



ICA-AP NEWSLETTER

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

January Newsletter

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COOP Dialogue 4.0 – Call for articles



The 4th edition of COOP Dialogue will focus on, Cooperatives' Contribution to SDGs: Achievements and Way Forward. We invite articles, research papers, opinions, case studies, stories, and short video stories from anyone interested to showcase their work, best practices, and views related to cooperatives and SDGs from the Asia and Pacific region. For further details and submission guidelines, read the [call for articles](#).

Virtual Lecture on International Women's Day – Registrations Open!



International Women's Day (IWD) 2023 will be celebrated on 8 March 2023 with the theme, "DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality." It is aligned with the priority theme for the 67th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW-67) by the United Nations (UN), "Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls."

The UN Observance of IWD recognizes and celebrates women and girls who are championing the advancement of transformative technology and digital education. IWD 2023 will explore the impact of the digital gender gap on widening economic and social inequalities. The event will also spotlight the importance of protecting the rights of women and girls in digital spaces and addressing online and ICT-facilitated gender-based violence.

To commemorate IWD 2023, the ICA-AP Committee on Women will organize a virtual lecture on 7 March 2023 that will cover two parts:

- What do we mean by digital inclusion for women in co-op business?
- How do we protect women's rights and safety in digital spaces?

The event is free to attend. To see the detailed program and to register for the event, [click here](#).

We encourage our members to share with us their plans for observing IWD 2023. Please share your activities at Shivali.sarna@icaap.coop and tag ICA-AP in your social media posts.

ICA-AP Updates

Women's Committee Office Bearers Meet in India



The newly elected Office Bearers of the ICA-AP Committee on Women held their first in-person meeting at the ICA-AP Regional Office, New Delhi on 23 January. Ms. Chitose Arai, Chairperson, and Ms. Priti Patel, Vice-Chairperson were accompanied by Ms. Takako Tsuchiya from the International Department of the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU).

The in-person meeting served as a good opportunity for the Office Bearers and Committee Secretary Ms. Simren Singh from ICA-AP to discuss the activity plan for 2023.

2023 marks an important year for the Committee as it completes 25 years since its inception in 1998. To commemorate the landmark event, the Committee, in collaboration with JCCU, will organize a celebratory event on 19 and 20 September 2023, in Tokyo.

As one of the most active committees of ICA-AP, the Committee on Women has come a long way since 1998, when it was established with the objective to promote women's inclusion and participation in cooperatives. Since then, various activities and programs have been undertaken to serve the evolving needs of women in cooperatives.

In the meeting, the Office Bearers reflected on the Committee's core work over the years and elucidated four broad areas under which the Committee's work gets represented: 1) Economic empowerment 2) Social empowerment 3) Knowledge, education, and training, and 4) Solidarity. This year the Committee will document its new strategy and activity plans based on these four areas.

The Committee will kickstart its activities with an online event to commemorate International Women's Day in March. It will organize a virtual lecture on the theme "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality" on 7 March. Last year, the Committee entered into a four-year partnership with the National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO), Philippines for a 'Capacity Building Program for Women Cooperators on Climate Change and Action in Asia and Pacific.' In line with ICA-AP's strategic objective, "Strengthen cooperatives as business enterprises and development actors" and its pillar "Sustainable Development" – "Capacitate role in climate action." The partnership is focused on developing a training manual on climate change and action and will deliver thematic

training of trainers on this subject up to 2025. The manual will be pilot tested in May 2023 in a member country of the Committee.

The Office Bearers also utilized this opportunity to meet and interact with the ICA-AP staff and Mr. Dileep Sanghani, President of the National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI). The Office Bearers visited the Krishak Bharati Cooperative Ltd. (KRIBHCO) and met Dr. Chandrapal Singh Yadav, President, ICA-AP who lauded the efforts of the Committee on its work on gender inclusion and equality in cooperatives and congratulated them on the silver jubilee year of the Committee.

Policy Conclave on 'Gig and Platform Economy' in India



In June 2022, NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India), a think-tank of the Indian Government Union Government, released a study report on India's 'Emerging Gig and Platform Economy.' This led to extensive discussions at the national level on the potential for employment and social inclusion within the sector, the implications on labor, and efforts that can be made by stakeholders to design labor welfare and social security policies and skill the workforce to tap potential opportunities in the sector.

On 25 January, NITI Aayog organized a Policy Conclave and Consultation on 25 January at the Indian School of Business (ISB), Mohali, Punjab on the Gig and Platform Economy in India. It focused on three thematic sessions (i) Promoting Financial Inclusion for Gig and Platform Workers (ii) Promoting Digital, Financial & Entrepreneurial Skills for Women and Youth in the Platform Economy, and (iii) Designing Social Welfare Initiatives for Gig and Platform Workers.

Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP along with Mr. Ganesh Gopal, Lead - Entrepreneurship, ICA-AP attended the Conclave. Mr. Iyer participated as one of the speakers for the session on 'Designing Social Welfare Initiatives for Gig and Platform Workers.'

Mr. Iyer emphasized the need for fair and decent work within the emerging and heterogenous gig ecosystem, which has a massive potential to contribute to employment and the country's GDP. He acknowledged the benefits and flexibility that a freelancer or worker gets within the changing world of work and highlighted the need to address their issues of decent work, fair wages, provisioning social security, etc., through both policy interventions, and more importantly, through inward-looking solutions such as collectivization. He spoke about the emerging form of platform cooperatives, highlighting some of the use cases of worker-owned platform cooperatives in the world operating efficiently in the services sector, and noted that the NITI Aayog's report had taken a limited view on the aspect of collectivization of workers within the gig economy.

Senior government officials, Mr. Kundan Kumar, IAS, Adviser and Joint Secretary, NITI Aayog, Mr. Manvesh Singh Sidhu, IAS, Secretary Labour Department, Punjab participated in the conclave. Some of the other key speakers at the consultation included stakeholders from the National Skill Development Council (NSDC), India's largest private sector aggregation platforms including Swiggy (Bundl Technologies Private Limited), and trade union worker federation representative, Mr. Shaik Salauddin, General Secretary of the Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers (IFAT).

Member Updates

NCF, Nepal to Host 3rd National Cooperative Congress



National Cooperative Federation of Nepal in collaboration with the Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives, and Poverty Alleviation will organize the 3rd National Cooperative Congress with the theme, 'Self Regulation and Governance for Coops Sustainability' from 6 to 8 April 2023 at the Yak and Yati Hotel in Kathmandu, Nepal. It will be an opportunity for the cooperatives in Nepal to discuss their current situation and future plans, including a review of the suggestions given by the second Cooperative Congress in 2028. For registration, scan the QR code in the picture.

NATCCO, Philippines Celebrates its 46th Anniversary



The National Confederation of Cooperatives in the Philippines, NATCCO Network, celebrated its 46th anniversary on 23 January with NATCCO Managers Club conducting a Leaders and Managers Forum online.

NATCCO Network was established in 1977 and today comprises 870 cooperatives with consolidated assets of 320 Billion Pesos owned by 7.1 Million individual members. NATCCO's mission is to build safe and sound cooperatives that can deliver quality financial services to improve the quality of lives of the people.

NATCCO Chairperson, Mr. Romulo Caceres from San Isidro Development Cooperative (SIDC) in Naga City shared the history of NATCCO's transition from a tertiary federation – composed of regional coop federations - into a secondary federation comprising primary cooperatives. He noted, becoming a secondary federation was a historic event when he was the President of the NATCCO Board in 2004. There was a deadlock as some voted against the transformation. Now, more than 870 member cooperatives of NATCCO are primary coops across the country. This is one of the indicators that cooperativism is running. Many national and international cooperative leaders shared their [congratulatory wishes](#) for NATCCO.

Mr. Balu Iyer, ICA-AP Regional Director extended his wishes and said that ICA is privileged to have NATCCO as one of our members for 42 years. NATCCO has grown to be the largest coop federation in the Philippines with 7.1 million members, coop membership, geographical reach, and an array of services. These all speak volumes of NATCCO's strengths, which have been the central fund, stabilization fund, education and training, enduring advocacy efforts, and representation in Congress through the COOP-NATCCO party list. He said NATCCO has committed to helping coops achieve the ICA 2030 Vision and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Over the years, NATCCO has remained steadfast in pushing the value of self-help to enable people to improve their lives and in pushing Climate Action. He wished NATCCO many more years of service. Watch his congratulatory message [here](#).

[PCC, Philippines Organizes 2022 National Cooperative Business Congress](#)



The Philippine Cooperative Center (PCC) held the first National Cooperative Business Congress (NCBC) on 28 and 29 November 2022 at the NOVADECI Convention Center in the Philippines. The NCBC was a two-day event that aimed to (1) promote financial programs, best practices, business undertakings, and roles; (2) create an avenue for discussion of the ongoing crises; (3) recommend possible actions/solutions to address the current crises and challenges of the country (Food, Health, Energy, Public Transportation, among others); and (4) link up the Cooperative Sector with other institutions to help solve crises and other economic and social issues.

NCBC saw participation from 632 delegates in person and 251 delegates online. The Congress was divided into 4 plenaries each focusing on food, health, transportation, and energy crises in the country. Key Credit and Financial Services Cooperatives jump-started the Congress by presenting their best practices, projects, and current challenges. Cooperatives like 1CISP, CLIMBS, NATCCO, and MSCB emphasized the need to improve financial literacy programs and assist smaller cooperatives. They also promoted concern for the community and climate adversity.

The 1st plenary focused on four major issues in food security: (1) its availability, (2) affordability, (3) safety and nutrition, and (4) resilience and sustainability. In addressing food security, experts pointed to an effective food supply chain management – of the food value chain. The food value chain can be dissected into 4 integral processes: Production, Processing, Marketing, and Consumption. Any disruption among these 4 processes would affect the indicators for food security. Agri-based (from agriculture, agrarian, aquaculture, farmers, dairy, fisherfolk, based cooperatives) and Marketing (consumers, marketing, producers, and logistics) Cooperatives are in forefront of issues related to production, processing, and marketing aspects of the food value chain.

The 2nd plenary focused on health services. The speakers noted the conundrum of health coops providing affordable health care while struggling with financial issues due to delayed PhilHealth payments, high capital requirements, and the ongoing pandemic. Several solutions were discussed such as utilizing technology to move consultations online and provide seminars to their members on topics like mental health. Another solution discussed was the need for cooperation among the different cooperatives by patronizing each other's services, and investments coming from the billionaire cooperatives.

The 3rd plenary discussed the ongoing challenge of the government's public transport modernization program - high cost of expenses, lack of solidarity or alignment of services from local government units and agencies like LTRFB, and the large expense/capital infusion needed to embrace the modernization program. Some of the solutions mentioned were taking loans from the government-owned Land Bank, lobbying for more favorable policies especially the subsidies from the government that must be extended to the cooperatives financing the modern jeepneys, the institutionalization of the PUV Modernization Program, and expanding their range of services.

During the 4th plenary, the electric provider cooperatives discussed the ongoing challenges of competing with large corporations, high capital requirements of rural electrification, reliance on environmentally detrimental coal-fired power plants, and infrastructural problems of the existing grids. Some solutions discussed were the need for collaboration between different electricity-providing cooperatives to drive down prices and push for renewable sources of energy.

The 2022 NCBC also had additional plenaries that discussed concerns and projects for and of the cooperative sector namely "measuring cooperatives' social impact," creation of a comprehensive cooperative-owned data registry, and the ongoing challenge of cooperative digitalization.

In the concluding session, participants agreed on action points which included - more robust and active participation of the cooperatives in the Philippine Development Plan 2023–2028, empowering the cooperative movements as actors in the socio-economic development of the country and it sees itself as an ally in achieving the socio-economic agenda of the government and its long-term vision.

The Congress also featured solidarity messages from the ICA President, Mr. Ariel Guarco, who emphasized the intervention capabilities of cooperatives, and ICA-AP Regional Director, Mr. Balu Iyer, who pushed for digitalization and ensuring cooperative access to digital cash transfers. Under Secretary and Chairperson of the Cooperative Development Authority, Mr. Joseph Encabo mentioned

the social obligation of cooperatives and said, “As a social enterprise, I believe that cooperatives have their own moral obligations, not only to the members but also to the community where we belong.”

Policy and Legal Watch

The Indian Government Approves Setting up of 3 National-Level Multi-State Cooperative Societies



Image credits: [Newsonair.com](https://www.newsonair.com)

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi, has approved setting up and promoting three national-level multi-state cooperative societies under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies (MSCS) Act, 2002. These are national multi-state cooperative export society; national multi-state cooperative organic society; and national level multi-state seed cooperative.

The proposed [national multi-state cooperative export society](#) will be the largest of the three with a paid-up capital of Rs 2,000 crore. This will be promoted by the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), the Amul brand’s promoter; National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED); National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC); Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO); and Krishak Bharati Co-operative Limited (KRIBHCO). Initially, these five promoters will invest Rs 100 crore each, said the official from the Ministry of Cooperation. The society will act as an umbrella organization for the export of surplus goods/services produced by various cooperative societies across the country.

The proposed [national multi-state seed cooperative](#) will have an authorized share capital of Rs 500 crore but will be established with an initial paid-up share capital of Rs 250 crore. It will have five promoters including three national cooperatives — IFFCO, KRIBHCO, and NAFED and two statutory bodies — National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) and the NCDC. This cooperative society Will act as an apex organization for the production, procurement, processing, branding, labelling, packaging, storage, marketing, and distribution of quality seeds; strategic research & development; and for developing a system for the preservation and promotion of indigenous natural seeds.

The proposed [national-level cooperative society for organic products](#) will have an authorized share capital of Rs 500 crore and will be established with an initial paid-up share capital of Rs 100 crore, an official said. Five cooperative bodies — GCMMF; NAFED; and National Cooperative Consumers’ Federation of India Limited (NCCF); NDDB; and NCDC will take the initiative to set up an organic cooperative society. This will act as an umbrella organization for aggregation, procurement,

certification, testing, branding, and marketing of organic products with support from relevant Union Ministries.

These three new societies will help in taking forward the respective sectoral interests of cooperatives from across the country. Primary to national-level cooperatives societies can become members of these umbrella bodies. All these cooperatives will have their elected representatives on the Board of the respective apex societies as per their bye-laws. This will help unlock the export potential of Indian cooperatives in global markets.

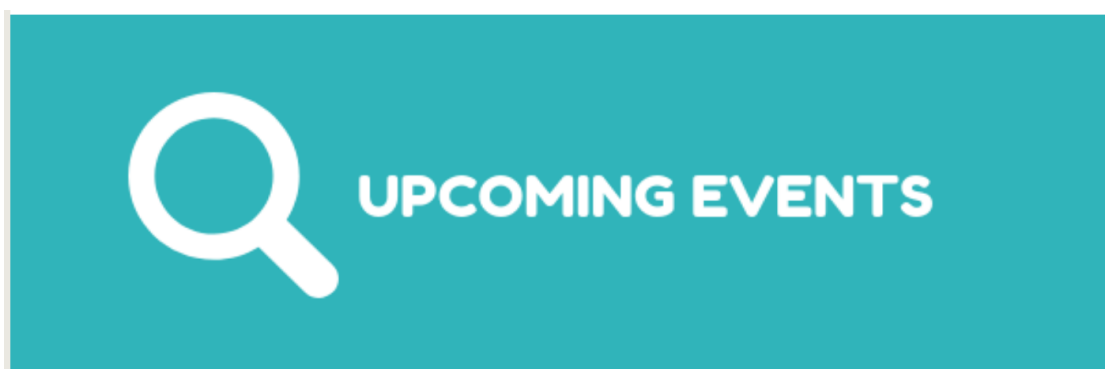
National Assembly of Vietnam Adopts Law on Implementation of Democracy at Grassroots Level



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The [National Assembly](#) in Vietnam passed the [Law on the Implementation of Democracy at the Grassroots Level](#), at its ongoing fourth session in Hanoi on 10 November 2022.

The legislators also looked into the [Law on Cooperatives](#) (revised) which comprises of 12 chapters and 111 articles. Compared to the 2012 version, three articles are removed, 65 are amended, and 49 others are supplemented. The building of the bill aims to complete the legal framework for the dynamic, effective, and sustainable development of the collective economy, together with the State economic sector to become a firm foundation of the civil economy. [Read more.](#)



- Webinar on Financial Literacy by ICA-AP Committee on Youth Cooperation – 6 March 2023
- IWD Virtual lecture on DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality - 7 March 2023
- Coop Colloquium by ICA-AP Committee on Cooperative Research – March 2023 (TBC)
- ICA-AP Regional Board Meeting in Kathmandu, Nepal – April 2023 (TBC)

- Training of Trainers on Climate Change and Action by ICA-AP Committee on Women (Country TBC) - May 2023 (TBC)
- International Day of Cooperatives – 1 July 2023
- The 25th-anniversary celebration of the ICA-AP Committee on Women in Tokyo, Japan (hybrid) - 19 & 20 September 2023