



**ICA REGIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE
FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
ACTIVITY REPORT
2008-2010**



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Foreword



It is my great pleasure to introduce our activities on International Co-operative Alliance Regional Women's Committee for Asia and Pacific (ICA-AP RWC) to co-operators worldwide and fellow colleagues in the Pacific region. Gender Equality is a very common issue with some similar challenges on this topic in almost every country.

Under the present economic depression little attention is paid on gender equality issues resulting in more difficult situation for women. We now therefore, need more energy to focus on the promotion of gender equality.

Women in the Asia-Pacific region and especially those in the rural areas tend to be modest and humble.

Many countries in the Asia-Pacific region are promoting gender equality programs into the mainstream of the society.

Our committee meeting was honored to receive participation of two vice-presidents, Ms. Emma Nieva from the Philippines and Ms. Kruewan Chonlanai from Thailand in 2009 and 2010 respectively. Their participation had a significant impact on discussions held.

ICA Regional Women's Forum was held in Vietnam and Beijing in 2008 and 2010 respectively where best practices were presented. During these meetings we shared the activity examples of Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Korea, Iran, Pakistan, Thailand and Japan.

We had the opportunity to visit women's co-operatives during the regional women's committee meeting in the Philippines in 2009 and noticed the dramatic achievements they have made. We realized that the co-operative movement is raising women's position in the society.

Gender equality in the Asia Pacific is moving ahead steadily.
Let's keep moving forward.

With Co-operative greeting,

Hitomi Tanaka

Chairperson, ICA -Asia and Pacific RWC

Message from the Regional Director



I have pleasure in presenting this report to all the stake holders. The ICA is committed to achieving gender mainstreaming in co-operatives in the region. We have set up strong mechanism in the form of Regional Women's Committee to help achieve the goal. The Women's Committee is one of the pro-active committees of ICA-AP and has been implementing a number of capacity building programmes for the members, institutions and for the community as well.

The lobbying and advocacy programmes in the form of women committee meetings, regional women forums and exposure visits have been impacting the thinking process of the fraternity towards gender balance. Due to the consistent endeavour of the gender programmes of the ICA-AP, a number of member organisations have created women department or women/ gender committees in their respective offices. The co-operatives around the region have shown remarkable support to ICA-AP gender programmes by hosting such programmes and by sending participants to attend such programmes.

Women are visible in co-operatives at primary levels as members but the leadership and senior management positions are still to be taken over. The age old socio-economic-religious-cultural circle has imprisoned women in many countries and isolated approach by co-operatives is not enough to create tangible impact. Therefore, an inclusive strategy is needed to address the situation. The co-operatives should partner with governments and UN agencies for clubbing resources. The co-operative law is one of the most important tool which should be re-written to help expedite women's participation in agricultural and other co-operatives.

I appreciate the efforts of the IC-AP Regional Women's Committee for their commendable work and wish to see a gender balanced co-operative movement.

Dr. Chan Ho CHOI

Regional Director

Introduction

Since the inception of the ICA Regional Women's Committee for Asia and Pacific in 1998, various activities are being conducted regularly to promote women empowerment for gender mainstreaming in co-operatives in the region. These activities are documented and a periodical Progress Report is being published by the office.

This 2008-2010 report is the fourth in series. During the period under report we reached out to thousands of members directly through capacity building programmes, lobbying, advocacy and networking efforts and through the direct beneficiaries of our capacity building programmes. Lobbying, advocacy and networking activities boost the influence on decision makers.

The visibility of women leaders improved slightly as there were 2 women CEO (NATCCO, Philippines, and SNCF, Singapore) took charge of the national Federations. However, the membership of the committee has not improved any bit and we have only 14 women members out of 71 member organizations in 25 countries. There is lack of interest in nomination to Women Committee due to other priorities.

However, gender mainstreaming programmes are widely accepted and promoted by members. We are thank full to our members and other stake holders for their continuous support in implementation of the activities. All our members generously host the programmes, send participants and provide logistics.

We invited international agencies such as UNDP, ILO, FAO and others and they got involved as resource persons to share experience and enrich knowledge of members for gender mainstreaming.

With co-operative solidarity, we shall continue with the endeavor and work towards achieving the goal of gender mainstreaming at all levels of co-operatives.

Savitri Singh

Advisor-Gender Programme

ICA-AP, New Delhi

“ICA Regional Women's Committee for Asia and the Pacific” (ICA-RWC for Asia & Pacific)

This Committee is a Committee of the ICA Regional Assembly for Asia and the Pacific. The Committee shall work in accordance with the aims and objectives of the ICA and the general policy of the ICA Regional Assembly for Asia and the Pacific.

The membership of the committee (September, 2010) is 14 members from 11 countries.

Office Bearers



Chairperson
Hitomi Tanaka



Vice Chairperson
Emma P. Abellanosa-Nieva



Vice Chairperson
Kruewan Chonlanai

Over all support



Dr. Chan Ho CHOI
Regional Director



Secretary
Savitri Singh

Aim and Functions

Overall Aim

The overall aim of the Committee is to promote and encourage member organisations to ensure women's participation in every aspect of co-operative development. The Committee shall give special attention to promoting women's participation in decision making, leadership and management at all levels. It should also ensure that Gender Awareness and Gender Integration in co-operatives within the region is achieved.

Functions

The functions of the Committee are follows:

1. To establish contacts among women leaders of co-operatives and create a forum for exchange of ideas and experiences in the region.
2. To promote understanding among co-operative leaders on the aspirations, needs and interests of women in all aspects of co-operative activities.
3. To represent women in co-operatives at the ICA Regional Assembly and ICA Regional Executive Council Meeting.
4. To identify areas for training, education, research and technical assistance required for national and regional projects and programmes for women in co-operatives.
5. To advise the ICA ROAP and member organisations to organise and implement activities which promote advancement of women in co-operatives, focusing on women's participation in decision making, leadership and management at all levels.
6. To liaise and collaborate with other regional and international organisations concerned with women and gender issues in co-operatives.

Activities

In order to achieve over all aims and objectives of the Regional Women's Committee through ICA-AP gender programmes, a number of activities are being implemented throughout the year. The activities are broadly divided into 3 categories: Governance, Advocacy and Capacity Building.

Governance

The meeting of the Women's Committee is held once in two years in conjunction with ICA Regional Assembly. All the members could meet to discuss and decide policy issues and election of the office bearers is also held if due. The members also make presentation about the activities of their co-operatives and share experiences.

However, in order to plan and implement the activities of the Regional Women's Committee, meeting of the Office Bearers is being held once in a year. Office Bearers include the Chairperson, 2 Vice Chairs and the Secretary of the committee.

Meeting of the Regional Women's Committee:

Two meetings were held during the period under report. The 6th RWC meeting was held in December, 2008 in Vietnam and 7th meeting was held in September, 2010 in China.

ICA -AP Regional Women's Committee Meeting-2008, Vietnam



The participants

The meeting of ICA Regional Women's Committee was held on 1st December, 2008, in Hanoi, Vietnam.

5 members attended the meeting. Several members could not attend the meeting due to strike at the Bangkok airport.

In absence of the Chair Person, Ms. Hitomi Tanaka, Vice Chair of the committee chaired the meeting. She extended warm welcome to the members and observers. The Vice Chairman of VCA made a special gesture by attending the meeting as a special invitee. He addressed the participants and extended warm welcome as the host.

The election of the committee held. Ms. Hitomi Tanaka from JCCU, Japan has been elected as Chairperson and Ms. Norma Preyaras from NATCCO, Philippines has been elected as vice chair.

The secretary presented report of the activities. All the activities as planned have been completed.

Papers on progress reports regarding gender integration and women development activities in co-operatives have been presented by some of the members.

Regional Women's Committee Meeting-2010, China

The meeting of the Regional Women's Committee for Asia and Pacific was held on 1st September, 2010 in Beijing International Convention Centre (BICC), Beijing, China.

Following members attended the meeting:

1. Ms. Hitomi Tanaka, Chairperson
2. Ms. Emma Neiva, Vice Chairperson
3. Ms. Kruewan Chonlanai, Vice Chair Person
4. Ms. Tahmineh Toliatkashani
5. Ms. Akiko SATO, represented by Ms. Chieko FUJIKI
6. Ms. MI-YEA, OH
7. Ms. Datuk Hajah Noraini Datuk Seri Panglima Haji Salleh
8. Ms. Errum Sharif Bhajji
9. Ms. SUZUE UTO
10. Ms. Savitri Singh, Secretary
11. Dr. Chanho CHOI- Regional Director-ICA-AP, Special Invitee
11. Mr. Yoshi Nakamura, ICA-AP, Singapore-observer

Following members could not attend the meeting :

1. Ms. Lida Sadaghian Babil
2. Ms. Aisyah Lutfi
3. Ms. Tran Thu Hang
4. Ms. Om Devi Joshi
5. Ms. Suchintha Marses Deepanthi Fernando Chakrawarthige

Besides members, 20 observers from 8 countries were also present.



Members of RWC-2010

The meeting started with welcome remarks by the Chair Person Ms. Hitomi Tanaka. Dr.Chanho Choi, Regional Director of ICA-AP also attended the meeting briefly at the opening session and extended warm welcome to the participants. Dr. Choi emphasized upon importance of equal participation of women and men in co-operatives and the need of capacity building of women to take up leadership. He said that in order to achieve gender equality, partnership with men is important .He further suggested that since the ICA gender programme is working for gender mainstreaming, the name "women's committee" does not reflect the vision and mission. The members may consider changing the name as gender committee. He cited the example of ICA Gender Equality Committee at ICA Headquarters in Geneva.

Dr. CHOI talked to the participants about UN proclamation of Co-operative Year-2012 and suggested that the participants may collect co-operative success stories and send to ICA for presentation before UN.



The meeting at Progress

After finishing the usual business of Action Taken Report and confirmation of the minutes of last meeting, the committee moved on to discuss the issue of increasing membership of the committee and election of the vice chair.

The position of second chair was vacant for a long time due to non availability of a suitable candidate. Election of office bearers was held to elect the vice chair.

Ms. Kruewan Chonlanai from AWCF was elected as second vice chair

Following new member joined the committee:

1. Ms. MI-YEA, OH from Korea
2. Ms. Datuk Hajah Noraini Datuk Seri Panglima Haji Salleh from Malaysia
3. Ms. SUZUE UTO from Japan

Following new members replaced the old members from their coop:

1. Ms. Kruewan Chonlanai, AWCF
2. Ms. Tahmineh Toliatkashani , CURACI , Iran
3. Ms. Akiko SATO, JA-Zenchu, Japan

4. Ms. Om Devi Joshi , NCF, Nepal
5. Ms. Suchintha Marses Deepanthi Fernando Chakrawarthige, COOPFED, Srilanka

The RWC-2010 has now 14 members from 11 countries.

After the elections, Work Plan- 2011 and Plan for Review of TOT Manual was discussed. The meeting decided that a committee should be constituted for review. The committee will have following members and may have a meeting next year-2011 to discuss.

1. Armi Zainudin from ANGKASA, Malaysia
2. Salome Ganibe, AWCF
3. Paul Sinappan, Independent Consultant
4. Hitomi Tanaka, Chairperson
5. Emma Neiva, Vice Chair
6. Savitri Singh from ICA-AP

There is no need to re-write the manual. Only, some additions and deletions of content is required. However, depending on our budget we may hire an international expert for final opinion.

At the end of the meeting following members shared information and updates about gender mainstreaming activities in their co-operatives -

- Ms. Chieko FUJIKI, JA-ZENCHU, Japan
- Ms. Emma Nieva, The National Confederation of Co-operatives (NATCCO), Philippines
- Ms. Datuk Hajah Noraini Datuk Seri Panglima Haji Salleh ANGKASA, Malaysia
- Ms. Tahmineh Toliatkashani, CURACI, Iran
- Ms. Errum Azim, Karachi Co-operative Housing Society, Karachi, Pakistan
- Ms. Kruewan Chonlanai, Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum (AWCF)
- Ms. SUZUE UTO, National Federation of Fisheries Co-operative Associations (JF-ZENGYOREN)

Meeting of the Office Bearers (OBM):

Following meetings were held during 2008-2010:

1. ICARWC Office Bearers Meeting-2008, Singapore

The meeting of ICARWC Office Bearers for 2008 was held on 30th August, 2008 in Singapore.

Following were present:

1. Mr. Jiro Ito , manager of JCCU representing Ms. Hitomi Tanaka, Vice Chair Person
2. Ms. Savitri Singh, Secretary
3. Mr. Yoshi Nakamura, Advisor, ICA-AP

Observers:

1. Prof. Dr. Kamsiah, vice-chair of the SNCF Women's Committee
2. Prof. Dr. Rokhsana is also a member of the Committee.
3. Jasni Jamil, in charge of SNCF Women's Committee affairs.

The observers also fully participated in the discussions. In the absence of a Chair Person, the Secretary extended warm welcome to the participants and observers and initiated the



The meeting at Progress

discussion. After the usual business of confirmation of the minutes of the last meeting and action taken report, the participants discussed implementation of the remaining activities of 2008, work plan for 2009 and planning and preparations for Regional Women's Committee Meeting, Regional Women Forum 2008 to be held in December, 2008 in Hanoi.

The most important issue discussed was elections of the office bearers, i.e. Chair person and two Vice Chairs.

2. ICARWC Office Bearers Meeting -2009, Philippines

Meeting of ICA-AP RWC Office Bearers was held on 7th September, 2009 in Manila Philippines. Office Bearers Ms. Hitomi Tanaka, Chair Person, Ms. Emma Neiva, Vice Chair Person and Ms. Savitri Singh, Secretary were present. Besides, contact persons from member co-operatives have also attended as observers namely Ms. Sally Ganibe, AWCF, Mr. Yoshi Nakamura, Advisor-ICA-AP, Ms. Makiko Sakurai, staff of JCCU, Japan and Ms. Emy Santos, NATCCO, Philippines.

Main agenda for discussion was Work plan 2010 and planning for review of the TOT manual for leadership development training for women.

The office bearers also discussed the planning for the forthcoming RWC Meeting and Regional Women Forum-2010 to be held in China .

3. ICARWC Office Bearers Meeting -2010, Tokyo

The Meeting of the Office Bearers of the Regional Women's Committee was held on 14th April, 2010 in Tokyo. Following were present:

1. Ms. Hitomi Tanaka, Chair Person
2. Ms. Savitri Singh, Secretary
3. Dr. Chan Ho Choi, Regional Director of ICA-AP as special invitee
4. Mr. Haruyoshi Amano, Manager -JCCU as special invitee
5. Mr. Yoshimitsu Nakamura, ICA-AP as Observer
6. Ms. Makiko Sakurai, JCCU as observer

Dr. Choi joined ICA in January 2010 and it was his first meeting with the Office Bearers of the Women's Committee. He expressed his happiness for the opportunity to participate in the OBM and said that it is one of the oldest active and educational committee of ICA-AP and ICA-AP is thankful to JCCU for promoting gender mainstreaming and women leadership in co-operatives. He mentioned about UN Co-op Year 2012 and relevance of women empowerment to celebrations of co-operative year. ICA-AP is increasing sectoral and thematic committees.



Yoshi, Hitomi Tanaka, Amano, Savitri, Dr. CHOI and Makiko

The women committee can intervene not only in consumer but also in other sectors, especially in agriculture, credit union and housing etc. We should develop new grass root strategy for women movement into co-operatives. He expressed his desire that would like to learn what Women Committee is doing and what are the future plans.

Savitri Singh made presentation on the background, inception, previous work and future plans of the women committee.

The secretary explained difficulty in getting members for the RWC. There are 60 members of ICA-AP but the women committee has only 7 members.

The RWC is looking for a second Vice Chair.

The person is expected to attend RWC meeting once in a year and for this, the support of the sponsoring organisation is required.

The RWC will continue with capacity building and advocacy programmes for gender mainstreaming in co-operatives. Preparation for the Regional Women and Youth Forum to be held in China was also discussed in details such as theme, speakers, participants and resources etc.

Advocacy

The Advocacy for equal opportunity and level playing field for women in co-operatives and gender mainstreaming at all level is one of the important strategy. In order to make women being seen, heard and counted, the gender programme regularly engaged in various activities through following platforms:

- i. Regional Women Forum
- ii. International Women's Day
- iii. Participation in the activities of member co-operatives, other ICA Regions and international events

i. Regional Women Forum

Regional Women Forum-2008

The 5th International Co-operative Alliance Regional Women Forum was held on 2nd December 2008 in Melia Hotel of Hanoi, Vietnam.

The theme of the Forum was "Advantage of gender integration in the economy of co-operatives in Asia Pacific". Total 50 women and men co-operators from 8 Asian countries participated in the forum.

The forum was divided into 3 sessions 1. Registration and opening 2. Business session comprising of presentation by speakers from International Agencies as well as from the ICA member co-operatives from various countries and 3. Closing which includes Presentation of the Forum's Resolution.



The delegates from various countries at the forum

The Theme was further divided in to 2 sub themes in order to put more emphasis on major components of the main theme.

At the out set, the chair person of the ICA Regional Women's Committee, Ms. Hitomi Tanaka welcomed the guests and participants of the forum and thanked them for their presence.

Dr. Nguyen Tien Quan, the president of Vietnam Co-operative Alliance delivered his opening address and declared the forum open. Mr. Shil Kwan Lee, Regional Director of ICA-AP and Mr. Ivano Barberini, the President of ICA also addressed the forum and re-affirmed their commitment for achieving total gender integration in co-operatives.

Ms. Stefania Marcone, Chairperson of ICA Gender Equality Committee could not attend the forum as she was unwell. However, she sent her message and best wishes for success of the forum which was read by Savitri Singh, Gender Programme Advisor of ICA-AP.

Business session opened with Keynote speech on the theme of the forum.

Keynote speech on the theme "Advantage of gender integration in the economy of co-operatives in Asia Pacific" was delivered by speaker Ms. Bui Thi Lan, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Representative from Nepal. Ms. Lan has rich experience of working for women farmers in several Asian countries as FAO Representative. She talked about significant contribution of women as food provider for the family as well as the community and focused on various FAO programmes for socio-economic development of women to achieve food security.

Ms. Stafania was originally scheduled to make presentation on the Sub-theme I: Women's entrepreneurship development for economic growth. However, Ms. Maria Elena Chavez Herting, Deputy Director General of ICA & secretary of the Gender Equality Committee read out the paper of Ms. Marccone as she was not well.

We invited the ILO country Director from Vietnam to speak on Sub-theme II: Equity and equality in co-operatives for economic development. She said that co-operatives are the very important strategic institutions for economic growth of women. She also informed about ILO programmes for empowerment of women through co-operatives.

Speakers from ICA member organisations, Ms. Fukushiro from JA ZENCHU, Japan and Ms. Armi Zainudin from ANGKASA, Malaysia presented country perspective and shared best practices.

The regional perspective was shared by Ms. Sally Ganibe, Executive Director of AWCF, Philippines which is a member organisation of ICA-AP Regional Women's Committee.

After the presentations are over, the participants got time to interact with the speakers and asked questions.

After the speeches on themes and sub themes, a Panel Discussion was held. Two international panelists could not join due to strike at Bangkok airport. The names of the panelists present were Ms. Bui Thi Lan, Ms. Armi Zainudin and Mr. Shil Kwan Lee. The topics of discussion were:

- a. Joint membership of couple/spouse of the member in agriculture co-operatives for increasing number of women in co-operatives
- b. 33% reservation for women at all levels, especially at leadership for active participation in co-operative business.

Based on the conclusion of the panel discussion, the forum resolved a number of actions by ICA as well as all the members, partners and stake holders.

The Chair Person of the ICARWC presented these resolutions of the women forum at the ICA Regional Forum to be adopted by the ICA. The resolutions are :

- The resolution of the ICA Regional Co-operative Minister's Conferences (4th to 8th) must be acted upon urgently
- All the ICA member co-operatives, associate members, and partners must amend their respective co-operative law to accept dual membership of spouse in all type of co-operatives and especially in agriculture co-operatives. The spouse should be considered as full member for all the practical purposes and benefits of the membership, including right to vote and stand for election
- Minimum of 30% in membership, management and leadership position of the co-operatives for women.
- ICA-AP to organize national and regional conferences/workshops to discuss legal issues/co-operative laws towards gender mainstreaming and increasing women's participation at leadership and decision making positions
- All co-operatives should collect and provide information on best practices in respect of enabling law and other legal provisions
- Capacity-building of women through various media forms
- Strengthen partnership with men towards gender equality and women empowerment

- For all co-operatives, every training should include gender awareness and family enrichment sessions
- The ICA should ensure compliance of recommendations by the members in the region within a mutually agreed time frame

Regional Women Forum-2010, China

The 6th International Co-operative Alliance Regional Women Forum was held on 2nd September, 2010 in Beijing, China in conjunction with ICA Regional Assembly and related events. This was a Joint event. 5th Youth Conference was also jointly held with the 6th Women Forum.

The Theme of the Forum was decided keeping in view participation of youth as well.

The theme was "Co-operatives: The Sector for Empowerment of Women and Youth".



ICA President Dame Pauline Green with the Participants at the Women Forum-2010

The Theme was further divided into 2 sub themes in order to put more emphasis on and address to the concerns of women and youth exclusively as mentioned below:

Sub theme no. 1 : Women's Livelihood and Leadership through Co-operatives.

Sub theme no. 2: "Socio-Economic Empowerment of Youth through Co-operatives".

40 participants from following 10 countries attended the event:

- | | | | | |
|----------|-------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. India | 2. China | 3. Indonesia | 4. Iran | 5. Pakistan |
| 6. Japan | 7. Thailand | 8. Philippines | 9. Singapore | 10. Korea |

The programme of the forum was divided into 4 sessions

1. Registration and opening
2. Business session comprising of presentation by speakers
3. Group discussions
4. Closing which includes presentation of the reports of the group discussions and Forum's Resolution

The opening ceremony was facilitated by Ms. Savitri Singh, Advisor, Gender Programs of ICA- AP and Secretary of the ICA Regional Women's Committee for Asia-Pacific (RWC). She initiated the program by welcoming the participants. She gave a brief background of the ICA- AP initiatives on Gender mainstreaming in co-operatives and role of Regional Women's Committee. She also introduced the outline of the day's program to the participants. Thereafter, she invited Ms. Hitomin Tanaka, Chairperson of the ICA RWC to address the participants.

Ms. Tanaka is the Vice Chairperson of Japanese Consumer Co-operative Union and Vice Chairperson of ICA-AP Regional Board. She has vast experience of promoting women in consumer co-operatives in Japan. She extended a warm welcome to the participants and thanked them for attending the Forum. She spoke about the endeavor of the Regional Women's Committee for empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming in co-operatives in the region.

Dr. Chandra Pal Singh Yadav, Chairman of National Co-operative Union of India (NCUI) was invited to deliver the opening address. Dr. Yadav said that platforms like the women forum are very important for organizing stake holders and providing opportunity to discuss issue of equal participation of women and youth in social and economic activities.



Dr. Yadav delivered his opening address and declared the forum open.

Dr. Yadav, in his speech, said that I am privileged to get this opportunity to join you at this important conference. I appreciate the Women's Committee for choosing the very appropriate theme: "CO-OPERATIVES : THE SECTOR FOR EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN and YOUTH". Women and youth are very important components of the society- women are the backbone and youth is the future. This is very true for co-operative sector as well. Almost 55% of food production is done by women in Asia as well as many other countries in the world. Majority of the co-operative members are related to agriculture.

Secondly, the co-operatives business needs young generation to gradually take over from the old so that new vision and methodology of young people can take co-operatives to new heights. I come from the National Co-operative Union of India (NCUI) which represents 240 million individuals co-operative members in the country, a large number of which are women.

NCUI and its member co-operatives in the country are proactive in empowering women for Gender Mainstreaming in co-operatives at the same time, various programmes are being implemented to increase Youth Participation in Co-operatives.

NCUI is implementing development projects exclusively for women in rural areas. Most of the states in the country have reserved quota for women at Boards of Co-operatives. NCUI is running several short and long term leadership and management capacity building programmes for women. The Youth education programmes are being implemented by the state-unions on a regular basis. Youth rallies, camps and debate competitions are organized throughout the year in various parts of the country.

The NCUI and the co-operative movement of India are committed to enhance women and youth participation in co-operatives. However, a lot has to be done to achieve our goals.

- The women committee of the NCUI recommends for 30% reservation for women at all levels of co-operatives.
- The committee also recommends that 33% of women membership should be prerequisite for registration of co-operative society.
- The committee also recommends that co-operative banks should provide education loans for students.
- Students/Campus co-operatives should be linked to main stream co-operatives to facilitate Joint purchase systems, business alliances and networking.
- Youth should be encouraged/ invited to participate in various co-operative activities, conferences, and workshops, etc.

These are some efforts we are making in India. I would be interested in knowing from other countries in the region. With these words I would like to congratulate the organizers for choosing a relevant theme and organizing such a wonderful forum.

Mr. Shil Kwan Lee, former Regional Director of ICA-AP presided over and chaired the session. He introduced the speakers and facilitated Question and Answer session.

Business session opened with Key note speech on the theme of the Forum.

Keynote speech on the theme "Co-operatives: The Sector for Empowerment of Women and Youth" was delivered by Ms. Mi-yea OH, Chairperson of iCOOP Goyang /President of Mutual Aid Society For Enhancing Korean Agriculture .

It is a mutual aid society established by the members of iCOOP KOREA to support local co-operatives and agricultural producers. Ms. OH started her address by reminding the participants, the message of this year's International Co-operative Day. It was "Co-operative Enterprise Empowers Women." At iCOOP KOREA, most of the leaders in 76 local co-operatives are women. And, of course, women are playing a crucial role also in representative and executive posts. She said that she believes this year's message bears a great significance for iCOOP KOREA, because its progress for the past decade is attributable to devotions and hard efforts made by the women leaders across the nation. On top of that, it was all the more encouraging to the women leaders of iCOOP KOREA when the first female president has been elected in the ICA General Assembly in 2009.

While concluding her speech, she talked about the tasks all co-operative members should take on together in order to enhance abilities and powers of women and the youth. She proposed following tasks to participants:

- To study and create a variety of co-operative business models where both women and the youth can participate. We have to show them that there are actually meaningful jobs other than jobs in private and public sectors to realize the alternative value and objective that co-operatives pursue. Co-operatives should be the good alternative for women and the youth for their better livelihoods and self-improvement. It is also essential for us to create jobs for the women and the youth who cannot take part in official economic activities for various reasons.
- However, we cannot draw interest and support from the public only by promoting values and social significances we pursue. Co-operative enterprises should at least secure the productivity level as high as the average business productivity level in the market. To this end, co-operatives should have more specialized strategy and management. In the consumer co-operatives led by women, in particular, education and training for women leadership and capacity building should be more strengthened.
- In addition, we should strive to promote the values and alternatives of co-operatives toward women and the youth. The public awareness on co-operatives is very low in Korea. As a result, the base of our co-operative members is not that broad. It is also very difficult to raise the business efficiency and secure management resources such as talented human resources and capitals due to our small business scale. Above all, the social support for co-operatives is weak. Just as it is stressed in the principles of co-operatives, we should spread out co-operative values to the public, the influential class and the youth.
- Lastly, I would like to highlight two things. First, it is imperative for us to take a closer look at the realities that each country's women and the youth are facing, and it is also important to come up with alternatives to promote co-operation and solidarity with marginalized women and the youth.

Ms. Hiroko Yamagishi, Vice Chairperson of Japanese Consumer Co-operative presented paper on the sub theme I:

"Women's Livelihood and Leadership through Co-operatives".

She presented her paper based on the activities of her co-operative in Kobe, Japan.

Mr. Ilham Nasai, Vice Chairperson of the ICA Regional Youth Committee delivered speech on the sub theme II: "Socio- Economic Empowerment of Youth Through Co-operatives".

Mr. Lee, Chair of the session initiated discussion on the equal participation of women in co-operatives, especially in agricultural co-operatives as the requirement of membership is ownership of land and most of the women do not own land. He cited the example of Korea where law is enacted to allow two members per family in order to provide opportunity to women. He invited Savitri Singh of ICA-AP to give more information on the issue. Ms. Dolly Goh, CEO of Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF), Ms. Emma Neiva of NATCCO Network and other participants also shared their views.

Ms. Puline Green, President of ICA joined the forum for a short while and interacted with the participants. She emphasized the need of women empowerment and gender main streaming in co-operatives. She shared ICA vision on co-operatives as equal opportunity organizations and informed the participants about UN proclamation of co-operative year 2012 and its significance for co-operatives to emerge as a strong socio-economic sector.

Business session concluded with summing up of discussion by Mr. Shil Kwan Lee.

In the post lunch session, participants were divided into 2 groups one for women and one for youth. The topic for the discussion was:

“Co-operative for Professional Development of Women and Youth”.

The members discussed the topic in detail and a report was presented by each group.

Report of the Women Group:

The women co-operators recommended the following:

The co-operative system can help professional development of women :

- By conducting sex disaggregated data for appropriate design of products and services for both women and men
- By conducting a need-based capacity building programs, i.e., Gender Sensitivity Training and creating awareness to change the stereo-type mindset, Leadership Training, Responsible Parenthood, Livelihood and the like.
- Working in tandem with the government, to reach out for information drive on various gender issues.
- By conducting regular forums participated by women delegates from ICA member countries for exchange of best practices.
- For ICA to recognize successful women, youth and other co-operative leaders by giving awards during ICA Assembly.

Report of the Youth Group :

The members of youth group agreed that there is a need to promote youth co-operatives professionally by co-operative organizations.

The group focused their discussion around certain KEY ISSUES:

- Unemployment
- Education (social illness)
- Environmental (climate change)
- As co-operatives cater to the people with limited needs and aspirations, students and youth in general, automatically qualify under this group.
- The idea of a co-operative press in the colleges and universities could help the young citizens of the world to be self sufficient and live independently.
- The Idea: As soon as the young students qualify into university, he or she is sou-moto inducted into the co-operatives wherein he or she becomes a member and contributes to the project.
- The co-operatives own newsletters and periodicals. One way of employment for youth could be writing/ contributing articles, reports etc. for the periodical.
For example, sports, debates, academics and research on relevant issues.
- Economic Aspect
- The Newspaper could carry advertisement material of various co-operative enterprises in the world. This will give the Co-operatives much needed publicity, especially with the International Year of Co-operatives only a year away. The Newspaper too would be able to earn its costs with such advertisements and promotional material.

Recommendations of the Youth group:

- The co-operatives are suitable organization for young students who have limited resources as co-operatives can provide part-time employment along with education.
- A system of employment to entice the youth to get involved in the agriculture activities.
- More information / publicity about co-operatives for awareness in general public.
- Home-based work for women (with child and home care) and entrepreneurship / self employment for youth.
- All the student in university should join co-operative and contribute to co-operative activities.
- The students should be encouraged to write on various topics in co-operative newsletters and periodical. This may be a part-time employment for them.

The Chair Person of the ICA RWC presented these resolutions of the women forum at the ICA Regional Assembly to be adopted by the ICA.

Recommendation to Regional Assembly -2010:

The co-operatives can provide professional development for women by:

- Conducting survey to assess needs of women and design need-based products and services.
- Conducting need-based capacity building programs such as training of co-operative members on gender sensitivity to change the stereo-type mindset, leadership skills, responsible parenthood and livelihood etc.
- The co-operatives should be aware of various government's programs on gender issues and work in tandem with the government to derive the benefit of such programs for their own members.
- ICA / co-operatives should organize regular forums / interactive sessions for exchange of best practices.
- ICA-AP should recognize successful women, youth and other co-operators by giving awards during ICA Assembly.

Current situation of Women in Co-operatives and Our Burning CONCERNS

- Socio-cultural barriers supported by generations of patriarchic system are too strong to be changed through awareness and persuasion.
- Women face difficulty to get elected in decision making positions because of socio-cultural and religious barriers
- Absence of supportive legal provisions in many countries
- Therefore, there is urgent need of adopting fast actions/measures.

Our all time recommendations to be acted upon by co-operative fraternity in the region

- Minimum 30% reservation of seats for women in membership, management and leadership position of the co-operatives in the region.
- ICA-AP to organize national and regional conferences and workshop to discuss legal issues/co-op laws towards gender mainstreaming, and revise the law to make women's membership easy and thereby increasing participation of women at leadership and decision making positions.

ii. International Women's Day

The ICA President and the Chairperson of the ICA Gender Equality Committee jointly issue a message to commemorate the event every year. The message is being circulated to the members and the theme of the message is used for advocacy for the cause.

The messages are placed at annexure- 3 of this report However, the following themes have been selected for past 3 reporting years:

1. International Women's Day - 8th March, 2008

"Investing in Women for Co-operative Success"

The message was sent to members and the day was widely celebrated by members. The Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF) has celebrated the Women's Day by organizing "A Health Fiesta at Park'. The Gujarat State Co-operative Union in India has organized a conference to observe the International Women's Day on 8th March, 2008 in the state capital Gandhi Nagar

2. International Women's Day - 8th March, 2009

"Co-operators United to End Violence Against Women and Girls"

3. International Women's Day-8th March, 2010

"Equal rights, equal opportunities: Progress for all"

iii. Participation in the activities of member co-operatives, other ICA Regions and international events



Women co-operators at the celebration

of NCU and Gujarat State Co-operative Union participants thanked Mr. Amin for his initiatives in organizing the conference. The speakers, in general, emphasized upon importance of women participation in co-operatives and appealed to women to actively participate in the business of their co-operatives.

India

The Gujarat State Co-operative Union in India has organized a conference to observe the International Women's Day on 8th March, 2008 in the state capital Gandhi Nagar.

More than 900 women co-operative members and leaders from all over Gujarat participated in the conference. Shri Dilipbhai Sanghani, Minister of Agriculture and Co-operation of Gujarat State was the Chief Guest and he inaugurated the conference. Mr. G.H. Amin, Chairman presided over the Conference. The



Savitri Singh addressing the conference in Gujarat

Mrs. Savitri Singh, Advisor, Gender Program of ICA-AP was invited as Guest of Honour to deliver keynote speech on the topic "Empowerment of Women Through Co-operatives". She read out the ICA President's message on the occasion. The theme of the message is "Investing in Women for Co-operative Success".

Further, she spoke about need of positive discrimination by the governments and stake holders. If there are enabling policies and legal provisions in place, it will automatically create enabling

environment for empowering women. The provision of 33% reservation for women in local government in India is one of the best examples to quote. In the context of ICA efforts and resolutions of Tagaytay-2006, she emphasized in her speech that there should be 33% reservation for women at all levels of co-operatives especially at leadership level. Several states in India have already introduced certain percentage of reservation for women at leadership level but Gujarat State has not introduced any such provision as yet.

The participants impressed upon the Agriculture and Co-operation Minister for reservations. He promised to look into the matter and help.

The conference provided opportunity to many village and small town women to travel to the capital city and meet up with many co-operative women from other parts of the state. It was a great platform for sharing and networking.

Initiating participation and sharing views through a platform like this is of immense value in building up better understanding about the issues and forming strategy for improvement and change.

Co-operative Summit and Women Conference of the Americas-2009

The ICA Americas has organized its first Co-operative Summit in September, 2009 in Guadalajara, Mexico. The ICA Americas VI Continental Meeting of Women Co-operators was also held in conjunction of the Summit. The ICA Regional Office for Americas invited Mrs. Savitri Singh, Advisor Gender Programme to participate in the Summit and present a paper in the Continental Meeting of the Women Co-operators to share experience from Asia-Pacific Region.



Chairperson, Women Committee of the ICA Americas addressing the delegates



The topic of the discussion was : "Global Crises Panorama and its Impact on Women's Lives".

Savitri Singh presented a Report from the ICA Asia & Pacific Region. The presentation is posted on the website at www.icaroap.coop

The Chief guest of the opening was Ms. Maria Elena Herting, Deputy Director General of ICA.

Savitri Singh sharing experiences from ICA-Asia and Pacific Region

ICA-AP Regional Conference on Co-operative Development for South Pacific

The ICA-AP, in collaboration with the Government of Fiji, the Fiji Co-operative Union and the Integrated Human Resource Development Programme (IHRDP) of the ILO in Fiji, organised a Regional Conference on Co-operative Development for South Pacific Islands.

The conference was inaugurated by Mr. Tom Rickett, Minister for Information, Trade, Tourism and Communication, who is also the nodal Minister for Co-operatives. Mr. Rickett in his speech emphasized the importance of co-operative development for overall economic development of the country. He especially mentioned importance of gender integration and empowerment of women through co-operatives.

The conference was attended by 85 women and men delegates from all parts of Fiji and also from Papua New Guinea. The speakers/ resource persons from Korea, India, Japan, New Zealand and ICA-AP have been invited for deliberation on different issues of co-operative development.

Besides addressing issues of legal reform, business development and resource generation, the conference deliberated upon need of active participation of women in co-operatives. Ms. Savitri Singh, Advisor Gender Programme of ICA-AP, spoke on gender issues in co-operative business in the Region and gave detailed information on ICA initiatives and programmes by power point presentation.



Co-operative members selling their products during the conference

The conference concluded that women are participating in co-operative business in Fiji but they need enabling environment to become active partners at all levels of co-operative business, especially at leadership level.

ICA at the 53rd Session of United Nations Commission on Status of Women



Rosy Weiss(far left) Savitri Singh and Marcela Villarreal (second from right) at the event

The 53rd Session of United Nations Commission on Status of Women (UNCSW-53) was held in New York from 2-6 March, 2009.

Ms. Savitri Singh, Adviser-Gender Programme of ICA-AP, on behalf of the ICA and the Gender Equality Committee, attended opening session of the 53rd session of UN Commission on the Status of Women-2009 and high-level round-table on the theme "Equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men,

including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS". She also attended other related meetings of the event held in UN from 2-6 March, 2009

She was also invited as a panelist from ICA to speak at a side event held on Tuesday, March 3, 2009 at UN Plaza, New York.

The topic of the panel discussion was "What does equal sharing of responsibilities mean for the rural women? The Moderator of the discussion was Ms. Rosy Weiss, President of International Alliance of Women (IAW).The event was sponsored by FAO/IAW & Women's Working Group of the AD HOC GROUP of INGOs in Rome.

Other panelists were;

1. Ms. Marcela Villarreal, Director, Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division FAO.
2. Ms. Margaret Cook, Asst. Programme Director of Soroptimist International (SI)
3. Ms. Nomusa Lauren Taylor-Dube World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS)
4. Ms. Lois A Herman, Women's International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF)

Ms. Marcela Villarreal talked about FAO programmes and initiatives. Her speech covered concerns posed by civil societies such as:

To what extent is gender a policy directive within FAO? FAO Gender proposals are being put forward what are the key components? Areas in which assistance to National Bodies is being anticipated? How might these new proposed FAO Gender modalities work especially so for International NGOs?

Ms. Savitri Singh emphasized on the need of reduction of work over load on rural women by creating infrastructure. About 50-60 % of the working time of average rural woman and girls is spent in fetching water, collecting fire wood for cooking and fodder for the cattle. Co-operatives help creating infrastructures and facilities such as water hand pumps, wells and ponds in the village.

Installation of bio fuel/ gas stoves and land grant for community level fodder development can go a long way in helping women.

These facilities will save lot of time and reduce hardship of women and young girls and in turn they will get some spare time for rest and pursuing education or recreation.

Capacity Building

The ICA Gender Programme together with Regional Women Committee has been organizing various capacity building programmes for co-operative members, men and women both to sensitise them about gender needs and roles and responsibility of the institutions to create level playing field for women co-operative members, staff and leaders.

Besides co-operative issues, other issues of concerns such as HIV/AIDS awareness is also addressed through the capacity building programmes.

The emphasis is to impart knowledge and training on management of co-operative business, help getting exposure to the working of other co-operatives, develop network with other co-operative businesses and people to enhance business possibilities and create resources such as funding to support programmes and developing resource material.

Following 2 programmes are being organized every year in one of the member countries:

1. Training for management capacity building and leadership
2. Exposure to success stories for business development

1. “Management Capacity Building of Women for Gender Integration and Co-operative Development”:

It is a regular training programme targeting leaders, trainers and persons responsible for gender mainstreaming in the co-operatives in one of the member countries per year.

This training programme aims to assist co-operative leaders/ trainers of Asia Pacific to:

- i. Raise the awareness of women and men leaders and members of co-operatives on gender issues, on the manifestations of gender bias (against women) in co-operatives, and on the effects of gender discrimination on the personal and interpersonal growth of its leaders and members as well as on the organizational development of Co-operatives.
- ii. Build up the capacity of current and potential women leaders of co-operatives by equipping them with knowledge and skills on the following:
 - Nature of Co-operatives
 - Effective and gender-responsive leadership
 - Co-operative Enterprise Management
 - Coping with challenges
 - Personal Development

The programme was held in 4 countries- Thailand, Nepal, Malaysia and Myanmar during 2008-2010:

i) Thailand :



Participants of the training in Thailand

The ICA- AP-CLT National Trainers Training Programme for "Management Capacity Building of Women for Gender Integration and Co-operative Development" was held from 7-11 January 2008 at CLT Training Centre in Bangkok. 28 women co-operative leaders and managers from all over the country attended 4 days programme. Mrs. Savitri Singh, Adviser Gender Programme of ICA-AP was the main resource person and conducted training on gender mainstreaming issue in co-operatives and entrepreneurship and leadership development of women.

ii) Nepal:

The ICA Training Programme on "Management Capacity Building of Women for Gender Integration and Co-operative Development" was held in Kathmandu from 28 April - 3 May 2008 in collaboration with Nepal Co-operative Federation.

Dr. Suvedi, a member of Parliament from Nepal, Mr. Deepak Baskota, Chairman of National Co-operative Federation of Nepal (NCF),

Ms. Bui Thi Lan, Country Representative of FAO, Nepal and Savitri Singh from ICA-AP were the speakers at the opening.

Mr. Juku Ozawa, former ICA staff and now JICA volunteer was also present. Ms. Archana Singh, ILO Programme Officer, Ms. Aruna Thapa, Programme Officer of UNIFEM, Nepal, Dr. Smita Premchander from Sampark, India and Savitri Singh from ICA-AP were the main resource persons.



Deepak Baskota, Bui Thi Lan, Savitri Singh and RB Shah at the opening

30 women and men co-operative trainers, leaders and staff attended the programme. Following topics were covered by the resource persons during 5 days class room programme:

1. Concept, rational, constraints and opportunities
2. Basic principles of capacity building
3. Understanding Gender
4. Gender mainstreaming in co-operatives
5. Situation of women and UNIFEM Programmes for gender mainstreaming in Nepal
6. Various aspects of management of co-operatives with special reference to the various kinds of co-operatives
7. Enterprise development- Role of Manager and Managing Committee
8. Decision-making capacity

As mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS in co-operative education and training is one of the focused area of the ICA-AP, a separate session on the topic was conducted by the expert from ILO. As a moderator, Savitri Singh explained why HIV/AIDS is an issue for co-operatives. Following issues have been covered during the session: 1. Basics of HIV/AIDS, it's impact on the society and ongoing programmes for prevention and cure of the disease 2. Prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Nepal as workplace issue and need for action on part of co-operative institutions 3. HIV/AIDS



The Participants of the training

risk behaviour and assessment.

The study visit was organized at the last day of the training. The participants visited 2 co-operatives in the outskirts of Kathmandu namely Shri Sidhi Ganesh Savings and Credit Co-operative in Bhaktapur and Artisan's Co-operative in Patan area of Lalitpur.

iii) Malaysia:

The skill development programme - "Management Capacity Building of Women for Co-operative Development" is being conducted regularly and was organized for the co-operative movement of Malaysia and held in Kuala Lumpur from 28 June to 3rd July, 2009.



Women co-operators performing at a get together during training

This programme aimed at assisting the co-operative movement of Malaysia to review the status of gender integration and women's participation, constraints and possible solution to enhance the quantitative and qualitative participation of women.



Role play during training

The methodology involved presentation of status paper by ANGKASA and discussion on various aspects facilitated by resource persons. The discussion led to creating a road map followed by education and training on various skills crucial for quality participation in co-operative business and management. Besides training on business issues, a session was also held on social and developmental issue of HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention.

The following topics were addressed during the programme:

- Effective and gender-responsive leadership
- Entrepreneurship development
- Various aspects of management of a co-operative i.e. product development, member services, accounts, balance sheet, book keeping etc.
- Coping with challenges and Personal Development
- HIV/AIDS Awareness



Mdm. Armi and Savitri Singh with the chief guest at one of the co-operative stalls

The women co-operatives arranged exhibition cum sale at the venue of the training. The participants and other guests got to know about products and co-operative got opportunity to promote and sell. The variety of products included textile, eatables and jewelry etc.

iv) Lao PDR:

ICA-AP in collaboration with AGRITERRA initiated a co-operative development project in Lao PDR. The farmers have been organised and trained to form co-operatives in selected areas in the country. A large part of farmers population consist of women.

As women play very important role in agricultural production and management, it is necessary to train them to acquire skills for better management of the work through co-operatives. Women posses certain special skills and have certain special needs too in order to perform in a competitive environment.

Therefore, ICA-AP has organised a training on "Capacity Building of Women Co-operative Leaders for Entrepreneurship Development" for the women co-operative leaders and extension staff of Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) of Laos. The training was held from 21-25 December, 2009 in Vientiane City.



Participants at a co-operative shop

Mr. Latsanivong Amarathithada, Director General, Department of Agriculture and Forestry of MAFF, Vientiane Capital and National Assembly Member of Laos delivered opening address and Savitri Singh, Adviser-Gender Programme of ICA-AP addressed the participants and gave brief introduction of the programme. Mrs. Pith Phomphet made a presentation on Gender relation policy on agriculture and forestry. Dr. Lassaye made a presentation on Lao National Decree on co-operatives.

The target group consisted of 30 women co-operative Leaders and extension staff.



Participants with Mr.Latsanivong Amarathithada and Savitri Singh

The following topics covered during the training:

- Gender and Socialisation
- Co-operative Values and Principles
- Co-operative business and gender issues in co-operatives
- How to start and manage a small co-operative business
- Leadership skills, communication, financial management, balance sheet and book keeping
- How to manage personal changes and stress etc.

The participants also visited women groups, women weavers and consumer shops run by the women groups to sell products from women farmers and producers.

v) Myanmar :

Training of Trainers for Gender Mainstreaming :

ICA-AP organized a Training of Trainers Programme on "Management Capacity Building of Women for Co-operative Development" from 19-23 October 2010, Yangon, Myanmar, for the co-operative leaders and trainers of Myanmar. The program was hosted by the Central



Participants with the Managing Director of CCS

Co-operative Society of Myanmar (CCS), an ICA member and technical in puts such as curriculum, training materials and resource persons were provided by ICA-AP. 25 women and men participants attended the programme.

Mr. U Khin Maung Aye, President of CCS Delivered opening address and welcomed the participants and ICA delegates. Dr. Chan Ho Choi, Regional Director of ICA-AP delivered special address and emphasized upon the need of women empowerment and gender mainstreaming in co-operatives for over all development of co-operatives, Ms. Savitri Singh, Advisor- Gender Programme of ICA-AP and coordinator of the programme extended warm welcome to the participants and thanked CCS for their efforts in organizing the programme. She further deliberated upon the back ground and aim and objectives of the programme and briefly introduced the proceedings for 4 days to come. Vice-Chaiman of CCS, Mr. U Kyaw Lynn, Mr. Kyaw Thein, Chief Executive Officer of CCS, Mr.Min Lwin, General Manager and other senior officers and Board of Directors were also present at the opening.



Group discussion in Progress

Nwai Law from FAO, Myanmar and Mr. Wann More Micro and Small Enterprise Development Specialist, UNDP, Myanmar were the other resource persons who contributed significantly in providing knowledge and information to participants on various aspects of women empowerment and gender mainstreaming issues.

Gender sensitization, managing a co-operative business and gender issues in co-operative business were the main issues addressed in the training programme. This was the kind of first time that the participants had exposure to issues such as sex and gender and gender socialization process which impacts over all gender balance in the society including co-operatives.

Mr. Zaw Win Deputy General Manager, CCS presented the Status Paper of CCS giving basic information about the co-operative system in Myanmar, situation of women in co-operatives and activities of CCS. There are about 12000 co-operative societies in Myanmar but visibility of women as members, leaders or managers are very low. There is no data available to know how many women are there in the co-operatives in the country.

Ms. Savitri Singh was the main resource person for the training. Ms. Aye Aye Khaine from UNDP, Ms. Tha



Women at work in a Yangon market

2. HIV/AIDS, Gender and Co-operatives:

Besides these gender mainstreaming issues, we also put emphasis to address other social and developmental issues which affect the life of women such as HIV/AIDS.

HIV/AIDS Awareness initiated by ICA for co-operatives in Asia Pacific with special focus on gender dimension of the pandemic as HIV/AIDS is no longer a health issue but has become a social and developmental issue.

The HIV/AIDS awareness is integrated in the capacity building programmes. A special session was held in every training programme organized in Thailand, Nepal and Malaysia. The experts from UN agencies have been invited to impart awareness on HIV/AIDS. The awareness session on HIV is very popular with the participants and they appreciated ICA initiative .

HIV/ AIDS Awareness Project in India:



A trainer at sensitisation workshop for leaders of co-operatives

The ICA-AP in collaboration with NCUI, India and NACO, Govt. of India, implemented a Gender Focused HIV/AIDS Awareness Project for the co-operative members of India in 7 Indian States in the year 2009. The project covered 600 women and men co-operative leaders through awareness camps, 200 co-operative trainers through week long TOT on HIV/AIDS Awareness and Prevention Skills and sensitized 350 co-operative leaders through workshops. The entire project was funded by the UNDP, India.

3. Exposure to success stories for business development

The programme aims at enhancing role of women in co-operative business. The programme was held in China, Philippines and Iran during 2008-2010.

The objective of this program is to provide a common meeting ground to Asian co-operative women leaders/persons responsible for gender and women development in co-operatives for sharing information and experience about success stories and best practices of their co-operatives and most importantly, help women to establish a network for mutual co-operation and business interest across the Asia & Pacific Region.

The out come expected from such programme is to :

- Establish contacts among women leaders/co-operative members and create network
- Collection of information and dissemination of best practices
- Identify mechanism to overcome factors that limit women's participation as organizer and decision maker
- Business information about products and services as well as know - how for women entrepreneurs
- Identify areas of mutual interest and collaboration.

China:2008

The ICA Seminar on Enhancing Women's Role in Co-operative Business was held in Beijing, China from 23-25 September, 2008. The programme was hosted by All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Co-operatives. Total 15 persons, 12 co-operative leaders (11 women and 1 man) from 5 countries namely-India, Nepal, Vietnam, Philippines and Malaysia and 3 women co-operators from China attended the programme.

The duration of the programme was 3 days. One day was devoted to a seminar on exchange of information and 2 days for visits to co-operatives and related institutions.

The speakers at the opening were Mr. Li Chun Sheng, Mr. Shil Kwan Lee and Savitri Singh. At the out set, Savitri Singh, co-coordinator of the programme, gave a brief introduction of the back ground of the programme and the activities of next 3 days.

The Regional Director of ICA-AP welcomed the participants and briefed them about ICA's



Opening of the Seminar

concerns on women empowerment and gender integration in co-operatives. He also talked about problems faced by women and possible measures taken by ICA-AP to address and remove such problems. He particularly mentioned about legal provision of "one member-one family" norm which is the biggest constrain faced by women. He expressed that this issue should be addresses and joint membership of husband and wife should be encouraged to enhance women's participation, especially in agricultural co-operatives. He also informed the participants about various capacity building activities of ICA-AP and particularly talked about Tagaytay Conference-2006 and its recommendations for 30% reservation of seats for women at all levels of co-operatives in Asia Pacific region.



Women delegates at the workshop

Mr. Li Chunsheng, President ICA-AP and Vice President of ACFSMC welcomed the participants and delivered opening address on behalf of the ACFSMC. He expressed his concerns on low participation of women in co-operatives and said that ICA will take appropriate measures to encourage gender integration in co-operatives in the region. He also briefly talked about the lower participation of women in co-operatives in China and mentioned that he is aware of the benefits which women can derive from co-operative business.

During the business session following programme was conducted:

1. Presentation on the theme: Enhancing Women's Role in Co-operative Business, including best practices in China by ACFSMC
2. Gender integration and situation of women in co-operatives in Asia Pacific by Savitri Singh.

3. Success case/best practices presentation and information sharing by participants from following countries:

- India
- Nepal
- Vietnam
- Philippines
- Malaysia

Panel discussion was held on the theme and participants interacted with each other for exchange of information.

Next day, the participants visited to the Duck Co-operative and Poultry Co-operative in Zhuozhou, Hebei Province. We noted that women farmers are quite active in these co-operatives as the business of the co-operative is women centric. Generally, most of the cattle rearing and duck and chi ken rearing work is done by women. The Co-operative in Zhuozhou, Hebei Province is headed by a women Chair person, Ms. Wang. We also met with the other women leaders. The Vice Chairperson of the Hebei Province Supply and Marketing Co-operative is a woman, Ms. Peng. The group has had good interaction with the women and men leaders of these co-operatives and exchanged business information.

Philippines-2009



Group of Participants

ICA Regional Workshop on Enhancing the Role of Women in Co-operative Business for women and men co-operative leaders of our region was organized from 8-10 September 2009 in Manila, Philippines.



Coop members making bags at the recycle product coop

A group of about 15 women and men co-operators from India, China, Nepal, Japan and Malaysia participated in the programme to have an exposure of gender focused best practices in Pilipino co-operatives.

The consultations during the workshop focused upon co-operative endeavor to promote women's interests for gender mainstreaming in co-operatives. The 3 days programme consists of one day workshop followed by 2 days study visits to few successful co-operative businesses in the country.

The NATCCO has arranged study visit to a couple of co-operatives where women are engaged in business.

Iran-2010

A workshop on the topic "Enhancing Role of Women In Co-operative Business" was held in Tehran, Iran on 25th May, 2010 followed by 2 days exposure/study visit to agricultural and rural co-operatives in Shiraj Province of Iran.



A consumer co-operative shop run by women

The programme has been organized by ICA-AP Gender Programme Division and was hosted by Central Organisation of Rural Co-operative (CORC) of Iran and Central Union of Rural and Agricultural Co-operatives of Iran (CURACI).

Women and men co-operative leaders from 6 countries, namely- China, Malaysia, Nepal, Srilanka and India attended the programme. The co-operative members from Iran were also present.

The workshop opened with the welcome address by Mr. M.R. Raeisi Nejad, Managing Director of the CURACI. He welcomed Ms. Maria Elena Chavez, Deputy Director General of ICA, Ms. Savitri Singh, Advisor of ICA-AP and the participants to Iran. He thanked ICA-AP for choosing CURACI for organizing the workshop in Iran. He further spoke in detail about the organizational structure of CURACI, its activities



The participants with DDG of ICA, Maria Elena and Managing Director of CURACI

and business. Ms. Maria-Elena Chavez Hertig, Deputy Director-General of the ICA was invited as special guest to attend the workshop. She extended warm welcome to participants and wished them a successful visit to Iran. She talked about ICA activities and how gender mainstreaming is one of the priority areas for it. She mentioned that CURACI and CORC are the special members of ICA and thanked Mr. Raeisi Nejad for his co-operation in hosting the workshop. She also thanked ICA-AP for the opportunity to meet with cooperators in Iran. Ms. Savitri Singh, Advisor- Gender Program of the ICA-AP also welcomed the participants and gave introduction of the programme such as background, significance and benefits of

organizing such workshops. She said that the platform like this provide opportunity for women co-operators to build relations and form network for mutual business development.

Business session commenced after the formal opening. First part of the business session was the introductory session for environment building in which experience /information sharing was done by the organizers and host country. Ms. Lida Sadhighiyan, Head of Women Affairs of Rural Co-operative Division of CORC made a presentation and shared detailed information on how CORC has developed projects for helping rural women through co-operative business model.



Tissue Paper packing in progress

Mr. Masoud Samayee, Managing Director of Sabahang Co-operative of Iran made a presentation and focused on how this multipurpose co-operative is helping in gender mainstreaming.

Ms. Saahla Moini, Director Manager of Sepidan Women Rural Cooperative made a presentation on "Rural Women Co-operatives in Fars Province of Iran".

She informed that Fars province with 1.7 hectare of agricultural lands and 10 million tons of various kinds of agricultural products has got the best rank among provinces in Iran. Due to high agricultural production in this

province during last 50 years, 500 rural and agricultural women co-operative companies have been established which caused enhancement of development in agricultural sector.

The most important activities of Women Rural Co-operatives in Fars:

- 1- Enhancement of rural women's contributions in family income.
- 2- Strengthening women's position in social and political areas.
- 3- Strengthening women's presence by taking part in social and economic activities.
- 4- Rural women societies vigilance and emphasis on their role in family from cultural, religious and moral point of view.
- 5- Using women leisure time by creating native jobs .
- 6- Improving the activities of co-operatives by using native knowledge.
- 7- Preventing migration of men from villages by generating resources through women's economic activities .
- 8- Women's presence in national ceremonies.

Existing situation of women co-operative companies:

No. of co-operatives	:	26
No. of the villages	:	93
No. of shops and offices	:	26
No. of members	:	5518

Capital : 1524000000
Credit units : 26

Ms. Maria Elena Chavez spoke on the topic "Gender Equality in Co-operatives-ICA Global Perspective".

Ms. Savitri Singh made a presentation on "Gender integration and situation of women in co-operatives in Asia Pacific".

The participants from various countries shared information about their co-operatives as listed below -

1. ALL China Federation of Supply and Marketing Co-operatives, China
2. ANGKASA, Malaysia
3. The Raj Laxmi Women Co-operative Bank, Jaipur, India
4. The District Co-operative Bank, Muzaffarnagar, India
5. The Consumer Co-operative Federation of Sri Lanka
6. The Valley Multipurpose Co-operative Ltd., Kathmandu, Nepal



The customers at the bread co-operative window

Second and third day were devoted to visits to agriculture and rural co-operatives, especially women co-operatives.

The participants visited to the following co-operatives:

1. Fatemih Rural Women Co-operative, Tafihan
2. Fatemih Rural Women Co-operative, Shaporgan
3. Passargad Rural Co-operative Union and its member co-operatives

The women co-operatives are running successful business of tissue paper manufacturing which is supplied to the consumer outlet run by the co-op itself. Hence, there is no much problem of marketing.

Similarly, we visited to a fresh bread making unit run by the women co-operative.

There is popular demand for the bread in the local area itself and we saw a long queue of buyers at the bakery.

Both these units manage to generate some profit and are self sustaining. The CORC supports these units (co-operatives) with funds and loans.

The women co-operative also runs a nursery school for children of the members and local residents.

We had a briefing session at the office of Passargad Rural Co-operative Union. The Managing Director of the Union informed that 5 primary co-operatives are the members of the union. The co-operative members are basically farmers and the main crops are vegetables and wheat.

We visited to cucumber and tomato farms of the members.



Students of Nursery School run by co-operative

A brief closing ceremony was held on 27 May evening in Shiraj. Mr. Khairad, Head of the Minister of Agriculture of Fars Province and other officials of the co-operative department were present. Mr. Khairad thanked the participants and the ICA for coming to Fars province. He said that it was an important event for the co-operatives of Fars Province to meet with foreign delegates and exchange information with co-operators of several countries. He spoke about women co-operatives in Iran and important role of co-operatives in socio-economic empowerment of women.

Reaching Out: News From Members

Indonesia

Ms. Tri Endang Sulistyowati, Management Board Chairperson of PPSW send following news:

Since 2005 The Centre for Women's' Resources Development (PPSW) began the developing process of decentralisation in the areas of Jakarta, West Java Banten, Sumatra and Borneo, which during this time became specific focus areas of PPSW assistance. For three consecutive years, PPSW has worked and functioned towards decentralization as mentioned earlier. As such, on the 7 - 11 of April 2008, PPSW organized and carried out their General Assembly (MUBES) which decided to recognise PPSW as an

Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum (AWCF)

The Board of Trustees (BOT) of Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum (AWCF) has appointed Ms Kruewan Boonrin Chonlanai of the Credit Union League of Thailand, Ltd. (CULT), Thailand as its new Chairperson. Ms Kruewan has been working for CULT for almost 18 years now starting as Training Staff of the Education Department and currently as Head of the General Manager's Office (2006-present). She also held the position of Program Manager of the it@coops project for Thailand for three years (2004-2007). The it@coops is a joint project of AWCF with InWEnt (Capacity Building International of Germany).

Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF)

The SNCF had organized a Professional Development Seminar on Inspirational Leadership for Women on 30th August, 2008 at NTUC Centre in Singapore.

The theme of the seminar was : Inspirational Leadership. The seminar was attended by about 120 women co-operators of Singapore.

Participants were expected :

- a. To understand the difference between leadership and management
- b. To understand why each one of us is a leader
- c. To understand what inspires us in leadership and how we can inspire in our leadership
- d. To understand how our leadership contribution might change in the different seasons of our lives
- e. To understand the crucial importance of inspiration and affirmation from the leader.

The speakers were Dr. Low Guat Tin who spoke on -Inspirational Leadership in the Different Seasons of Our Lives and Mrs Ding- Khoo Seok Lin who spoke on-"Leading Me, Leading You, Leading Us".

National Co-operative Union of India (NCUI)



Participants of the NCUI Women Committee

The meeting of the NCUI'S National Co-operative Committee for Empowerment of Women was held on 29th January, 2009 in New Delhi. The meeting was chaired by Shri GH Amin, President of National Co-operative Union of India and convened by Shri Bhagawati Prasad, Chief Executive of NCUI and Member Convener of the Committee. There were 13 members present in the meeting. The main agenda of the meeting was women leadership development and co-operative legislation.

Ms. Savitri Singh of ICA-AP attended the meeting as special invitee. She talked about the situation of women membership in co-operatives of Asia Pacific and ICA initiatives. She presented the resolution of the ICA Regional Women Conference, Tagaytay-2006 at the committee and appealed to members to implement the recommendations in their co-operatives.

Publications

In order to disseminate information and create knowledge resources, manuals, reports and newsletters are being published periodically by the ICA-AP Gender Programme. The RWC Newsletter is a quarterly newsletter which carries out news and reports of our activities as well as the news and reports received from members and other stake holders including international agencies. The publications and news letters can be found on the ICA-AP website www.icaroap.coop and in the library.

Projects and partners

The ICA-AP gender programmes are being organized for the capacity building of members as well as the co-operatives. We appreciate the whole hearted response of the members by sponsoring co-operators to participate in various programmes. The sponsorship involves time and money both. However, ICA-AP also sponsors the participants from some priority member organizations and provides financial and technical support to the members for organizing gender development programmes. We are also grateful to the various UN agencies and Government Departments who extended support for making our activities successful.

The activities are generally hosted by the ICA-AP members by sponsoring lodging, boarding, local transport and study tours for the participants which included local as well as foreigners.

The projects and partners during the period under report are listed below:

Projects	Partners
1. Over all support	Japanese Consumer Co-operative Union (JCCU), Japan
2. TOT, Thailand	CLT, Thailand
3. TOT, Nepal	NCF, Nepal
4. TOT, Malaysia	ANGKASA, Malaysia
5. TOT, Myanmar	CCS, Myanmar
6. HIV/AIDS Awareness Training and Workshops held in India	NCUI; India, UNDP, NACO-Govt. of India
7. Exposure and Networking in China	ACFSMC, China
8. Exposure and Networking in Philippines	NATCCO, Philippines
9. Exposure and Networking in Iran	CURACI and CORC, Iran
10. Regional Women Committee Meeting and Forum-2008	VCA, Vietnam
11. RWC Meeting and Forum, 2010	ACFSMC, China
12. TOT in Lao	AGRITERRA Project
13. HIV / AIDS Awareness, Entrepreneurship Training etc.	UNDP, FAO, ILO, UN AIDS providing resource persons and learning materials etc.
14. Representation of RWC at national and international events	ICA Gender Equality Committee, Geneva & ICA-AP

Friends in the Journey

1. Mr. Shil Kwan Lee, ex Regional Director of ICA-AP is a gender sensitive person. During his tenure as Regional Director (2002-2009) he extended his full support to the gender mainstreaming projects of ICA-AP by providing resources and motivation.
2. Ms. Goh Ming Huay, Board Member of SNCF, Singapore served the Committee as Vice Chair from 2004-2008.

Annexure: 1.

Recommendations of Regional Women Forums- 2008 & 2010

Recommendation to ICARA-2010, China:

The Chair Person of the ICARWC presented these resolutions of the women forum at the ICA Regional Assembly to be adopted by the ICA.

The co-operatives can provide professional development for women by:

- Conducting survey to assess needs of women and design need-based products and services.
- Conducting need-based capacity building programs such as training of co-operative members on gender sensitivity to change the stereo-type mindset, leadership skills, responsible parenthood and livelihood etc.
- The co-operatives should be aware of various government's programs on gender issues and work in tandem with the government to derive the benefit of such programs for their own members.
- ICA / co-operatives should organize regular forums / interactive sessions for exchange of best practices.
- ICA-AP should recognize successful women, youth and other co-operators by giving AWARDS during ICA Assembly.

Current Situation of Women in Co-operatives and Our Burning CONCERNS

- Socio-cultural barriers supported by generations of patriarchic system are too strong to be changed through awareness and persuasion.
- Women face difficulty to get elected in decision making positions because of socio-cultural and religious barriers
- Absence of supportive legal provisions in many countries
- Therefore, there is urgent need of adopting fast actions/measures.

Our all time recommendations to be acted upon by co- operative fraternity in the region

- Minimum 30% reservation of seats for women in membership, management and leadership position of the co-operatives in the region.
- ICA-AP to organize national and regional conferences and workshop to discuss legal issues/co-op laws towards gender mainstreaming, and revise the law to make women's membership easy and thereby increasing participation of women at leadership and decision making positions.

Recommendations to ICA-RA, 2008-Hanoi

The Chair Person of the ICA RWC presented these resolutions of the women forum at the ICA Regional Forum to be adopted by the ICA.

- The resolution of the ICA Regional Co-operative Minister's Conferences (4th to 8th) must be acted upon urgently
- All the ICA member co-operatives, associate members, and partners must amend their respective co-operative law to accept dual membership of spouse in all type of co-operatives and especially in agriculture co-operatives. The spouse should be considered as full member for all the practical purposes and benefits of the membership, including right to vote and stand for election
- Minimum of 30% in membership, management and leadership position of the co-operatives
- ICA-AP to organize national and regional conferences/workshop to discuss legal issues/co-op laws towards gender mainstreaming and increasing women's participation at leadership and decision making positions
- All co-operatives should collect and provide information on best practices in respect of enabling law and other legal provisions
- Capacity building of women through various media forms
- Strengthen partnership with men towards gender equality and women empowerment
- For all co-operatives, every training should include gender awareness and family enrichment sessions
- The ICA should ensure compliance of recommendations by the members in the region within a mutually agreed time frame.

Annexure: 2.

List of Office Bearers, Members and Contact persons of ICA Regional Women's Committee September, 2010

Office Bearers

Chair Person	Ms. Hitomi Tanaka Vice Chair Person Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU) 3-29-8, Shibuya, Coop Plaza, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo-150-8913, Japan. Phone- 81-3-5778-8103
Vice Chair Person	Ms. Emma Neiva Women's Representative to NATCCO Board National Confederation of Coops Inc. (NATCCO) 227 J.P. Rizal Street, Project-4 Quezon City-1109, Philippines E.mail: ceo@natcco.coop
Vice Chair Person	Ms. KRUEWAN CHONLANAI Manager, Central Finance Facility Department Credit Union League of Thailand (CULT) & Chair Person Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum (AWCF) 227, J P Rizal Street, Project 4 Quezon City 1109, Philippines E-Mail : Kruewan9@hotmail.com
Secretary	Ms. Savitri Singh Advisor- Gender Programme ICA-Asia and Pacific, 9, Aradhana Enclave Sect. 13, RK Puram, New Delhi Tel.91-11-26888250 E-mail savitrisingh@icaroap.coop

Members

1. **Ms. Hitomi Tanaka**
Vice Chair Person
Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU)
3-29-8, Shibuya, Coop Plaza
Shibuya, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo-150-8913, Japan.
Phone- 81-3-5778-8103
2. **Ms. KRUEWAN CHONLANAI**
Chair Person
AWCF/ CULT
Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum (AWCF)
227, J P Rizal Street, Project 4
Quezon City 1109, Philippines
kruewan9@hotmail.com
3. **Ms. Lida Sadaghian Babil**
Manager of Women Rural
Co-operative Affairs
Central Organisation for Rural Co-operatives of Iran
753, Valli-e-Asr-Avenue, Tehran-15948, Iran.
lisa@yahoo.com
4. **Ms. Tahmineh Toliatkashani**
Expert of Foreign Trade
Central Union of Rural Agricultural
Coops of Iran, 78, North Felestin Avenue
P.O. Box 14155-6413, Tehran-15948, Iran
hmonshizadeh@trocairan.com
5. **Ms. Aisyah Lutfi**
National Federation of Women's Co-operatives (INKOPWAN)
Jalan Dharmawangsa Raya, no.18
Kebayoran Baru, Jakarta Selatan 12160, Indonesia
phone: 62 21 7394961
fax.: 62 21 7222669
6. **Ms. Akiko SATO**
Chair Person
National Council of Agricultural Co-operative
Women's Association
Central Union of Agricultural Coops (JA-Zenchu)
8-3, 1-chome, Otemachi, Chiyoda-ku,
Tokyo-1000004, Japan

7. **Ms. Tran Thu Hang**
Program Officer
International Relations Dept - VCA
Vietnam Cooperative Alliance
77, Nguyen Thai Hoc Street
Ba Dinh District
Tel. 84-4-843-1768
Email: thuhangvca@yahoo.com
8. **Ms. Om Devi Joshi**
Board of Directors
National Co-operative Federation of Nepal Ltd. (NCF)
Bijuli Bazar, Kathmandu-10, Nepal.
Tel : 977-1-4781510/4781787 Fax : 97-1-4781326
E-mail : ncf@wlink.com.np
9. **Ms. MI-YEA, OH**
Chair person
Mutual Aid Society for Enhancing
Korean Agriculture, iCOOP, Korea
Tel)82-2181-7914 Fax) 82-2-2181-7960
E.mail: omy3240@hanmail.net
10. **Ms. Datuk Hajah Noraini Datuk Seri Panglima Haji Salleh**
Chairperson, ANGKASA'S State of Sabah Liaison Committee
National Co-operative Organisation Of Maalaysia (ANGKASA)
WISMA UNGKU A.AZIZ, JALAN SS6/1 KELANA JAYA,
47301 PETALING JAYA, SELANGOR, MALAYSIA
Phone No. +603 7800 7892
Fax No. +603 7806 1519 / +603 7804 2315
E-mail address: international@angkasa.coop
11. **Ms. Emma Neiva**
Women's Representative to NATCCO Board
National Confederation of Coops Inc. (NATCCO)
227 J.P. Rizal Street, Project-4
Quezon City-1109, Philippines
E.mail: ceo@natcco.coop
12. **Ms. Errum Sharif Bhaiji**
Executive, Women Wing
Karachi Co-operative Housing Society
66, Kokan Society, Alamgir Road, Bahadurabad
Karachi, Pakistan
Contact#: 9221--34532603, 34946972
Mobile#: 00923002106353 Fax#: 92213-4941795
Email: errum99@hotmail.com, Website: www.kchsunion.com

13. **Ms. Suchintha Marses Deepanthi Fernando Chakrawarthige**
 Director, COOPFED, Sri Lanka
 C/O Mr. D.K. Pathirana, General Manager [COOPFED]
 No. 11 Saunders Place, Colombo 12, Sri Lanka
 Tel:(94-11) 2437137, 2437138, Fax:(94-11) 2331008
 E-mail: coopfed@sol.lk , Web Site: www.coopfed.lakdora.com
14. **Ms. SUZUE UTO**
 President
 National Association of FCA Women's Group Associations
 Tokyo
 National Federation of Fisheries
 Co-operative Associations (JF ZENGYOREN)
 7th Floor, Coop Bldg.,
 1-1-12 Uchikanda
 Chiyoda-ku
 Tokyo 101 850, Japan

Contact Persons

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| AWCF | 1. Ms. Sally Ganibe
Regional Coordinator
Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum (AWCF)
227, J P Rizal Street, Project 4
Quezon City 1109, Philippines
Tel. 63-2-913-7011-14 |
| India | 2. Mr. Ritesh Dey
Assistant Director
National Co-operative Union of India (NCUI)
3, Siri Institutional Area, Khelgaon Marg,
New Delhi-110016, India.
Tel.91-11-26861988 |
| Japan | 3. Ms. Ayako Nakata
(JA-ZENCHU) General Affairs Section
Central Union of Agricultural Coops (JA-Zenchu)
8-3, 1-chome, Otemachi, Chiyoda-ku,
Tokyo-1000004, Japan.
E-mail: nakata-ayako@zenchu-ja.or.jp |
| Japan | 4. Ms. Satoko Horiuchi
(JCCU) Public Relations DIV.
International Department
Japanese Consumers' Co-operative
Union (JCCU) 3-29-8, Shibuya, Coop Plaza,
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo-150-8913, Japan
e-mail: satoko.horiuchi@jccu.coop
Phone:+81-3-5778-8103 FAX:+81-3-5778-8104 |

- Japan** 5. Mr. Masaki SATO
National Federation of Fisheries
Co-operative Associations (JF ZENGYOREN)
7th Floor, Coop Bldg.,
1-1-12 Uchikanda
Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 101 850, Japan
- Korea** 6. Ms. Juhee LEE
iCOOP KOREA
External co-operative team
171-9, Singil-dong, Yeoungdeungpo-gu
Seoul, R.O.Korea
Tel: 82-2-2181-7914
- Malaysia** 7. Ms. Noor Azlinn
National Co-operative Organisation of Malaysia
(ANGKASA), Wisma Ung A. Aziz
Jalan SS 6/1 Kelana Jaya
47301 Petaling Jaya
Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.
Tel. 60-3 7800-7812
- Philippines** 8. Ms. Evangeline Lopez
International Department
National Confederation of Coops Inc.
(NATCCO)227 J.P. Rizal Street,
Project-4 Quezon City-1109, Philippines.
Tel. 63-2-913-7011-15
- Singapore** 9. The Singapore National Co-operative Federation Ltd.
510 Thomson Road, #12-02, SLF Building,
Singapore-298135
- Thailand** 10. Mr. Phanuwat W
International Department
Co-operative League of Thailand
13, Pichai Road, Dusit
Bangkok, Thailand
Tel.66-2+669324 to 62
- Vietnam** 11. Director, International Relations
Vietnam Co-operative Alliance
77, Nguyen Thai Hoc Street
Ba Dinh District, Hanoi, Vietnam
Tel. 84-4-843-1768

Annexure: 3.

International Women's Day - 8th March, 2010

"Equal rights, equal opportunities: Progress for all"

Message by: Dame Pauline Green, ICA President and Stefania Marcone
Chair, ICA Gender Equality Committee

This year the United Nations focuses attention on the fact that the respect of women's rights and the guarantee of opportunities leads to significant advances in social and economic development. Under the theme, "Equal rights, equal opportunities: Progress for all", International Women's Day underlines the need for governments, civil society, women's organisations, the private sector, the media, the entire UN system, and individual women and men to join forces in making important changes to policies, programmes, attitudes and behaviours to ensure that women fully participate in economic and social life.

Nearly every study that addresses the impact of women's participation in the economy concludes that gender equality is not only the right thing to do, it also makes good business sense. There are business studies showing that the higher percentage of women in decision-making positions, the more successful and efficient enterprises are. In times of economic stress, there is no business argument that can counter the value-added of investing in women. Similarly development studies over and over show that investing in women has a high return improving livelihoods, improving access to education for children and health for all, and reducing poverty in general terms, thus making an impact on overall national economic and social development.

In the co-operative movement, there are similar indications that women's participation leads to successful enterprises that fully serve the needs of all members and their families. Women are participating in co-operatives sometimes making up a very significant proportion of the membership and workforce as a recent ICA Gender Equality Committee survey is showing.

The evidence abounds for why it is in the interest of all to make women's rights and opportunities a priority and yet progress at all levels continues to be slow.

Despite this, ICA and its Gender Equality Committee wish to underline the important contribution made by the worldwide co-operative movement in creating a culture of mutual respect and its commitment to democracy and participation. All over the world, co-operatives contribute to the challenge of gender equality by implementing at various levels gender equality policies and programmes, providing co-operators with awareness-raising, training and education, and decent work. Furthermore, co-operatives are promoting this model of business to women entrepreneurs who often find that this form of enterprise allows them the flexibility and alternative management structures that they seek - an efficient business model that takes into account their specific needs and that promote their socio-economic empowerment.

More action is nonetheless required.

Co-operatives must intensify their efforts in improving gender equality in particular at this time of economic instability. Co-operative resilience can only be reinforced when

programmes to ensure equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men are implemented, particularly at senior levels in our movement.

On the one side, there is continued need to review national and co-operative policies and co-operative statutes and bye-laws to ensure that these do not constrain women's access to equal opportunities including the right to own land and other property. Innovative strategies are needed to promote changes in organisational culture, rules of procedure and working methods as well as address constraints related to lack of time (work-family balance), and lack of personal security.

There is also the need for attitude changes. Too often obstacles in the form of negative stereotypes about women's leadership potential continue to limit change and progress. Specific measures to encourage and support women's participation and enable them to seek and gain senior leadership positions should be enhanced, including management and leadership training, formalised mentorship programmes and sustainable financial support.

On the 8th March 2010, International Women's Day, we call on ICA member organisations and co-operators, to review and reinforce their commitments, policies and programmes to make gender equality a reality.

Let us be leaders in assuring progress for all by taking important steps to booster women's rights and access to participation and leadership in co-operative enterprise.

Let us begin by asking all our members to ensure that from this year onwards that their representative delegations are truly gender-balanced.

International Women's Day - 8th March, 2009

“Co-operators united to end violence against women and girls”

Message by: Dame Pauline Green, ICA President and Stefania Marcone Chair, ICA Gender Equality Committee

This year again the United Nations focuses attention on the global pandemic of violence against women and girls. Under the theme, “Women and men: United to end violence against women and girls”, International Women's Day underlines the need for governments, civil society, women's organisations, young people, the private sector, the media, the entire UN system, and individual women and men to join forces in putting a halt to violence against women and girls.

Violence against women is truly a global phenomenon despite that fact that many continue to believe that violence to women and girls is prevalent in only very select communities. However as World Bank data confirms, one out of every three women is likely to be beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime. The most common form of violence experienced by women globally is physical violence inflicted by an intimate partner; and women aged 15-44 are more at risk from rape and domestic violence than from cancer, motor accidents, war and malaria.

The structural causes of violence against women are rooted in discriminatory customs and traditions. Attitudes and stereotypes including the notion that domestic violence is a private and acceptable matter remain widespread, while economic discrimination of women

exacerbates the perpetuation of women's subordinate status in society and this places them at an increased risk of violence.

How can these causes be addressed and by who?

Political will, commitment, investment of resources and leadership at all levels and by all are crucial. Comprehensive measures to secure gender equality and protect women's human rights are necessary for the effective prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women. These include national gender equality action plans; legal frameworks to end impunity, protect women and allow them to equal access to resources (land, credit, etc), prevention; awareness-rising and educational measures especially involving men and boys, and the provision of services and support for victims/survivors.

The Co-operative Movement, representing more than 800 million women and men co-operators around the world, is called today to mobilise and play a stronger role to end violence against women and girls! They can do so by promoting gender equality in their own co-operative structures, but also taking a leadership in their communities to change attitudes, making political representations and ensuring that action is taken to make violence against women and girls a thing of the past.

ICA and its Gender Equality Committee wish to underline the important contribution made by the worldwide co-operative movement in creating a culture of mutual respect and its commitment to remove all forms of discrimination. All over the world, co-operatives contribute to challenge the structural causes of violence, through implementing gender equality policy and programmes, providing co-operators with awareness-rising, training and education, decent work and socio-economic empowerment for women and girls in and through co-operatives, etc. Moreover, co-operatives are also relevant actors for supporting victims with services and social inclusion opportunities.

Co-operatives can start making a difference by simply removing all obstacles that prevent or limit the direct membership and active participation of women in all types of co-operatives. This means seriously reviewing co-operative bye-laws, policies, standing orders and even internal practice to ensure that real opportunities are available to women to improve their socio-economic status and by doing so in turn contribute the success of their co-operatives while empowering themselves.

On the 8th March, 2009, International Women's Day, we call on ICA member organisations and co-operators, to further mobilise their socio-economic strength by contributing in this global struggle against all forms of violence against women and girls.

Let us aim high and be leaders of change in our societies.

International Women's Day - 8th March, 2008

"Investing in Women for Co-operative Success"

Message by: Ivano Barberini, ICA President and Stefania Marcone, Chair, ICA Gender Equality Committee

Increasing evidence shows that gender inequality is simply bad economics. Investment in gender equality and women's empowerment is therefore vital for improving economic, social and political conditions. Further, it has a multiplier effect on productivity, efficiency and sustained economic growth according to the United Nations. It is for this reason that the

2008 theme of International Women's Day focuses on the need to invest in women and girls and calls on actions to increase resources for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Investing in women is not only a socially responsible and economically valuable, but also a necessity for co-operative organisations wishing to increase their creative and innovative abilities, essential resources to compete in the global market.

What is meant by investing in women and girls? It means not only making financial commitments to build capacity and implement gender sensitive programme and policies, but also taking a leadership role in ensuring gender equality progress. It means taking practical actions to remove barriers and create opportunities for women's empowerment and professional growth. It also means addressing the issue of young women and ensuring that they find co-operative services relevant; that they find value in joining or forming their own co-operatives and that they consider participation in co-operative democracy rewarding and worthwhile.

Educated girls contribute to increased economic productivity and improved family nutrition:

- For every year a girl goes to school beyond the fourth grade, her wages rise 20% and her family size drops by 20%
- A job given to a woman means support for the entire family
- Empowered women are agents for the common good and uplift the well-being of the human family overall
- Women who are empowered to make decisions strengthen family healthcare, reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and promote long-lasting peace both in industrialised and developing countries.

We are reminded too that the larger youth issue is of significant importance to the success of the co-operative movement. One person in eight is a girl or young woman age 10-24 and so co-operative education for girls and young women, and gender awareness for all are essential for the continued success of the movement.

So in celebrating International Women's Day, co-operatives are called to allocate an adequate proportion of financial resources to achieve effective gender equality. They should seek additional resources for new and existing gender programmes and training for women; they should review policies and organizational capacity to empower women and keep gender balance in mind when recruiting staff and electing leadership; and they should address the issue of young women and girls and their participation in the co-operative movement.

The ICA and its Gender Equality Committee are convinced that the co-operative movement has a significant role in making investments of all types to promote gender equality and that we can make a difference. Finally, let us not forget that progress for women is progress for all.

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**ICA REGIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
ACTIVITY REPORT 2008-2010**

9 Aradhana Enclave, R.K. Puram, Sector - 13, New Delhi - 110066. India
Tel.: 91-11-26888250 Fax: 91-11-26888067 Email: info@icaroap.coop Website: www.icaroap.coop