and other agricultural needs, as well as generate employment for the communities. The developed wastelands are converted into bio-diverse forests with various flora and fauna. The water-logged area developed in the dense forests provides shelter for migratory bird and a wildlife sanctuary.

Watershed Management

IFFDC's watershed programme with the climate-proofing component rehabilitates and conserves land and water resources to develop climate change resilience and ensures food and livelihood security of the rural communities. An area of 17,480 hectares has been treated by various soil and water conservation measures to develop Integrated Watershed through the 64 Village Watershed

Committees (VWCs), the community-based institutions promoted to sustain the watershed and climate-proofing interventions.

Recharged groundwater and increased water in the nearby wells have enabled farmers to harvest two crops leading to more returns. Harvested surface water, through the developed 261 Check Dams, 1117 ponds and 1213 wells have helped in irrigating an additional area of 15,171 hectares. It is estimated that the soil-water conservation measures checked soil erosion and saved the loss of more than 62,000 metric tonnes of soil per hectare per year. The Watershed Community is made aware of climate change, its effects, and tools and techniques to deal with it in drought conditions.

The role of IFFDC as a cooperative society in ecological restoration has been recognised twice with the prestigious “Social Impact Awards” by the Times Of India in 2011 (Livelihood Category) and 2015 (Environment Conservation Category). IFFDC and its 4 promoted PFFCS have also been awarded “Indira Priyadarshini Virkshamitra Awards” by the Ministry of Forest and Environment, Government of India for their outstanding contribution to restoring ecosystem and environment up-gradation.

The efforts of IFFDC exemplify the important role that cooperatives play in climate action by adopting mitigation and adaptation measures and by mobilising and organising their members/ communities to generate livelihood through ecosystem restoration.

Interview with Mr. Jack Sim



1. What made you devote your life to social work at the age of 40?

I was a school failure! I could not study very well because I was a very playful child. I could not do anything that educated people do and with no choice left, I became a businessman as it didn't require a degree. I started with no money and went to investors. In those days we didn't know a thing called start-up; it was a start-up of building material. I realized that it is quite easy to make money and went on to start 16 businesses altogether.

By the time I turned 40, I had enough money to retire. I left the rat race and became a social entrepreneur because I didn't want to make any more money. One should make money only when one needs it and not otherwise. This is because, whatever you earn you are going to exchange it with time, and time is the only commodity that you can spend with great people. Then why would I want to spend the most precious commodity of my life in exchange for more money that I do not need? Some people will say leave it to your kids. But why should I stop my children from the struggle and all the fun of life?

Life is a skill training programme where everybody must be given the chance to train themselves. That chance is given with basic education and more importantly, basic moral values so that they do not just have the skill of survival, but they also the skills to become a good and useful person in society. I chose social work to show my children that there are other ways to become a useful human being. Children do not believe you unless they watch you do it. For the benefit of the future generation, my children, and other young people, if more people contribute back to society and live their life for the service of others, a culture of service will spread.

If people only think about themselves and focus on getting rich, they make others poorer, and society will start to deteriorate and break up because of wealth materialism. There is also spiritual materialism when people want to be a hero and take all the credit. If you want to solve things, the best way is to start a movement for everybody to participate and not attribute it to only one person.

2. What was your motivation to start the Restroom Association of Singapore and the World Toilet Organisation?

I was 40 years old and at 40 you have many new questions in your mind. It is called the midlife crisis. You have everything and feel the need for new excitement in life. The noblest thing you can do is service of people, start an NGO. You can also feel very happy if you enjoy it. Choose a social cause which is important, the one that nobody wants to work on. Today if you need funding, then you should either work on COVID-19 or climate change. But the actual problem still exists. Therefore, you should work on something different. I was looking for a relevant than a bigger issue to work on.

When our Prime Minister said that we should measure our graciousness against the cleanliness of public toilets, then I thought that nobody is going to do this because it is disgusting! I followed the subject of sanitation to break the taboo and talk about it, and soon enough, the politicians used it to win the election, the media used it to get more readership, the academia started researching and publishing, and the NGOs started to collect money from funders, and the markets start to move. Most of the work is not done by me, I was just a storyteller. Eventually, we created the United Nations World Toilet Day, 19th November, which is the founding day of our NGO, the World Toilet Organization (WTO).

In a blink of an eye, it is now 20 years! We are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the World Toilet Organization! I am glad that within this lifetime, I have created a UN policy and a UN day, and this has been one of the higher points of my life. If you want to do something, then the mission must be higher than you. If you are very concerned about self-image, then you cannot be free for altruism.

We are very small and created a big impact because we do not implement. But, we are a movement. Funders say, if you are a movement or advocate, we will not fund you because we want to fund the implementing organisation. I say that is okay. If it is solving the sanitation problem, this is what we want. I keep my overheads very low and can manage with little funding. I need the people on the ground to have funds. If you talk about a movement, you must make people on the ground sustainable and therefore, the social entrepreneur idea happened. The social entrepreneur idea also runs into this spiritual materialism issue because each of them wants to save the world all by themselves. I think that the next step of solving problems would be by cooperative social enterprise.

If social enterprises become a cooperative movement, they will share the business model, the technology and without increasing overhead costs, they can increase distribution 100 times. This is the model and the spirit of cooperatives. The mission is higher than us. We are not important, we are a conduit, we are a vehicle for the greater good of society. This is the philosophy that I expect.

3. Tell us about some of the key initiatives of WTO and how do they ensure adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all?

The main thing we do is to make the subject of talking about going to the toilet a normal subject. If one day, people can just talk about poop, pee, menstruation, diarrhoea, and about dirty toilets, that will be the success. What you put inside your body, it does come out. We can talk about what goes in but cannot talk about what comes out. That makes no sense at all. Every taboo before it was broken, it is always seen as just normal, but we don't speak about it. The same has been with women's issues and choices. The MeToo movement, LGBTQ movement, trees conservation hippies protecting trees by hugging them, contraception, etc. All these later turned into movements when people started talking. I am glad to be one of the first people in history to create a movement on sanitation, and of course, it is not done alone but with all the people in the world.

If this happens, then it triggers into politics which is very beneficial. Because politicians didn't like it at first until they realized that they can use it to win the election. Politicians need not like something if they can win the election by promising toilets. Bingo! We are successful as people started talking about it. This is the way effective advocacy works.

This guerrilla marketing strategy is very provocative as it breaks new barriers and pushes the envelope, and then the rest is up to the people.

4. How do you think cooperation and collective action can help reduce environmental degradation?

I think that the Coop model is very new and advanced thinking, but the coop bureaucracy is absurd. We have to break the coop rules to enshrine the coop spirit. The coop organizational structure and moves were pre-internet and the new coop structure has to be decentralised and a loose arrangement. It must not be hard and fast. The basic concept of the coop is to come together and share synergistic exponential impact. The principle is that if you are in a silo and working alone, you will not be able to create the impact that is unleashed by the synergies of putting together. This is the main essence of cooperatives.

However, if you now go ahead and follow the rules of cooperatives you'll probably not go far. You will get far by running it as a company. Cooperatives all over the world have been very lethargic, and so, we need Coop 4.0 to go in line with the post-industrial revolution with the technology that links each other without controlling each other. Agencies have to be given to the operating unit. The partnership must be because you can use each other's strength, but not slow down each other. And I think this kind of new thinking needs to be pushed by the International Cooperative Alliance and they have to reinvent themselves.

I have seen a lot of thrift and loan cooperatives in Singapore. They are operated by very old people who are quite happy to be a friendship club rather than a mission-driven thing. It doesn't work, most of them should close down. On the other hand, we have a very big cooperative in Singapore, run the union and it is so successful with a billion-dollar business, running supermarkets, media, taxi company, insurance company, even running funeral parlour. This cooperative looks like a big conglomerate. In theory, it is a cooperative, but it is a big company. Even if it is very successful, it has to reinvent itself to grow internationally.

I think that we are at the tip of the iceberg of a transformation of digital cooperative, Coop 4.0. Somebody has to start writing this thesis and the moment we can do that, I think the best

dissemination centre will be the ICA. Members of the Alliance, probably, will be shocked that they have to change as well.

So, what I feel is that if you want to solve it for the environment, you still need a business. The business could be to reduce fossil fuels, reduce and renew wastages, use solar energy over the cooking stove. If we can think of all the problem of the 17 SDGs as a business opportunity, then we can keep on relating that and convert to cooperative business. Climate change is a real issue, but nobody is taking real action. If somebody says that I am going to be carbon neutral by 2050, don't you think that it should not take so long? On top of that, when they pledge to 2050; there is no penalty if they don't deliver. Sometimes, it is just an empty promise. If we are serious about climate change, then we should not go out to the shop anything except when we need it. This means that the consumption and growth economy model has to change, and a lot of the economic theory has to change. Ultimately, we have to change until the meaning of life changes.

5. As the “Hero of the Environment” what will be your message to the world?

My message to the world is that the only way to save the environment is to not buy things. Maybe, more than half of the things that you have bought, other than food, you probably don't need. A dress lasts very long, and some people say I feel embarrassed to repeat dresses. No, you should feel so proud that you wear the same dress so often because you are preserving the environment.

Don't drink water from disposable bottles. Use tap water and fill a flask for yourself. This plastic bottle is the most ridiculous invention. When I was young, we never had such a product. We would always boil water and drink and it was safe.

If we all ban one-time-use plastic, I think that will be the solution. As long as we solve climate change through frugal lifestyle, we will have a lot of money to spare. We do not need to spend so much, and we also do not need to torture ourselves with the stress of the rat race so much.

Therefore, my message to save the environment will be - stay frugal, reuse whatever you can, don't buy/ shop unnecessarily, instead give love, care for others, and be a useful person for others.

Key Takeaways:

1. One should make money only when they need it and not otherwise.
2. Life is a skill training programme where everybody is provided with basic education and moral values and given the chance to train themselves.
3. The noblest thing you can do is service of people.
4. If you want to do something, then the mission must be higher than you. If you are very concerned about self-image, then you cannot be free for altruism.
5. We have to break the coop rules to enshrine the coop spirit. Coops need to reinvent themselves.
6. The only way to save the environment is not buy things unnecessarily.

[Article by SANASA on the Lassana \(Beautiful Sri Lanka\) Project](#)



In 2007 SANASA Federation drafted its environmental policy as “Beautiful Sri Lanka” in consultation with its 6,000 Thrift and Credit Unions across the country. SANASA Beautiful Sri Lanka programme was coupled with Sri Lanka NEXT Blue-Green Economy, the government initiative in 2016 by the Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment (MOMDE) to develop 10,000 sustainable villages by 2020.

The programme was officially inaugurated by His Excellency, the President of Sri Lanka, Honorable Maithreepala Sirisena on 1st July 2016 at SANASA Campus. The event was organized in line with the International Day of Cooperatives 2016. It was launched in collaboration with the Environmental Authority of Sri Lanka, Department of Forest Conservation, State Timber Corporation, Geological Survey Mines Office, Central Environmental Authority, Department of Coast Conservation, Marine Environment Authority, and National Ozone Unit. It received the support of several government agencies and a National Steering Committee was appointed to expedite the project.



The project envisioned the development of sustainable villages with the following objectives:

1. Biodiversity conservation with community participation
2. Combatting climate change with community involvement
3. Creating opportunities with SANASA for Sri Lanka Carbon Fund (SLCF) Ltd
4. Penetrating National Ozone Unit (NOU) activity to grassroots communities

5. Creating awareness on Natural Resource Management (NRM) among grassroots communities
6. Research engagements and environment policy and planning activities with SANASA
7. Promoting environmental education among SANASA members
8. Approaching sustainable development with MoMDE and SANASA members
9. Sustainable environment programs for SANASA societies and its members - creating "Lassana roads under tree guardian mechanism".

100 villages were selected from the existing primary SANASA societies to be developed as green villages by training 100 change agents (social mobilisers) to further train society members and villagers; 10 Voluntary Environmental Leaders (VELs) from each of the 100 villages to deliver the message of green village concept to grassroots. It carried out various activities like,

1. Awareness programme for 150 selected members of SANASA and 50 members including school children and youth organizations to provide technical advisory services.
2. Surveys and research on endangered mangroves for restoration.
3. Conducting programmes for mangrove conservation.
4. Creating Educational, research, and scientific awareness of the campaigns among general public.
5. Introducing eco-tourism as an economic activity.

To create a climate change sensitive population and to develop smart green villages - 10,000 Blue-Green Beautiful Sri Lanka villages have been developed during the period 2016-2021 in collaboration with SANASA movement.

ICA-AP Updates

ASEC Open Space at 13th Asia Europe People's Forum

On 19th May 2021, the Asian Solidarity Economy Council (ASEC) conducted a zoom discussion on Social Inclusion and Social Protection at the "13th Asia Europe People's Forum for a Just, Peaceful and Sustainable World (AEPF-13)." The ICA-AP presented the role of cooperatives in social inclusion and social protection in ASEC Open Space.

In Asia, as it is in many parts of the world, the vast majority of people are marginalised and with little or no social protection under an economic system that prioritizes profits over people and the planet. In July 2020, UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres called for a new social contract in his lecture in the Nelson Mandela lectures. Amidst the social and economic dislocations brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, he said, the existing global socio-economic order no longer responds to the requirements of the people especially on issues of social inclusion and social protection, health, education, and global imbalances.

One of the major strategies of social inclusions is the setting up of institutions that deliver services that ensure the access of those most at risk to the opportunities and resources (finance, input supply, markets, technology, knowledge, skills, etc.), necessary to participate fully in economic, social, cultural and political life. Social Protection is another major strategy to achieve social inclusion. Social protection measures aim to provide benefits to guarantee income security and access to essential health care, such as insurance, disability benefits, old-age pensions, cash and in-kind transfers, and other contributory and tax-financed schemes.

The ASEC Open Space was to show how people's organizations in different countries are pursuing alternative, solidarity-based development initiatives. The common features of such social and solidarity economy (SSE) initiatives are (1) democratic, participatory, socially responsible, and gender-responsive governance; (2) edifying ethical values held by their leaders, managers, and members; (3) people at the center of development, i.e. socially inclusive development with a focus on providing social protection and services; (4) concrete measures to conserve and protect the environment; and (5) economic and financial sustainability of the SSE eco-system.

Dr. Ben Quinones from ASEC moderated the Open Space and Dr. Rene Ofreneo provided the context on Social Inclusion and Social Protection under the neoliberal system vs. people's alternatives. Case studies on experiences in Asia were presented by Kumar Loganathan on ASSEFA (India), Dr. Eri Trinurini on Bina Swadaya (Indonesia), Datuk Dr. Mohd Yusof Kasim on the Cooperative sector (Malaysia), Bhola Bhattarai on the Forest User Groups (Nepal), and Rolando Victoria on Alalay sa Kaunlaran Inc (Philippines). The Open Forum on 'Reflections on People's Alternatives' moderated by Dr. Etchel Tongson included comments by John Restakis, Co-founder, Synergia Institute, Shigeru Tanaka, Joint Coordinator, RIPESS; and Balu Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP. Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria, ASEC Chair presented the synthesis of discussion and lessons learned.

Cooperatives are central to social development as they provide a model for social inclusion and confronting the growing inequalities in the world. This is because cooperatives look beyond the bottom line. They have a social mission to enhance not only the livelihoods of their members but also the communities that surround them. Cooperatives with their values and principles embody an economic model that empowers the marginalised and promotes social inclusion, while at the same time, remain viable business enterprises. Many are formed in response to crises in which the poor and vulnerable are worst hit and where victims have few alternatives to helping themselves. Cooperatives provide sustainability and stability.

The prevalence of economic doctrine that recognises investor-owned businesses as the dominant model of enterprise presents challenges to existing and new cooperatives which, present an alternative and more sustainable economic model. Cooperatives need an enabling legislation, technical assistance, and access to credit to be able to better deliver on social inclusion and protection.

[Webinar: Sharing Digitization Strategies Among Credit Unions and Cooperative Banks](#)

International Cooperative Banking Association (ICBA) in collaboration with the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and the World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU) organised a webinar on "Sharing Digitization Strategies Among Credit Unions and Cooperative Banks" on 25th May 2021. ICA Director-General, Mr. Bruno Roelants and 86 participants attended the webinar.

To enhance digitization of the global credit union system, WOCCU and the ICBA are making different learning options available to their member institutions. This webinar was one such joint initiative for members of both organizations to learn ways to digitize back-office operations and customer-facing online and mobile services.

Dr. Brian Branck, President and CEO, WOCCU and Mr. Bhima Subrahmanyam, President, ICBA made introductory remarks. Dr. Greg Neumann, Director, Communications at WOCCU moderated the webinar which featured presentations from:

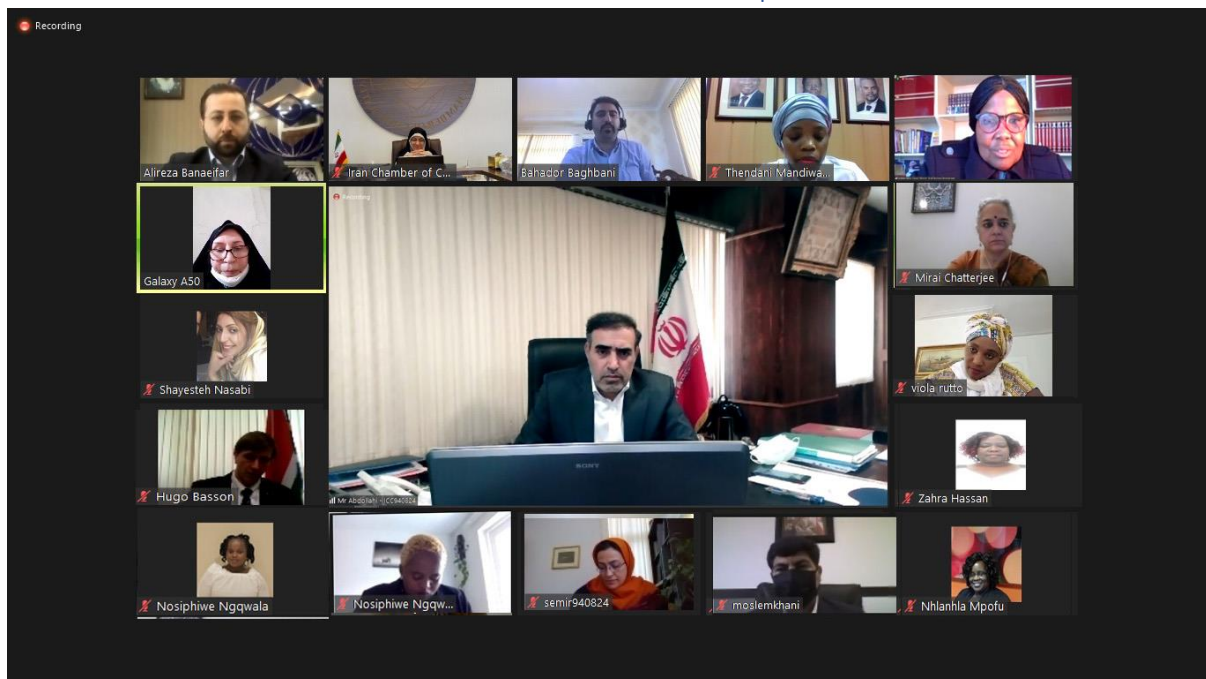
- **Carey Price**, Senior Vice President, Digital Strategy and Delivery, BCU (USA)
- **G.R. Chintala**, Chairman, National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (India)

- **Dohun Kwon**, IT Platform Quality Assurance officer, National Credit Union Federation of Korea
- **Mirosław Skiba**, President of the Board, SGB-Bank S.A. (Poland)
- **Błażej Mika**, Vice-President of the Board, SGB-Bank S.A. (Poland)

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

NEWS FROM MEMBERS

International Webinar on Women in Economic Development



On 1st June 2021, the Iran Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC) in collaboration with the Embassy of South Africa in Tehran organised the International Webinar on Women in Economic Development.

Along with the guest speakers, prominent women cooperators from Iran and South Africa participated in the webinar to honour women and discuss their position in the economic development of countries.

Mr. Bahman Abdollahi, President of ICC, in his opening remarks, said, "Today, one of the biggest goals of countries is to achieve sustainable economic development." He noted that human resource is an important and effective factor in the development of societies and women, as half of the world's population, play a major role in the development of societies.

He recognized the contribution of women to work and said if their potential talents are tapped into, women with their wide participation in various economic sectors can move the wheel of a country's economy. This will their dependency and increase the level of family income and productivity, thereby improving the economy. He concluded by highlighting the need to expand the international cooperation between countries and the transfer of experiences to strengthen the women's cooperatives and stressed the need to strengthen the relations of the Iranian cooperative movement with South Africa.

Mr. Vika Mazwi Khumalo, the South African Ambassador, in his remarks, addressed the history of the women's movement and Women's Day in South Africa and Iran and appreciated the role played by women within their respective communities.

He discussed the role of women in South African economic development and said that South African Constitution not only enshrines women's rights but women have been increasingly more active in government and policy-making with 50% of the national cabinet and 46% of the Parliament constituting women. Women have also progressed in the economic sphere by successively managing SMMEs. Women represent 52% of the South African population and black women are its largest single self-employed segment. He also noted the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on economies, especially women's businesses, and the role of women in controlling the crisis. He concluded, "I believe that women will continue to play an important role, even if it is unseen, in our global recovery. If we do not utilise women as an instrumental and powerful resource in our recovery, we will not accomplish this task. The need to accelerate digital and financial inclusion for women remains a cornerstone for our collective COVID-19 response and speedy recovery."

Mr. Ariel Guarco, President of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), addressed the participants via video message. He welcomed the cooperation between the Cooperative Movement of Iran and South Africa and praised the initiative.

He emphasized the important role of women in strengthening cooperative identity and creating equitable communities in the world. He noted the importance of women in the ICA and said that the Chairperson of the Gender Equality Committee (GEC) is a permanent member of the ICA Board.

He outlined ICA's goals for women on a global scale, including eradicating violence and creating greater opportunities for women's economic independence and said that the ICA has succeeded in actively involving GEC in UN commissions on the situation of women. He mentioned that other important issues of women's participation like cooperative management, the role of cooperatives in the care economy and the development of an inclusive digital economy will be discussed at the next ICA World Cooperative Congress in December.

Ms. Rosemary Capa, Deputy Minister of Small Business Development, South Africa addressed the role of women in the South African economy and managing small businesses in the country. She noted that the number of women entrepreneurs in South Africa has grown rapidly. She acknowledged that most women entrepreneurs in South Africa play a major role in the socio-economic well-being of their communities. The country needed entrepreneurs in the SMMEs who could assist in fighting unemployment and help stimulate economic growth. She mentioned that the Government of South Africa has recognised the value of women's contribution by supporting them and changing their attitude towards them. The Department of Small Business Development has established several mechanisms to assist female entrepreneurs such as the cooperative incentive scheme, the business upliftment strategy, and the shared economic infrastructure facility.

Ms. Mirai Chatterjee, the Director of the Social Security Team at Self-Employed Women's Association, (SEWA), introduced the SEWA Cooperative as a major women's cooperative in India and the Asia-Pacific region and described its recent measures and activities.

Ms. Tahmineh Daniali, ICC's Consultant on Women Affairs, Mr. Moslem Hhani, the director of the Cooperative Promotion, Training and Research Officer in the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare, and Ms. Khatereh Ostaderzaei, the head of ICC's women committee, addressed issues such as the role of women in Iran's economic development; entrepreneurship and labour market; and women's position in various fields in the Iranian cooperative sector, respectively.

The webinar was the final step of the second cooperation project between Iran Chamber of Cooperatives and the South African Embassy in Tehran to strengthen the relations between women cooperators of the two countries. As part of the project, 16 bilateral meetings in four fields of activity including creative industries, agriculture, health, and education were held to identify the common areas for economic cooperation between women cooperators in two countries. The representatives of the four working groups presented the outputs of these meetings in the webinar. It was decided to continue joint executive activities between the women of the two countries based on specific operational plans in each area.

[NYCS from India Joins ICA](#)

National Yuva Co-operative Society Ltd. (NYCS) from India joined ICA as a member in May 2021. NYCS is a multistate and multipurpose youth cooperative society. It creates opportunities for youth through skill improvement, entrepreneurship development, sports and thrift culture, leadership development, and positive civic actions.

NYCS has a direct membership of 1,209 individuals, four cooperatives, and 1,205 youth clubs with 10,249 individual members.

More information can be found [here](#).

[CCS Elects New Chairman – Mr. Aung Phyu](#)

Mr. Aung Phyu took charge as Chairman of the Central Cooperative Society on 1st May 2021. He retired as the Director-General of Cooperative Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, Myanmar and has served as the Chairman of Union of Government Employees Cooperative Federation (GEC).

Obituary



Dr. Daman Prakash

We are saddened by the demise of our former colleague Dr. Daman Prakash who worked in ICA-AP from 1962 to 2002. During his long and illustrious career, he held various positions - Director Agriculture Cooperative Management, Technical Advisor in Sri Lanka with the ICA-SCC-NCC/SL Co-operative Teachers' Training Project, Chief Technical Advisor with ILO in Indonesia, and Senior Consultant with JA-Zenchu of Japan. He co-authored many publications on agriculture cooperatives and his contribution to the field has been immense.

Dr. Prakash was a well-known person to the cooperative movement of Nepal where he shared his knowledge and ideas to develop the cooperative movement. In 2014, at the first National Cooperative Congress of Nepal, Prime Minister Shushil Koirala presented him the 'national award of appreciation' for his invaluable contribution for the promotion of cooperatives.



Mr. Mohammad Sharif Bhajji

We are saddened by the passing of Mr. Mohammad Sharif Bhajji who was the Managing Director of Karachi Cooperative Housing Societies Union (KCHSU), Pakistan and the Director of Kokan Cooperative Housing.

Mr. Bhajji got involved in the world of cooperatives in his early years and continued his father's legacy through cooperative housing societies where he established many hospitals, schools, rehabilitation centres and recreation parks. In his long career, he served as a secretary of Cooperative Housing for over 20 years and developed a fair price shop and Kokan Park. As the General Secretary of the Union Cooperative Club, established for the recreation of the residents of the same vicinity, he refurbished and expanded the club. He was also a Director of Union Cooperative College for over 20 years. He contributed to the betterment of Sindh Province in Pakistan as the Secretary of Sindh Provincial Cooperatives Union, which includes 2,700 consumer, agriculture, fisheries, credit and housing societies. Later, he served as a Board Member of the Cooperative Housing International (CHI), one of the sectoral organisations of ICA, from 2009 to 2013.

Our heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Dr. Daman Prakash and Mr. Mohammad Sharif Bhajji!

ICA-EU Updates

Consultation on the EU Regional Multi-annual Indicative Programme for Asia and Pacific (2021-27)

The Policy Forum on Development (PFD) together with the European Commission (EC) and European External Action Service (EEAS), as part of the consultations around the 2021-2027 programming of the European Union (EU), held a consultation on the EU Regional Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) for Asia and Pacific, on 19th May 2021. The consultation was held to capture the views of the multiple PFD stakeholders, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Local Authorities (LAs).

The EU representatives have identified three key priorities - regional integration and cooperation, pursuit of EU interests with key partners, and migration and human mobility. Each of the priorities reflected the concerned sub-regions (Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, South-East Asia, and the Pacific) and countries with no dedicated national programmes, notably India, China, and other high-income countries. Financial resources catalysed by EU guarantees/ blending under the European Fund for Sustainable Development plus (EFSD+) are expected to be replenished and become operational over the coming months with the adoption of Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI).

The moderated discussion comprised of an introductory presentation and Q&A session on the current thinking around the Asia and Pacific MIP. This was followed by an interactive plenary discussion on two questions – 1) How to best operationalise EU interaction to support the implementation of the programme in line with the foreseen regional priorities, and 2) What aspects of the programme are most relevant and important for our members? What is missing? And in which areas of the EU's work we see maximum possibilities to enhance joint action with the EU to meet the SDGs?

Considering the important role that cooperatives play and the relevance of their views, ICA global and regional offices along with few member organisations participated in the virtual consultation. ICA-AP presented its views that the EU Delegations should consider cooperatives as partners across all programmes and advocate for dedicated CSO allocations in all geographic programmes. ICA-AP reiterated that the EU should invest in local businesses, cooperatives, smallholder producers and family farmers in rural areas to help rural communities become catalysts of an inclusive and equitable rural transformation that, in turn, can support sustainable urbanization. ICA-AP also suggested that the EU should simplify the design and delivery of EU external assistance by lifting administrative and financial barriers for CSOs that cannot carry high risks and costs related to programming. This will allow CSOs and cooperatives to be better represented at the EU partner country level.

On the thematic areas of interest, ICA-AP remarked that the EU should promote and strengthen the development of alternative digital platforms – platform cooperatives, that promote the democratisation of data, redistribution of wealth, and ensure decent jobs and social protection for workers in the platform economy. Additionally, the EU should acknowledge community ownership through cooperatives and the role of citizens as consumers, workers, and investors as a pathway to achieving the green transition.

The PowerPoint presentation and other relevant documents of the programme are available on [Capacity4dev](#).

Announcements

[International Day of Cooperatives 2021](#)

The International Day of Cooperatives (#CoopsDay) will be celebrated as **“Rebuild better together”** on **3rd July 2021**. 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**.

Worldwide, more than one billion cooperators, present in the fields of health, agriculture, production, retail, finance, housing, employment, education, social services, and many other spheres, continue to prove that no one needs to face a crisis like the pandemic on their own.

#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.

Come join us in the biggest annual celebration of cooperatives and share with us how you/ your cooperative #RebuildBetterTogether!

1. Take a photo with our CoopsDay poster.
2. Share it on social media using #RebuildBetterTogether and #CoopsDay.
3. Tell us your story [here](#) or send everything to Shivali Sarna (shivali.sarna@icaap.coop), Communication and Membership Development Officer, ICA-AP.

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

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 invite you to the third edition of **Asia Pacific Cooperative Youth Summit (APCYS 3.0)**. The virtual Summit will be from **27th July to 29th July 2021!**

APCYS aims to bring together youth from different parts of the region and imbibe in them the spirit and culture of cooperatives. [APCYS 1.0](#), “*Youth Cooperatives and the Power of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*”, held in Bali, Indonesia in 2016 had 70 young participants from 17 countries. [APCYS 2.0](#), “*Creative Skills, Cooperative Entrepreneurship, and Sustainable Development*”, organized in Cebu, Philippines had 147 young cooperators participating from 17 countries. The summits provided a platform for youth in the region to interact with each other, hear stories from young coop entrepreneurs, pitch their ideas to start cooperatives, 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, hear pitches 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 the cooperative identity can be 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 through 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 and their community, through the [Coop Pitch Competition](#).

If you are part of the cooperative movement in your country or want to learn more about cooperatives, register for **APCYS 3.0** at www.apyouthsummit.coop.

If you have a knack for entrepreneurship and want to contribute to the cooperative movement, the Coop Pitch Competition is an opportunity for you to start. It is an integral part of the summit, designed to find new and sustainable enterprise ideas on cooperatives. Interested participants need to separately register for Coop Pitch [here](#), after registering for the main event.

For more updates and information, stay tuned to the [website](#) and ICA-AP social media channels.

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 are being updated at <https://ICAWorldCoopCongress.coop>.

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.

25 Voices Campaign

If you are under 25 and passionate about cooperatives, we are looking for you to share your story with the cooperative world as part of our 25 Voices campaign in a run-up to the World Cooperative Congress.

This year, the ICA is featuring 25 members of the cooperative movement who are under the age of 25, to tell the world what the cooperative identity means to them – in the form of a short video story, photos and other digital media. The stories will use real-life examples to inspire and vividly show the cooperative difference.

Read more about the campaign [here](#) and if you would like to share your story, please reach out to Shivali Sarna (shivali.sarna@icaap.coop), Communication and Membership Development Officer, ICA-AP.

Upcoming Events

- ICEI-NFUCA Webinar on Opportunities for Cooperatives in Educational Institutions Post COVID-19: Part 2 – 21st June 2021
- Roundtable on International Cooperative Development and Covid-19, Rebuild better together in the Asia-Pacific region – 2nd July 2021
- International Day of Cooperatives – 3rd July 2021
- Online ICA-AP Youth Summit 3.0 – 27th to 29th July 2021
- 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