

ICA-AP NEWSLETTER

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

January 2025

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IYC 2025 Launch for Asia-Pacific and Japan in Tokyo, Japan



The International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) 2025 journey begins! The IYC 2025 official launch for Asia-Pacific and Japan will be held on 19 February 2025 in Tokyo. Co-hosted by ICA-AP, the IYC 2025 Japan Committee, and the ILO Office for Japan, this hybrid event will bring together cooperative leaders, policymakers, and youth to set the stage for a year of advocacy, awareness, and action. The program will feature addresses from key figures as well as presentations from cooperatives across Asia-Pacific on their plans for IYC 2025. Youth representatives will share their insights alongside short films showcasing the impact of cooperatives. Interested participants can register to attend online; program and registration details are available [here](#).

ICA-AP President Shares a Message on IYC 2025



Dr. Chandrapal Singh Yadav, ICA-AP President, in his message to all ICA members in the Asia-Pacific region, encouraged them to actively celebrate, participate, and collaborate as we mark the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) 2025. This is our chance to showcase the power of cooperatives in building a better world. He thanked them for their continued cooperation with the regional office and conveyed his thoughts and aspirations in 11 points to guide the collective efforts to celebrate IYC 2025. [Read more](#).

ICYC Chairperson Atty. Dulce S. Bustamante Shares a Message on IYC 2025



Dear Cooperators and Youth Leaders,

Happy International Year of Cooperatives!

As we embark on 2025, the International Year of Cooperatives, we are reminded of the transformative power of cooperatives in driving sustainable development and strengthening communities worldwide. This year serves as both a celebration and a call to action—a time to reflect, innovate, and reimagine how cooperatives can address the world’s most pressing challenges.

Youth stand at the forefront of this movement. With their energy, creativity, and passion, young cooperators are shaping the future through bold ideas, digital innovation, and socially responsible leadership. Their active participation not only strengthens the cooperative model but also ensures its adaptability in an ever-evolving world.

At the ICA-AP Committee on Youth Cooperation (ICYC), we remain committed to fostering youth engagement in cooperatives. Through initiatives such as the Coop Pitch, Youth Summits, and capacity-building programs, we provide platforms for young leaders to learn, collaborate, and drive meaningful change. This year, we are also amplifying the Go Green Campaign, which connects youth with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through climate action. By empowering young cooperators to champion environmental sustainability and lead impactful initiatives, we aim to inspire a greener, more resilient future.

Let 2025 be the year we invest in the next generation of cooperative leaders—encouraging them to dream big, lead boldly, and cooperate for a better tomorrow. Together, we can ensure that cooperative principles remain a guiding light of hope and progress for generations to come.

I invite all stakeholders to join us in celebrating and advancing the International Year of Cooperatives. Let’s make 2025 a milestone year for cooperatives and youth worldwide.

In solidarity and cooperation,

*Atty. Dulce S. Bustamante
Chairperson, ICA-AP Committee on Youth Cooperation (ICYC)*

Interview with Mr. Jeroen Douglas on IYC 2025 Hopes, Plans, and A Lot More



We spoke to Mr. Jeroen Douglas, ICA Director General, as he shares insights into the global cooperative movement and the significance of 2025 as the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC). The interview explored key takeaways from ICA's historic Global Conference in New Delhi, including the need to strengthen cooperative identity, engage youth, and leverage technology to address global challenges like climate change, inequality, and poverty. He shared insights on how cooperatives can become solutions for a better future and the ambitious vision for a five-year sprint to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. With personal reflections and strategic priorities, Mr. Douglas' message is a clarion call to unite, innovate, and amplify the cooperative voice worldwide. Watch the interview [here](#).

17th ICA-AP Regional Assembly



The ICA-AP 17th Regional Assembly and the elections of the new Regional Board will be held in Sri Lanka from 24 to 28 November 2025. ICA-AP signed an MoU with the National Council of Cooperatives in Sri Lanka (NCCSL) to host the 2025 Regional Assembly and related events.

The Regional Assembly and side events will be centered around the theme of the 2025 UN International Year of Cooperatives (IYC 2025), "Cooperatives Build a Better World", and will see a culmination of activities undertaken by the Regional Office to observe the IYC. Stay tuned for more updates!

ICA-AP UPDATES

COOP Dialogue 8 – Call for articles



The upcoming issue of COOP Dialogue (CD8) is themed "Cooperative Housing: Bridging the Urban Divide". It will focus on how cooperative approaches can address the housing crisis intensified by rapid urbanization. We are inviting contributions from anyone passionate about exploring innovative solutions to this global challenge. Share your insights on how cooperatives in your country are tackling this crisis. Read the submission guidelines [here](#).

Parallel Event at NGO Commission on Status of Women 69 Forum



On 19 March 2025, ICA-AP and its Committee on Women will organize a virtual parallel event at the NGO Commission on Status of Women (CSW) 69 Forum on the topic, "Policy Actions Matter: Cooperatives in Asia-Pacific and Their Initiatives to Foster SDG 5 (Gender Equality)" under the theme "Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women".

The event will showcase good case practices from the cooperative sector in Asia and the Pacific, highlighting gender-based policies and institutional mechanisms that have been put in place to advance women's empowerment in the cooperative sector. It will also showcase the initiatives taken

by cooperatives in different countries to foster SDG 5 and the steps being taken to make these initiatives successful.

It will be held from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm IST. Interested participants can register [here](#).

COOP Colloquium 11: Promoting Partnerships between the State and Cooperatives Comparative Perspectives from Select Countries of the Asia-Pacific Region



The 11th Coop Colloquium brought together experts and stakeholders to discuss partnerships between the government and cooperatives, emphasizing how such partnerships can help address socio-economic challenges. The session was timely and very significant following the declaration by the United Nations, marking 2025 as the International Year of Cooperatives. The colloquium centered around findings from an exploratory study by Prof. Yashavantha Dongre and Prof. M. Indira, looking at cooperative-government partnerships in diverse countries throughout the Asia Pacific. The study sought to offer an understanding of the constitutional and legal structures, the existing partnerships, and the opinion of stakeholders to present the recommendations for action towards further strengthening of these collaborations.

Prof. Dongre outlined the study's scope, objectives, and methodology. He briefed participants on key aspects of the research, which spanned countries such as India, Nepal, Malaysia, the Philippines, Japan, Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Jordan, Morocco, and Fiji. It focused on constitutional and legal provisions, policy frameworks, and the roles of cooperatives in implementing government programs. Key highlights of the study included the diversity in constitutional recognition for cooperatives. For instance, India's 97th Constitutional Amendment grants fundamental rights to cooperatives, while Nepal integrates cooperatives into its sustainable development strategy. In contrast, countries like Japan and Kyrgyzstan provide indirect support through freedoms of association without explicit constitutional provisions. The policy landscape also varied, with India, Malaysia, and Korea having dedicated cooperative policies, while others like Morocco and Jordan embed cooperatives within broader macroeconomic strategies.

Legal frameworks were discussed in detail, showcasing how different countries have tailored laws to address sector-specific needs. India's Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, Nepal's Cooperatives Act (2017), and Korea's Framework Act were highlighted as robust examples of enabling legislation. However, countries like Fiji and Jordan face challenges due to limited or outdated legal provisions.

Participants actively engaged in discussions, sharing insights and perspectives from their regions. Challenges such as bureaucratic hurdles, limited financial resources, and inadequate cooperative

representation in policymaking were highlighted. The lack of consistent consultation mechanisms and awareness of cooperative benefits were identified as key barriers to effective partnerships.

Dr. Sidsel Grimstad from Griffith University discussed questions on balancing cooperative and state interests, with discussions emphasizing the importance of cooperative autonomy in partnerships. Stakeholders from Korea and the Philippines shared best practices, including regular consultation mechanisms and the integration of cooperatives in public service delivery. Participants agreed on the need for empirical studies and knowledge sharing to identify areas for collaboration.

The session also covered the role of cooperatives in delivering welfare programs. Examples from India, Nepal, and Korea demonstrated how cooperatives contribute to initiatives like public distribution systems, rural healthcare, and community development. Discussions emphasized the potential for scaling such efforts by addressing gaps in policy support and infrastructure.

The colloquium concluded with several actionable recommendations. Participants called for the establishment of dedicated government departments or committees to engage cooperatives more effectively. Regular consultations and advisory mechanisms were emphasized to ensure cooperative representation and alignment with state objectives.

Key Takeaways:

1. **Diverse Frameworks:** The constitutional, legal, and policy frameworks for cooperatives vary widely across regions, with significant implications for cooperative-state partnerships.
2. **Empowering Cooperatives:** Enabling policies, regular consultations, and financial incentives are essential for fostering effective collaborations.
3. **Challenges to Address:** Bureaucratic hurdles, inconsistent engagement mechanisms, and low awareness of cooperative benefits remain critical barriers.
4. **Knowledge Sharing:** Learning from successful models, such as Korea's Framework Act and the Philippines' Cooperative Development Authority, can inspire effective strategies elsewhere.
5. **Actionable Recommendations:** Participants emphasized the need for dedicated government departments, capacity-building programs, and streamlined administrative processes to strengthen cooperative-state collaborations.

The next Colloquium will be held on 25 February 2025.

ICA-EU Updates

Press Release: ICA-AP Strengthens Cooperative Communication with Digital Storytelling & Branding Training in Malaysia



The ICA-AP Regional Office successfully conducted a peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing and training program under the ICA-EU Financial Framework Partnership Agreement Phase 2 (FFPA2). The program themed “Telling Our Stories, Building Strong Cooperative Brands in the Digital Era” was hosted by ANGKASA in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on February 5-6, 2025. The training was designed to equip cooperatives with effective branding, communication, and digital storytelling skills, preparing them for the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) 2025. [Read more.](#)

Strategic Dialogue on Cooperative Development for Rural and Agrifood Systems Transformation in the NENA Region



The Strategic Dialogue on Cooperative Development for Rural and Agrifood Systems Transformation in the North East and Northern Africa (NENA) Region brought together key stakeholders to discuss the role of cooperatives in advancing sustainable rural and agrifood systems.

Hosted in Morocco, in partnership with FAO, ICA Africa, and ICA-AP, the event gathered representatives from government institutions, cooperatives, and international and support organizations to explore pressing challenges and emerging opportunities in cooperative development. Mr. Balu Iyer, Regional Director, and Ms. Monalisa Kashyap, Program Coordinator & Advocacy Officer, represented the ICA Asia and Pacific regional office as part of the ICA-EU partnership program.

The opening session featured remarks from high-level officials, including representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Marine Fisheries, Rural Development and Waters and Forests of Morocco, FAO RNE (Mr. Ahmad Mukhtar), and ICA Asia and Pacific. The keynote address by Ms. Aicha Errifaai, General Director of ODCO, set the stage for discussions on cooperative resilience and growth.

The plenary session delved into the positioning of cooperatives as key agents for rural transformation, highlighting FAO's situation analysis and policy frameworks for cooperative development. Experts, including Ms. May Hani (FAO RNE), Mr. Balu Iyer (ICA Asia and Pacific), and Ms. Rym Ferchichi (UMNAGRI), shared insights on regional trends and regulatory needs.

Parallel panel sessions explored four critical areas: 1) Inclusion of women, youth, and indigenous people in cooperatives; 2) Cooperatives as institutions for peacebuilding and resilience; 3) Strengthening cooperative identity in the NENA region; 4) Services and innovation within cooperatives. The third session was moderated by Ms. Monalisa from ICA-AP and Mr. Melvin from ICA Africa. Each session featured expert speakers from countries of the NENA region.

The second day provided a platform for direct engagement between government representatives and cooperative leaders, with two high-level roundtable discussions. The discussions featured officials from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Qatar, and other NENA countries, addressing policy and institutional support for cooperative development. The day concluded with a field visit to local cooperatives, including Biobenzaf Cooperative and Nissaa Al Horat Cooperative, showcasing successful cooperative models in agribusiness and women-led enterprises.

The final day focused on translating discussions into actionable strategies. Participants engaged in working group discussions to develop a Common Vision for Cooperative Development and outline concrete steps for a regional roadmap.

Updated Country Snapshots – India and Vietnam



Originally developed in 2019 under the ICA-EU Partnership Program Phase 1, the country snapshots offer an overview of the cooperative landscape, policy developments, and key contributions to the economy in each country. In Phase 2, the Vietnam and India snapshots have been updated with new insights and recent developments, including:

Vietnam –

- Latest data on the Vietnamese cooperative sector
- Updates on the 2023 Cooperative Law and legislative advancements
- Inspiring new case studies from innovative cooperatives - Thanh Cong Waste Recycle Cooperative, Hanoi; Hao Dat Tea Cooperative, Thai Nguyen Province; Rach Gam Shipbuilding and River Road Transportation Cooperative, Tien Giang Province; and Saigon Co.op – a pioneer in cooperative retail leadership
- Key international initiatives, such as the “You Cool” Project, showcasing their alignment with global developments in cooperative movement.

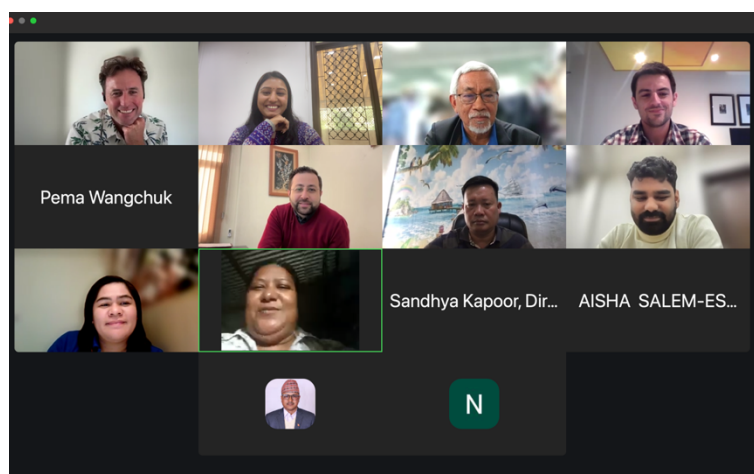
Read the full snapshot [here](#).

India –

- Latest data on India's 621,514 cooperatives and 287 million members
- Legislative updates, including the Multi-State Cooperative Societies (Amendment) Act 2023
- Case studies featuring Looms of Ladakh, SEWA Federation, ULCCS, and IFFCO
- India's role in the global cooperative movement, including insights from the ICA Global Conference in New Delhi

Read the full snapshot [here](#).

Empowered Leadership, Thriving Cooperatives: Strengthening Governance for Better Tomorrow



On 16 December 2024, the ICA-AP organized a virtual capacity building training on ‘Principles of Good Governance’ as a part of its series – Empowered Leadership, Thriving Cooperatives: Strengthening Governance for Better Tomorrow, aimed at equipping cooperative leaders with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the complex challenges of the modern world. The webinar series was organized as part of the ICA-EU Financial Framework Partnership Agreement (FFPA) Phase 2, with the core objectives of:

- 1) Enhancing understanding of good governance principles and best practices to ensure transparency, accountability, and democratic decision-making within their organizations;
- 2) Promoting effective governance structure that supports sustainable business models, ethical practices, and community-driven approaches, ensuring cooperatives create a positive impact on their members and society;
- 3) Providing an understanding of innovation and technology in cooperative governance.

The training on 16 December was organized in partnership with the [Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals \(BCCM\)](#), the peak body representing cooperatives and mutuals (CMEs) in Australia. BCCM brings together these businesses with a shared goal of enhancing awareness of CMEs and highlighting their significant contributions to the economy and community well-being.

The training session began with greetings and introductions by Ms. Monalisa Kashyap, Program Coordinator. She shared the background of the training program and introduced the theme of the second training on the Principles of Good Governance. The session aimed to provide insights into governance principles from an Australian perspective while fostering engaging discussions and active participation among attendees. Attendees from Iran, Bhutan, Malaysia, Nepal, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Kiribati participated in the webinar.

Mr. Anthony Taylor led an interactive discussion using the Menti tool for warm-up questions before diving into the principles of good governance in cooperatives. He emphasized that strong governance, through systems, mechanisms, and controls, is key to achieving a cooperative's purpose. He outlined the board's critical role in strategy and policy-making, stressing the need to balance representation, expertise, and member voice. Addressing common challenges in cooperative businesses, such as the free rider, horizon, portfolio, control, and influence cost problems, he highlighted how effective governance can help mitigate these issues. He also referenced the Australian Cooperative and Mutual Enterprise Governance Principles as a valuable benchmark for cooperatives.

The training session explored key aspects of cooperative governance through case studies and interactive discussions. Using the Capricorn Society as a case study, participants examined the importance of creating, protecting, and returning member value while maintaining a strong focus on identity and purpose. The discussion highlighted the need for clear roles and responsibilities, due diligence in board appointments, and structured evaluation processes. For smaller cooperatives, implementing a self-assessment process—overseen by the board chair—and using a board skills matrix to ensure expertise and experience were also emphasized.

The session also covered the application of technology in governance, with case studies from Yenda Producers Co-op and The Co-op Bank (UK). Participants discussed the importance of having a clear strategy and a long-term vision for cooperative banking ensuring its alignment within a broader financial portfolio.

The training concluded with a case-study discussion on governance challenges in a cooperative with two regions, A and B. Participants explored strategies to address concerns from Region B, including board representation, equitable resource allocation, and transparent communication. Suggestions included open nominations for regional representatives, ensuring board diversity, and offering job opportunities in Region B. The session reinforced the need for member-centric governance and a standardized measurement tool for cooperative governance effectiveness.

The third and final session of this training series, focusing on Cooperative Leadership, is scheduled for February 27, 2025, and will be facilitated by the NATCCO Federation from the Philippines.

Member Updates

Cooperatives in Asia-Pacific Gear Up for IYC 2025 Celebrations



Our members across the region have started hosting national launch events and activities to kick off IYC 2025 celebrations.

India - The National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI) kicked off IYC 2025 with its Centre for Entrepreneurship Development and Cooperation (CEDC) by hosting the inaugural meeting of the Committee of Women Entrepreneurs (CoWE). The meeting, attended by 20 women entrepreneurs from NCUI's Incubation Centre, focused on empowering women artisans through innovative ideas, product development, branding, and promotional initiatives. Dr. Sudhir Mahajan, Chief Executive of NCUI, highlighted CoWE's potential to support Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and foster collective empowerment. Advisor Sumit Singh outlined the Incubation Centre's achievements, including mobilizing over 5,000 women and training 1,500 as entrepreneurs. Participants shared success stories showcasing the transformative impact of the initiative. CoWE aims to strengthen SHGs by enhancing the visibility and marketability of their products, fostering collaboration, and promoting women's economic independence. As a cornerstone of NCUI's IYC efforts, CoWE is poised to drive innovation, sustainable development, and women's empowerment through cooperative frameworks in 2025 and beyond.

Malaysia – Malaysia marked the launch of IYC 2025 at ANGKASA's headquarters on 12 December 2024. The event, officiated by Minister of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives YB Datuk Ewon Benedick, highlighted the UN's recognition of cooperatives and Malaysia's commitment to strengthening cooperative networks domestically and globally. As part of Malaysia's ASEAN 2025 chairmanship, the government has endorsed the ASEAN Cooperative Dialogue, to be hosted by ANGKASA with full governmental support. Prime Minister YAB Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim announced an RM1 million allocation for ANGKASA to bolster regional economic cooperation through the ASEAN Co-operative Organization during the ASEAN 2025 Summit.

The minister emphasized that the cooperative movement in Malaysia has the potential to address global challenges and lead the regional cooperative agenda. He also announced that a draft amendment to Malaysia's 30-year-old Cooperative Act is in its final stages, set to be presented to the Cabinet this month and to Parliament next year. The amendment aims to enhance legislation and

enable cooperatives to generate greater revenue for their members. Feedback from ANGKASA and cooperative leaders will be incorporated into the draft. Datuk Seri Dr. Abdul Fattah Abdullah, President of ANGKASA, encouraged state governments to hold IYC 2025 launch events to strengthen local cooperative engagement and awareness. States were also urged to implement programs that support the growth and competitiveness of cooperatives on a global scale. This milestone event underscored the importance of cooperatives in Malaysia's economic development and their potential for regional and global impact in 2025.

Vietnam – On 11 December 2024, the Vietnam Cooperative Alliance hosted a ceremony to honor outstanding cooperative products and present the inaugural Mai An Tiem Award 2024 (Coop Gold Product Awards 2024). The awards celebrate high-quality and competitive products from reputable cooperatives and cooperative unions in Vietnam, highlighting their role in developing the collective economy. These awards aim to improve productivity and quality, promote cultural identities and traditional values, and meet market demands while standardizing product branding and evaluation criteria. This year, 100 exemplary products were selected from numerous submissions in sectors like agriculture, handicrafts, and food and beverages. The event also marked the launch of the Month of Action for Cooperatives and the International Year of Cooperatives 2025. The ceremony was attended by Nguyen Thi Thanh, Vice Chairwoman of the National Assembly.

Australia – The national apex Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals (BCCM) launched the BCCM Icons campaign. It is a year-long celebration for 2025, aimed at highlighting the history, achievements, and impact of Australia's co-operatives and mutuals. Through social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, the campaign will feature inspirational stories of co-operatives and mutuals, emphasizing their positive influence on members and communities. The campaign encourages active participation from members, stakeholders, and networks to amplify content and increase social media engagement, creating a collective effort to showcase the value of co-operatives and mutuals during the IYC 2025.

Sri Lanka – On 7 January 2025, the Department of Cooperatives and the National Council of Cooperatives in Sri Lanka held a ceremony to launch IYC 2025 in Colombo.

China – All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives will organize the Shanghai Expo (a cooperative expo aimed at promoting trade among cooperatives in the region) in November 2025 as a key regional IYC 2025 activity.

[Jordan Cooperative Corporation signs MoU with ILO](#)



Picture Credit: ILO

The Jordan Cooperative Corporation (JCC), our member from Jordan, and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have signed a three-year agreement (2025-2027) to strengthen Jordan's cooperative sector through training, governance support, and digital tools. Signed under the patronage of Jordan's Minister of Agriculture Khaled Al-Hunaifat, the partnership aims to enhance cooperative development, promote decent work, and combat child labor in agriculture. As part of the PROSPECTS Partnership, supported by the Netherlands, JCC will adopt ILO's Think.Coop, Start.Coop, and My.Coop training materials, integrating them into its national training programs. This collaboration builds on a previous agreement in 2020, which led to the development of Jordan's National Cooperative Strategy and legislative reforms. [Read more.](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS

- ICA-AP Regional Board Meeting in Tokyo, Japan – 18 February 2025
- IYC 2025 Launch for Asia-Pacific and Japan in Tokyo, Japan – 19 February 2025
- Virtual Capacity Building Training on Cooperative Leadership – 27 February 2025
- COOP Colloquium 12 on Affordable and Sustainable Housing – Solutions Through Cooperative Models – 25 February 2025
- ICA-MAFF Women's Training Course in Thailand and Japan – 17 February to 12 March 2025
- Virtual parallel event at NGO CSW 69 – 19 March 2025
- ToT on climate change and action for women cooperators by ICA-AP Committee on Women in Indonesia – 21 to 24 May 2025
- International Day of Cooperatives – 5 July 2025
- Cooperative Entrepreneurship: Shaping a Sustainable Future in PNG – 19 to 21 August 2025
- 17th ICA-AP Regional Assembly in Sri Lanka – 24 to 28 November 2025