

*Regional Conference on  
Women in Decision-Making  
In Co-operatives  
7 to 9 May 1997  
Tagaytay City, Philippines*

**A Declaration  
and Platform of Action  
for the Enhancement of  
Women 's Participation  
in Leadership and  
Decision-Making  
in Co-operatives**



Asian Women In Co-operative Development Forum (AWCF)



Co-operative Alliance Regional Office for Asia  
and Pacific (ICAROAP)

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with funds support from MISEREOR of Germany  
and SEAGEP, CIDA

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## PREFACE

**The Declaration and Platform of Action For the Enhancement of Women's Participation in Leadership and Decision-Making in Co-operatives** are two important outputs of the regional conference on "Women in Decision-Making in Co-operatives" held in May 7-9, 1997 in Tagaytay City, Philippines. The conference was jointly organized by the Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum (AWCF) and the International Co-operative Alliance Regional Office for Asia and Pacific (ICAROAP). The purposes of the conference were: a) to analyze the low representation of women in the leadership and decision-making positions and processes in society and in co-operatives, and b) to present practical actions on how to increase women's participation in leadership and decision-making in co-operatives at all levels; primary, secondary, tertiary, regional and international.

The Declaration is a *statement of concern* from co-operative leaders and staff on the serious, age-old and prevalent issue of women's low participation in the leadership and decision-making positions and processes in co-operatives at all levels: primary, national, regional and international. It is a *call to action* for all co-operatives, that is, to not only confront and analyze, for the awareness, recognition and concomitant analysis has been done, although sporadically since the early beginnings of the co-operative movement, but more importantly, to take the necessary and important steps to address the issue.

The Platform of Action is a *guideline* and a *commitment* to achieve the goal of enhancing women's participation in the leadership and decision-making of co-operatives at all levels. The Platform is a *plan* to achieve this goal in a timeframe of eight years, 1997-2005.

The Declaration and Platform of Action are two important results of several stages of consultation and brainstorming among co-operative leaders and gender advocates in the co-operative movement in several countries in Asia. The first consultation and brainstorming was among representatives of the AWCF members, particularly, its Executive Committee and the Gender Advisors of the ICA Regional Office for Asia and Pacific. The second was among the one hundred sixteen participants of the conference. The third was by a core group from both the AWCF and ICAROAP who did the finalization of the two documents.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was a valuable model for drawing up this Declaration and Platform. Three important sections, in particular, of the Beijing Platform for Action were deemed relevant and facilitative to the understanding and eventual implementation of the co-op sector's own Platform of Action. Thus, they were formulated and included in the latter.

The *Mission Statement* defines and articulates the goal and purpose of the Platform. The *Institutional Arrangements* identifies and defines the roles of institutions, committees and agencies –co-op and non-co-op, government and non-government –in the implementation of this Platform. The

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## PREFACE

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*Financial Arrangements* defines and clarifies the financial contributions that these institutions, committees and agencies must make to pay for the cost of implementing the Platform.

We hope that all individuals from co-operative organizations who read this Declaration and Platform for Action will, in her and his own way, contribute to achieve what we hope for – enriching the co-op movement through enhanced participation by women in the leadership and decision-making in co-operatives at all levels.

We wish to acknowledge the financial assistance provided by MISEREOR of Germany and SEAGEP, CIDA for the regional conference on “Women in Decision-Making in Co-operatives” held in May 7 to 9, 1997 at the Taal Vista Hotel, Tagaytay City, Philippines and this publication.

**Lota Y. Bertulfo**

*Regional Coordinator*

*Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum*

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## FOREWORD

In 1995, at the occasion of the ICA Congress in Manchester, United Kingdom, the Co-operative Principles were revised and the Congress adopted the Statement on the New Co-operative Identity. The New Co-operative Principles indicate that Co-operatives should be open to all persons “without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination”. This was the first time that the word “gender” has been included in the co-operative principles.

In line with this New Co-operative Principle, the ICA Regional Office for Asia and Pacific had conducted several regional conferences or workshops in order to bring to the awareness of its members the issue of gender inequality in co-operatives as well as to identify strategies on how to pursue and achieve in and through co-operatives.

As the result of our activities, women leaders are coming up little by little at the primary levels. However, when we observe the realities prevailing in most co-operatives in our region with the perspective of gender equality, we still discover there are very few women leaders specifically at state or national levels.

This Regional Conference on Women in Decision Making in Co-operatives was held with the purpose to find out women and men’s perspectives of why women are marginalized in the decision making in co-ops at all levels from their actual experiences and sharing of their insights



as a result of their experience. All of participants including both women and men had active discussions on these issues and finalized the Tagaytay Declaration and Platform of Action which should be utilized by all co-operatives in the Asia and Pacific Region.

I am very pleased to share herewith all of our ideas, views, or products of discussions with respective co-operators. They must be useful and valuable for not only gender or women activities but your daily activities. The history and nature of co-operatives show that co-operatives are democratic and gender-fair institutions. I do hope this small booklet will contribute to improvement of your co-operative movement.

Lastly, I should pay a great respect to AWCF which has been working as a co-organizer of the Conference. Without their surprising efforts, the Conference would not have been successful and fruitful.

With co-operative greetings,

**Robby Tulus**

*Regional Director,*

*International Co-operative Alliance Regional Office for Asia and Pacific*

## **TAGAYTAY DECLARATION**

### **Preamble**

1 We, women and men leaders, staff and members of co-operative organizations and non-government organizations promoting co-operatives from Asia and Pacific (specifically Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam), Europe (specifically, Denmark, Finland and Sweden) and North America (specifically, Canada) participating in and contributing to the successful reflection and deliberation in the regional conference on “Women in Decision-Making in Co-operatives” organized by the Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum and the International Co-operative Alliance Regional Office for Asia and Pacific held in Tagaytay City, Philippines, on May 7-9, 1997,

2 Aware of the gross marginalization of women in the leadership and decision-making structures and processes in co-operatives at all levels: primary, national, regional and global,

3 Determined to increase the number and level of participation of women in the leadership and decision-making structures and processes in co-operatives at all levels,

4 Acknowledging the voices and concerns of our other sisters and brothers in the co-operative movement in the

Asia and Pacific and other regions in the world, who share our concern and commitment for increased participation by women in the leadership and decision-making structures and processes in co-operatives,

5 Dedicate ourselves unreservedly to promote and advocate the increased participation of women in the leadership and decision-making in co-operatives, agreeing that such goal requires the cooperation and solidarity of all co-operators: leaders, staff-women and men - as we strive to create a more caring and effective leadership in co-operatives into the 21st century.

**We reaffirm our beliefs:**

6 In the co-operative principles of democratic member control, voluntary and open membership, member economic participation, autonomy and independence, education, training and information, co-operation among co-operatives, and concern for community,

7 In the co-operative values of democracy, equality, equity, solidarity, self-help, and self-responsibility,

8 In the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others, on which co-operatives all over the world were and are organized on these bases.

**We are convinced that:**

9 Women and men have different needs, interests, priorities and styles of leadership and decision-making arising from their specific roles and situations, and that both women's and men's needs can only be adequately and appropriately addressed if women and men are equally represented in the decision-making processes in all structures,

including in co-operatives; and that, addressing these needs will result to the progress of these structures;

**10** The exclusion of women and the failure to incorporate women's concerns in decision-making and leadership levels and processes in all structures, represents a major loss to society as a whole; and to co-operatives in particular, translates into a loss of half the potential, talent and experience pool that can contribute to the growth and progress of co-operatives;

**11** All co-operative members and leaders, women and men, are bound and at the same time, have a role to play in increasing the number and participation of women in decision-making and leadership in co-operatives in all levels: primary, national, regional, and global.

**We are aware and recognize that:**

**12** The gross marginalization of women in decision-making and leadership levels and processes in structures in society, including in co-operatives are due to:

- cultural beliefs and socialization processes that result to women's subordinate position compared to men and restrict women from being more involved in public life,
- discrimination (explicit and covert) against women in access to education and training,
- institutional settings that are governed by male norms, and thus, reflect men's needs and situation more than women's different needs and experience, and,
- in the limited number of women in co-op membership;

**13** Women's number and participation in decision-making and leadership structures and processes in co-operatives must be increased for the following reasons:

- women are more critical of the traditional definition of politics and of the use of power: too centralized, too hierarchical and too autocratic; women leaders will bring in a different kind of leadership in co-ops;
- if there are more women decision-makers in co-operatives, co-operatives' focus can be enlarged in such a way that women-specific needs will be included; women can influence co-ops to use resources that will help correct gender inequality and inequity not only in co-ops but also in society at large;

**14** Efforts have been made to increase the number and participation of women in decision-making and leadership in co-operatives, but these efforts are inadequate, and in some cases, ineffective in achieving this goal as evidenced in the:

- still marginal number of women in decision-making and leadership positions in co-ops especially in the national, regional and global levels
- in the barriers that continue to keep women from these positions such as co-op practices, standards, and processes in selecting leaders,
- in the exercise of leadership duties and in the recognition of contributions as leaders;

**We are determined to**

**15** Amend laws, revise, and where necessary, create structures to increase the membership of women in all types of co-operatives;

**16** Create an environment that is conducive to partnership between women and men and supportive of increased participation by women in leadership and decision-making in co-operatives at all levels, primary, national, regional and global, and other structures in society: family, community and law;

**17** Continue our advocacy on gender equality, gender equity, and the empowerment of women in co-operatives by transforming our co-operatives to be sensitive and responsive to the needs of both women and men members;

**18** Set up systems and take the immediate steps to provide women with the necessary education, training and experience in order to be effective as leaders;

**We commit ourselves to:**

**19** Bring co-operative practice in line with co-operative theory and values by pursuing and creating a kind of leadership in co-operatives that is:

- consistent with co-operative principles;
- democratic, participatory, collaborative, consultative and accountable to members;
- gender responsive where women and men work together for the betterment of family, workplace and society; and
- responsive to the needs and situation of the disadvantaged.

**20 We hereby adopt and commit ourselves** as leaders, members, staff, volunteer promoters and organizers of co-operatives to implement the following Platform of Action. We call on the International Co-operative Alliance and its members, other co-operative movements, the Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum and other networks of gender and co-operatives, non-government organizations and women's organizations promoting co-operatives, to fully commit themselves and contribute to the implementation of this Platform of Action.

## **PLATFORM OF ACTION**

### *Chapter 1*

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

**1** The Platform of Action is an agenda to increase the participation of women in the leadership and decision-making positions and processes in all types of co-operatives in all regions of the world by increasing their opportunities and capabilities for leadership and decision-making. It aims to facilitate and accelerate the achievement of congruity between co-operative practice and theory, specifically in the area of democratic member control.

**2** The Platform of Action is a broad guideline for achieving equality between women and men in the access to power and decision-making in co-operatives with the end in view that such equality of access will result to equitable benefits between men and women as well as to the benefit and progress of co-operatives.

**3** Although the implementation of the actions enumerated and described in the Platform of Action are specific to co-operatives, the intention is that the serious and full implementation of the Platform of Action will result to improved gender relations not only in the context of co-operatives, but in the home, workplace and in the wider community.



4 The cooperation of ALL men and women in co-operatives, working together as equal partners, is essential to the successful implementation of this Platform and the achievement of the goals for which this Platform was drawn up. Likewise, the serious, sustained and long-term commitment from leaders, members and staff - women and men - from ALL co-operatives.

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**GLOBAL AND REGIONAL FRAMEWORK  
FOR WOMEN'S ENHANCED  
PARTICIPATION IN THE LEADERSHIP  
AND DECISION-MAKING  
IN CO-OPERATIVES AND IN SOCIETY**

**Global Situation of Women's Participation in Leadership  
and Decision-Making**

5 Women are marginalized in the leadership and decision-making positions and processes in all structures in society in all countries of the world. Such condition has been existing for centuries, so much so that this has been taken to be the norm - the inevitable, incorrigible, unchangeable state of women vis-a-vis men. This state is certainly a shame to humankind, which is comprised of at least 50% women.

6 In 1995, there were only 24 women heads of states. In 1994, women comprised only 5.7% of cabinet ministers. In the same year, there was not a single woman minister in 59 countries. It was only in 16 countries where women comprised 15% of ministers. And only one country, Sweden, had more women ministers than men (52% women to 48% men).<sup>1</sup>

7 The *UNDP Human Development Report 1995* stated, "Upholding the equality of rights is not an act of benevolence by those in power.

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<sup>1</sup> The World's Women 1995. Trends and Statistics. .United Nations, New York, 1995.

It is needed for the progress of every society.” Further, it stated, “The goals of gender equality differ from one country to another, depending on the social, cultural and economic contexts.... Fundamental to all these priorities are the equality of access to means of developing basic human capabilities, the equality of opportunity to participate in all aspects of economic, social, and political decision-making, and the equality of reward.... Equality is not a technocratic goal- it is a wholesale political commitment. Gender equality is an essential aspect of human development.”

8 The *Beijing Declaration*<sup>2</sup> stated, “Women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.”

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<sup>2</sup>With the Beijing Platform for Action, one of two main outputs of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China last September 1995. These two documents serve as guideline for achieving equality between women and men, equitable access to resources between women and men, and to improved situation of millions of women in the world. Although Governments are mainly responsible for implementing the Platform for Action, all actors of civil society, such as co-operatives, have a key role in achieving the goals of the Platform.

9 The *Beijing Platform for Action* pointed out, “Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and ensure its democracy and ensure proper functioning. Equality in decision-making performs a leverage function without which it is highly unlikely that a real integration of the equality dimension in government decision-making is feasible. Women’s equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women’s interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women’s perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.”

10 Further, the Beijing Platform for Action stated unequivocally that women’s participation in decision-making is a demand for simple justice and democracy.

11 In a study commissioned by the UN, five basic arguments for women’s participation in decision-making and politics were presented:

a) Democracy and egalitarianism - women constitute at least half of any population and should be represented proportionally. The recognition of women’s rights to full citizenship must be reflected in their effective participation at

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<sup>3</sup>Women in Politics and Decision-Making in the late Twentieth Century. United Nations, New York, 1995.

the various levels of political life. There cannot be true democracy where women are virtually excluded from positions of power.

*b. Legitimacy* - women's underrepresentation can be dangerous for the legitimacy of the democratic system since it distances elected representatives from their electorate and more particularly from the women among their electors.

*c. Differences in interests* - political participation involves articulating, providing and defending interests. Women are conditioned to have different social roles, functions and values. It is reasonable to believe that women are more aware of their own needs and are therefore better able to press for them. Women are more aware, for example, of the need to have proper provision for the care of children and of others who are physically dependent; and to have more protection against sexual violence and harassment. The current composition of the political decision-makers means that women are unable to articulate and defend their own interests.

*e. Efficient use of human resources* - no country can afford not to utilize all its human resources. Women comprise half the world's pool of potential talent and ability. The importance of their fundamental biological and social roles is clear, and though their inputs is often unrecognized, they are major contributors to national economies through their paid and unpaid labor.

Excluding women from positions of power and from elected bodies impoverishes public life and inhibits the development of a just society. In short, without the full participation of women in decision-making, the political process will be less effective than it can and should be, to the detriment of society as a whole.

**12** The *UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)* established the proportion of at least 30% women in decision-making positions to establish a “critical mass” of women who can effectively influence decision-making processes. This is borne out by the experience of Nordic countries.

**Regional (Asia and the Pacific)  
Situation of Women’s Participation  
in Leadership and Decision-Making**

**13** Asia is currently the most rapidly growing and dynamic part of the world. While the region is forging ahead at an incredible pace of economic growth, the same unfortunately cannot be claimed for the vast majority of its women. Large numbers continue to suffer poverty, illiteracy, poor health, malnutrition, and low social, economic, and political status. While economic growth in the region has admittedly led to some gains for a significant majority of women, the overall plight of Asian women remains unsatisfactory and unaddressed.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Women in Development: Issues, Challenges and Strategies in Asia and Pacific. Asian Development Bank, 1994.

**14** A *UN ESCAP* survey (for the period, 1985-1993) of women's participation in politics and leadership in Asia and the Pacific showed that women comprise only 11% of total parliamentarians in the region in 1993, which was lower than it was in 1987 at 12%. The survey further showed that there were more women parliamentarians in East Asia at 19% and lowest in the Pacific states at 2%.<sup>5</sup>

**15** The *UNDP Human Development Report 1996* showed that women's participation in decision-making for the period, 1990 to 1995, in Asian and Pacific countries ranged from 0 to 23.9% or an average of 6.3% among twenty-five countries surveyed.

**16** Yet, it has been observed that "greater participation in political decision-making has been perceived to be one of the factors that strengthen the process of empowerment....Equal participation by women in the public sphere can be looked upon as an effective strategy to initiate a process of changing power relations elsewhere in society."

### **The Nature of Co-operatives**

**17** Historically, co-operatives have fulfilled the socio-economic needs of communities, and have enjoyed success in many countries. Co-operatives are formed by many low-income communities to promote their well-being and to become self-reliant. In Asia and the Pacific, the total number of individual co-operative membership has reached no less than 480 million people by yearend 1995

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<sup>5</sup>Women in Asia and the Pacific 1985-1993. UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. UN New York, 1994.

Assuming that 50% belong to the middle class category and 40% still among the relatively poor, it means that well over 200 million members are still in need of basic services and social infrastructure.

**18** Where women are concerned, their subordinate roles continue to prevail. Unless co-operatives take an active part in mainstreaming gender, women continue to have less access and control over resources as compared to men, and they will continue to be marginalized in the co-operative leadership and decision making processes .

**19** Co-operatives are distinct in their “identity” and mode of operations from private enterprises. Co-operation is a practical philosophy based on a society that promotes development by consent and consensus of the people. Co-operatives combine business and moral values. Cooperatives are unique as they possess universal suitability and acceptance to operate under all kinds of economic systems : be they capitalism, socialism, or a system based on mixed economies. Cooperatives combine the merits of all the systems. Co-operatives promote the values of self-help, self-initiative, and self-responsibility which are basic characteristics of capitalism. They adhere to values of equality, equity, solidarity and non-exploitation which are vital ingredients of socialism; co-operatives believe in democratic governance which balances the two systems under one where public and private sectors co-exist.

**20** But the central focus of any co-operative movement is always to be in the best interest of **MEMBERS** (read : *Women and Men*) both in the short and long term. Co-operatives exist primarily to serve them, and any measure of effectiveness must be based on how well those needs



are served. Co-operatives also become more effective when they give people more control over their lives. Co-operatives give members the opportunity to consume more wisely, and give producers the opportunity to control the production and distribution of their goods; co-operatives give all kinds of people the chance to save, invest, and borrow money in honest, secure, and competitive financial institutions. There is an important kind of dignity in enlarging such kind of empowerment.

21 A co-operative movement must also build a **strong vertically integrated structure**, combining the power of local co-operatives into an integrated system that can wield influence on national, regional and even international levels. Doing so will require vision and a capacity to make difficult decisions. In rare instances, it may even require foregoing local possibilities in favour of a common good. "Acting locally, working globally" became a cliché in the later decades of the twentieth century. Within co-operatives, it must become a reality if full effectiveness is to be achieved - - where women and men work together at all levels within the co-operative structures.

22 There is a challenge for more strategic thinking. Thinking strategically means the ability to consider how the membership advantage, the co-operative distinctiveness, the empowerment of people, the combination of resources and the pools of accumulated capital can be most effectively deployed. It is envisioning what can be prudently attempted and collectively accomplished.

23 Co-operatives also confronted other challenges in the 90s as a result of open markets and globalization that demanded a review of ways of doing, a change in understanding and perspective of the old and emerging issues such as the increasing gap between the haves and have-nots, envi-

ronmental degradation, and the deepening inequality between women and men in all spheres of life, including in co-operatives.

24 Within the context of all the above challenges the INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE ALLIANCE conducted and celebrated its Centennial Congress in Manchester in September 1995. It was at the ICA Centennial Congress that the definition of a Co-operative has been accepted by all delegates coming from all over the world. It was at the Centennial Congress that the Co-operative values have been adopted, and Co-operative Principles revised and sharpened. The Co-operative definition, values and principles are put together under what is now called the **“STATEMENT on the CO-OPERATIVE IDENTITY”**.

25 The document on **“STATEMENT on the CO-OPERATIVE IDENTITY”** approved by the ICA’s members in Manchester consists of three parts : the Definition, the Values, and the Co-operative Principles.

*Firstly*, as there has been no commonly-accepted international definition of a Co-operative (with the exception of a 1966 document issued by the International Labour Office), co-operatives have been described in different ways by different people over the years. The ICA’s definition clearly identifies the main characteristic of any co-operatives in any sector or any country. In short, a co-operative is:

- \* an autonomous association of persons
- \* who unite voluntarily
- \* in order to meet their common needs and aspirations
- \* through a business enterprise

- \* which they jointly own
- \* and democratically control

**Secondly**, Co-operatives are based on values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others.

The **Third** part of the Identity Statement deals with the Co-operative Principles. In the past, the principles were used to define the key characteristics of a co-operative and to describe its basic values. This inevitably led to some confusion, which is why the three elements have now been separated. In reality, the co-operative principles are “*guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice.*”

The seven principles are :

- \* Voluntary and Open Membership
- \* Democratic Member Control
- \* Member Economic Participation
- \* Autonomy and Independence
- \* Education, Training, and Information
- \* Co-operation among Co-operatives
- \* Concern for Community

**26** The new principle added is that of “Autonomy and Independence”, giving emphasis that co-operatives must be controlled and directed by their members. The second new principle is that of “**Concern for Community**”. As locally-rooted, member-responsive organizations, co-operatives have a close link with their communities. During recent years, it has become apparent that

co-operatives are often playing a leading role in the economic, social, and cultural development of their communities. They have become especially active in the field of community health, community housing, group-lending for micro-enterprises, and in environmental protection.

27 The principle of Concern for Community also, in some ways, mandates co-operatives to go beyond the community's and the members' economic needs which co-operatives traditionally addressed, such as need for credit, consumer goods, marketing of products, etc. to the social needs and concerns of the community and of co-ops' members such as greater political participation by women in community and co-ops' affairs, gender equality, childcare, physical safety, etc.

28 The history and nature of co-operatives as can be gleaned from their values and principles, show that co-operatives are democratic and gender-fair institutions, which respect and encourage the participation of all members in all co-op affairs, including in decision-making, regardless of their gender.

### **Efforts to Promote Gender Equality in Co-operatives**

29 In the Declaration passed during the celebration of the ICA Centennial held in Manchester in 1995, it was stated, "There are untapped resources in many memberships, especially among women and young people. Much of the future success of the co-operative movement will depend upon a willingness to recognize true equality between women and men in the deliberations of co-operative organizations; much of the vitality will come from the involvement of young people."

**30** In the same document, it was pointed out that one of the many challenges that face co-operatives in the next century are resolving “complex issues of social justice, many of which co-operatives have historically tried to address; it is as important as before that they continue to do so. One of them concerns the unequal position of women around the world. Women are disproportionately evident among the poor; they provide more than their share of labor, paid and unpaid, in most economies; their capacity to control their own lives is often restricted.”

**31** The importance the ICA and its members placed on the need for gender equality in co-operatives is no less demonstrated in the passing of the Resolution on Gender Equality in Co-operatives during the ICA Centennial Congress held in Manchester last September 1995. The resolution stated, “Gender equality is a global priority of the ICA.... To improve such gender balance co-operatives are requested to set an action plan which should include targets, with a clear idea of what should be achieved and by when.”<sup>6</sup>

**32** In Asia and Pacific, the ICAROAP had conducted several regional activities for the purpose of bringing to the awareness of its members the issue of gender inequality in co-operatives as well as to identify strategies on how to pursue and achieve in and through co-operatives. These activities were: three regional consultation meetings on gender integration in co-operatives, the first in Colombo in 1992, the second in Tokyo in 1993, and the third in Bangkok in 1996, two sub-regional gender sensitivity training and

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<sup>6</sup>For details on this resolution, see *Annex 7*

planning meetings, and the setting up of a protempore Regional Women's committee during the ICAROAP General Assembly in 1996, which the ICAROAP Executive Committee approved in ChiangMai in March 1997.

**33** In the Co-operative Ministers' Conference on "Co-operatives in a Changing Socio-Economic Environment" held in ChiangMai last March 1997, the body passed four resolutions on Gender and Development.<sup>7</sup>

**34** The Canadian Co-operative Association was catalytic in its approach to gender and co-operative development when it organized a consultation meeting on Women in Development (in the co-operative context) in Kuala Lumpur in 1989 that led to the organizing and conduct of a Leadership Training for Women Leaders in ASEAN countries, which in turn, led to the setting up of the Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum, then a collaborative informal forum among co-operative organizations to pursue gender equality and the empowerment of women in and through co-operatives.

**35** The AWCF has been promoting gender awareness and gender integration in co-operatives since its inception in 1990. Leadership development for women has been one of its four priority thrusts since it was set up. All of its programs and activities are geared towards increasing women's share of power and decision-making in co-operatives.

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<sup>7</sup>For details on this resolution, see *Annex 8-C*

**Women's Participation in Leadership and Decision-Making  
in Co-operatives: Global and Regional (Asia and Pacific)  
Situation**

36 The picture of women's participation in the leadership and decision-making in co-operatives is the same at the global level and in the context of Asia and the Pacific. And the picture is that of low, even marginal representation of women in co-op Boards - lowest at the national level and slightly greater at the primary and chapter/federation levels. The picture is better only in Nordic countries.

37 When women are in the Boards at all, they usually hold the position of Secretary or Treasurer, both doing or implementing positions, rather than a position of decision-making.

38 Several factors have been identified to cause women's limited representation in co-op Boards and in co-op management in all regions of the world:

*One*, reproductive roles traditionally borne by women reduces women's time for community and voluntary work such as being an elected official in a co-operative;

*Two*, old stereotypes of women and men where men are traditionally seen as more fit to have a public role (i.e., as leaders) and women to have a private role (i.e., as homemakers);

*Three*, requirements and processes for entry in leadership and decision-making in co-ops restrict women's access and opportunities for leadership and decision-making therein, eg, the member must have served a certain number of years in an elected position before she/he can get into the Board or be elected

as co-op President or Chairperson, the nomination procedure where the member willing to be elected must nominate her/himself in front of the general assembly - this practice is not attractive to women, the “old boys network” that is actively at work during election time in co-ops;

*Four*, practice of leadership and decision-making in co-operatives discriminates against women, eg, the practice of holding long meetings at night in less than safe places, hierarchical and bureaucratic styles, etc.;

*Five*, co-op laws and by-laws that restrict women’s membership in co-ops, eg, laws that stipulate that only landowners or heads of households can be members of co-ops; furthermore, traditional laws and cultural practices that regard women as subordinate to men;

*Six*, in some co-ops, women are not given the same opportunities as men for basic training and higher education in such areas as finance, technology and management.

**39** The co-op movement is filled with many examples of co-ops being ably and effectively led and/or managed by women. From women’s leadership and management, many co-ops have progressed and have improved the lives of peoples all over the world.

**40** The benefits that co-operatives get from women’s leadership and management can be multiplied with more women in leadership and decision-making in co-operatives. The need to enhance women’s participation in leadership and decision-making in co-operatives is not only for ethical reasons, but for economic reasons as well.



**PLATFORM OF ACTION TO ENHANCE  
THE NUMBER AND PARTICIPATION  
OF WOMEN IN THE LEADERSHIP AND  
DECISION-MAKING IN CO-OPERATIVES  
IN THE ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION**

**41** In order to enhance the number and participation of women in the leadership and decision-making structures and processes in co-operatives, we propose the following strategies and actions to be implemented within a period of eight years, from Year 1997 up to Year 2005.

**Strategy I: Instituting gender-sensitive Co-op Laws, By-Laws and policies that promote increased women membership in co-ops and participation in leadership and decision-making therein.**

**Actions to be taken**

**42. *By Governments:***

- a) Review Co-op Laws, implementing rules and guidelines from a gender perspective, and amend, if they cause disadvantage to women in becoming members of co-ops;
- b) Review Co-op Laws, implementing rules and guidelines from a gender perspective, and amend or correct, if they cause disadvantage in becoming leaders and/or becoming effective in the performance of their duties as co-op leaders;

**43. *By all types of co-operatives at all levels: primary, national, regional, and global:***

- a) Review their (co-op) By-Laws and other policies from a gender perspective and, amend, if they cause disadvantage to women in becoming members of co-ops; promote joint membership in primary level co-operatives of couples in a household;
- b) Undertake pro-active efforts to increase the number of women members in their co-ops;
- c) Review their (co-op) By-Laws, other policies and practices from a gender perspective and amend or correct, if they cause disadvantage to women in becoming leaders and/or in becoming effective in the performance of their duties as co-op leaders;
- d) Undertake pro-active efforts to increase the number and participation of women in the leadership and decision-making structures and processes in co-operatives;

**44. *By all co-operatives, Governments, non-government organizations:***

- a) Support ICA ROAP in its efforts to pursue legislation and government policies that are more gender-responsive, with particular emphasis on the resolutions adopted by the Fourth Asia Pacific Conference of Co-operative Ministers held in Chiangmai, Thailand, from March 19 to 22, 1997.
- b) Support the role of the ICA Regional Women's Committee for Asia and the Pacific in its efforts to promote gender-responsive policies in co-operatives;

- c) Support the Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum (AWCF) in its efforts to advocate gender-responsive policies in co-operatives and provide services in helping co-operatives become gender-responsive.

**Strategy II: Building capability of co-ops on women leadership development**

**Actions to be taken**

**45. *By primary level co-operatives:***

- a) Conduct Gender Sensitivity Training (GST)\* for women and men co-op members, leaders, and staff;
- b) Allocate technical, material, human, and financial resources for the training of the Education Committee on women leadership development in co-ops;
- c) Ensure and monitor the equal access by women and men members and staff to all types of training opportunities and resources for their personal and professional advancement;

**46. *By national level co-operative organizations:***

- a) Initiate, promote and conduct GST for women and men co-op members, leaders and staff;
- b) Develop and allocate technical, material, human, and financial resources for the training of national trainers on women leaders at all levels;

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\*Also referred to as Gender Awareness Seminar/Training, it serves as an introduction and provides a basic orientation to the participants on gender, gender issues, and how they affect social and economic development and political life, in general. When conducted in the co-op context, GST shows how gender issues affect co-operative development, in particular.

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- c) Ensure and monitor the equal access by women and men members and staff of affiliates/ members to all types of training opportunities and resources for their personal and professional advancement;

**47. *By all co-operative organizations at all levels: primary, national, regional (ICAROAP), global, and gender & co-operative networks such as the AWCF:***

- a) Promote awareness among members as voters on the need and importance for women to be in the leadership and decision-making structures at all levels in co-operatives;
- b) Support the quota system as a means to ensure and facilitate the increase in the number and level of women's participation in the leadership and decision-making in co-operatives;

**Strategy III: Building capability of women for leadership and decision-making in co-ops**

**Actions to be taken**

**48. *By primary level co-operatives:***

- a) Conduct Gender Sensitivity Training for women members and leaders;
- b) Allocate resources for and provide training opportunities to women members to enable them to get into leadership positions in co-ops; likewise, to be effective and efficient in the performance of their duties as co-op leaders;

- c) Provide equal opportunities for women and men staff of co-ops in promotion and other opportunities for career advancement in a co-op organization/employer;
- d) Educate young cooperators about gender issues and promote awareness of the need and importance for women to be in the leadership and decision-making in co-operatives;
- e) Establish a network of women leaders in the primary level that bring the women's agenda (empowerment of women, support in carrying out multiple roles, equitable sharing of power in co-operatives) to the co-operative movement, build solidarity at all levels, build consensus on common issues and exercise influence on decision-making processes in co-operatives at all levels;

**49. *By national level co-operative organizations:***

- a) Develop and allocate technical, material, human, and financial resources for leadership skills training of women members at all levels;
- b) Develop and allocate technical, material, human and financial resources for management skills training of women co-op managers, other women co-op staff, and women elected leaders;
- c) Develop a management and leadership development program for women and men members and leaders that emphasize the new model of leadership and management that is consistent with co-op values and principles and is characterized by caring and compassion, consultation, democratic style, high regard for ethics, cooperation and collectivism;

- d) Develop and promote a gender-sensitive human resource development for co-operatives among affiliates/members;
- e) Develop and promote a gender-sensitive youth development program for co-operatives among affiliates/members;
- f) Document and publish stories about the efforts of co-operatives in enhancing women's participation in the leadership and decision-making in co-operatives and disseminate to the media, governments and general public;
- g) Establish a network of women leaders at the national level that bring the women's agenda (empowerment of women, support in carrying out multiple roles, equitable sharing of power in co-operatives) to the co-operative movement, build solidarity at all levels, build consensus on common issues and exercise influence on decision-making processes in co-operatives at all levels;

**50. *By the ICAROAP and AWCF:***

- a) Develop, publish and disseminate curriculum and materials for a Leadership Development Program for Women in Co-operatives;
- b) Organize and conduct regional fora at least once a year on issues related to equitable sharing of power and decision-making between women and men in co-operatives;

- c) Organize and conduct regional exchange programs and exposure visits for women leaders of co-operatives on co-operative operations and other programs relevant to the enhancement of women's participation in leadership and decision-making in co-operatives;
- d) Assist members in their respective leadership development programs for women in co-operatives;
- e) Advocate at the international level issues concerning women in leadership and decision-making in co-operatives;
- f) Document and publish stories of women leaders in co-ops who could be good role models for other women as well as men leaders in co-operatives highlighting women leaders' unique contributions to the progress of co-operatives;
- g) Document and publish cases of co-operatives that are successful in enhancing the participation of women in leadership and decision-making in co-operatives;
- h) Document and publish stories about the efforts of co-operative organizations in enhancing women's participation in the leadership and decision-making in co-operatives at the regional and international levels to the media, governments and the general public;
- i) Establish a network of women leaders in the primary, national, regional and global levels that bring the women's agenda (empowerment of women, support in carrying out multiple roles, equitable sharing of power in co-operatives) to the co-operative movement, build solidarity at all levels, build consensus on common issues and exercise influence on decision-making processes in co-operatives at all levels;
- j) Build solidarity with allies in the women's move-

ment, people's organizations, non-government organizations, trade union movement and other movements and organizations in all parts of the world who are supportive to the cause of enhancing women's participation in the leadership and decision-making in co-operatives;

**Strategy IV: Developing, promoting and implementing a gender-disaggregated data collection and utilization system for co-operatives**

To measure the actual participation and contribution of women and men in the co-operatives for the purpose of:

- making women's contribution to co-operative development visible;
- showing the degree of inequity and inequality in women's and men's involvement in co-operatives;
- facilitating the recognition of gender issues in co-operatives; and,
- providing concrete basis for the co-operative's formulation of policies, design of programs, and provision of services that are gender-responsive.

**Actions to be taken**

**51. *By the ICAROAP and AWCF:***

- a) Develop a model or system for generating, analyzing and utilizing gender-disaggregated data in all aspects of operations of primary level co-operatives, including on leadership representation and participation;
- b) Promote and assist primary level co-operatives in using this model or system so as to collect gender-disaggregated data on a regular basis to establish benchmarks and monitor the progress towards a more gender-responsive co-operative movement;



- c) Collect and publish gender-disaggregated data on membership and leadership, and disseminate the same to co-op members, to relevant government bodies, and to the general public;

**52. *By co-operative organizations at the primary and national levels:***

- a) Collect gender-disaggregated data on membership and leadership vis-a-vis co-op operations on a regular basis, and utilize these data to make co-op services truly responsive to the needs and conditions of women and men members;

**Strategy V: Creating a supportive environment for the enhancement of women's participation in the leadership and decision-making in co-operatives**

**Actions to be taken**

**53. *By co-operative organizations at all levels:***

- a) Undertake pro-active efforts to address and correct gender stereotypes that portray women as less capable than men to be leaders in all structures, including in co-operatives as shown in media, in books and other educational materials, and as practiced in the family; but rather, to portray women as equal to men and that the difference in roles, capacities, and physical make-up between women and men is an advantage and not a limitation;
- b) Provide material and financial resources to support women and men members of co-operatives in their reproductive roles in the form of childcare subsidy,

- parental leave, transport services, good and safe daycare facilities;
- c) Ensure women's equal access to advanced technology as it enhances women's participation in leadership and decision-making in co-operatives;

**Strategy VI. Establish a Leadership Development Fund for Women in Co-operatives generated from within the co-operative movement as well as from other institutions to be used in carrying out the actions contained in this Platform of Action.**

**Actions to be taken**

**54. *By co-operatives at all levels:***

- a) Allocate at least 2.5% of the annual net surplus for contribution to the Leadership Development Fund for Women in Co-operatives of the (co-op) organization;
- b) Allocate a percentage of the Education and Training Fund proportionate to the percentage of women members in the (co-op) organization for contribution to the Leadership Development Fund for Women in Co-operatives;
- c) Undertake fund-raising activities to contribute to the Leadership Development Fund for Women in Co-operatives.

## **INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

**55** The Platform of Action is a set of actions that should lead to the increased participation of women in the leadership and decision-making in co-operatives. Immediate action and accountability are essential if the targets are to be met by the year 2005. Implementation is primarily the responsibility of co-operatives at all levels: primary, national, regional and international.

**56** The participation of other institutions promoting and supporting co-operatives, but do not have the structure of a mainstream co-operative organization, such as co-operative networks (eg, Asian Co-operative Organization), gender and co-operative networks (Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum), non-government organizations, people's organizations, and women's organizations at the community, national, regional, and international levels, is important, and may even be essential to the successful implementation of this Platform as they provide the social development and human rights perspective of this endeavor in a sustained basis.

**57** Women leaders, members and staff of co-operatives play a big role for the successful implementation of the Platform. They should form the core of advocates who will remind co-operatives at all levels to implement the Platform and achieve the goals for which it was drawn up.

### **A. Primary Co-operative Level**

58 All elected officials of the primary co-operative, especially the Board of Directors, are mainly responsible for giving the co-operative the mandate to implement the Platform of Action. All elected co-op officials and management must ensure that the Platform is implemented and must account to their members, the extent that they have led their co-op to create the enabling and supportive environment for women to participate fully and as equitably as the men in the leadership and decision-making in their co-op.

59 The role of the co-op's Internal Audit/Supervisory Committee is to monitor the implementation of the Platform and report to the members.

60 The Education Committee (EdCom) must be mobilized in implementing the Platform. The EdCom must ensure that gender perspective is integrated in the Education and Training program of the co-op. The EdCom itself must have gone through some basic Gender Sensitivity Training and must be trained for running leadership training seminars for women members.

61 The co-op management must ensure that any kind of training that the co-op access from other institutions have a gender perspective and is supportive of the increased participation of women in leadership and decision-making in co-ops.

### **B. National Level**

62 The Board of Directors of the national/apex organization must provide the mandate for the organization to implement the Platform. All elected officials and the management at the national/apex level must account to their member-coops, the extent that they have led their co-op to cre-

ate the enabling and supportive environment for women to participate fully and as equitably as the men in the leadership and decision-making in co-ops at the primary, chapter/federation, and national levels.

**63** The national/apex organization must take a lead role in mobilizing resources from among their member-coops, in particular, and within the co-op movement, in general, for the establishment of a Leadership Development Fund for Women which shall be made available for use by co-ops.

**64** The national/apex organization must train the education committees of its member-coops in running leadership training seminars for women. The national/apex organization must ensure that gender perspective is integrated in its Education and Training Program for members, staff and leaders. The staff of the whole Education and Training Department of the national/apex organization itself must have gone through some basic Gender Sensitivity Training.

**65** The national/apex organization must ensure that any kind of training that the organization access from other institutions have a gender perspective and is supportive of the increased participation of women in leadership and decision-making in co-ops.

### **C. Regional and International Levels**

#### **International Co-operative Alliance Regional Office for Asia and Pacific (ICAROAP)**

**66.** To ensure effective implementation of the Platform by ALL co-operatives at all levels, the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), the international body of co-operatives representing the family in which all members of co-ope-

ratives - women and men - belong, should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming the gender perspective in all co-operative policies, programs, services, and business operations. The ICA must play a key role in promoting awareness about the Platform of Action and its funding requirements as well as in monitoring co-operatives' participation and contribution in implementing the Platform. In Asia and Pacific, the ICA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ICAROAP), must perform these roles.

**67** Within the ICA structure, specialized committees and specialized bodies were set up for the purpose of providing advice to the ICA about specific sectors of the co-op movements as well as about specific areas of concern related and/or affecting co-operatives. Although the Women's Committee would be normally expected to play a lead role in ensuring that this Platform is implemented and in fact, in actually implementing the Platform itself, all specialized committees and specialized bodies must be concerned and contribute to the successful implementation of the Platform.

**68** The **Regional Women's Committee for Asia and the Pacific** has a key role in ensuring that the Platform is implemented. Comprised of leaders from the movement who are aware of gender inequality and inequity and committed to correct this imbalance in and through co-operative structures, the Committee can effectively monitor the implementation of the Platform by all members of the ICAROAP.

**Asian Women in Co-operative  
Development Forum (AWCF)**

**69** Gender and co-operatives networks such as the AWCF play an important role in the successful implementation of the Platform. The AWCF, because of its nature and the purpose for which it was set up, is in a good position to perform its advocacy role in ensuring that mainstream co-op organizations do not forget or fall short of their commitment to implement the Platform. As a resource body, it has a long experience and developed an expertise in the area of gender and co-operatives. AWCF is available to co-operative organizations and development agencies promoting co-operatives (who are not its members) at national, regional and international levels to provide technical assistance and services, upon request, for the successful implementation of the Platform.

**70** The AWCF should assist ICAROAP in promoting awareness about the Platform and its funding requirements as well as in monitoring co-operatives' participation and contribution in implementing the Platform.

## **FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS**

**71** Commitment to change is best demonstrated in the willingness to pay for the financial costs of the change. All co-operatives at all levels: primary, national, regional and international levels must allocate funds needed for the successful implementation of the Platform. The Boards of all co-operatives at all levels must adopt a policy mandating their organizations to allocate funds for the implementation of the Platform.

**72** All co-operative organizations must contribute at least 2.5% of its annual net surplus and a percentage of its Education and Training Fund which is proportionate to the percentage of women members to the Leadership Development Fund for Women in Co-operatives.

**73** Regional and international bodies such as the ICAROAP and the AWCF must play a lead role in accessing resources from outside the co-op movement to contribute to the Leadership Fund for Women. The Fund must be made available to all women in co-ops as well as those who will eventually become co-op members. The Fund can also be made available to fund Gender Sensitivity Training seminars for co-operative members, leaders and staff - men and women - as they contribute to gender awareness among cooperators and support the enhanced participation of women in the leadership and decision-making in co-operatives.



## **ANNEXES**

**Women's Participation in National  
and International Leadership  
1995**

Heads of State of Government	By 1995, only 24 women had been elected as head of State or Government, half since 1990
Government and Cabinet	1994 women were 5.7 per cent of cabinet ministers (3.3 per cent in 1987) 1994 women held no ministerial position in 59 countries (93 countries in 1987) 1994 women held more than 15 per cent of ministerial positions in only 16 countries (8 countries in 1987) 1994 In Sweden, 52 per cent of ministers were women
Sub-ministerial level	1994 women held more than 15 per cent of positions in 23 countries (only 14 countries in 1987)
Parliamentary representation	Wide variation 1987-1994 proportion of women declined in eastern and western Asia Strongest in northern Europe (Nordic countries)
Overall	Women's representation at highest levels of government weakest in Asia In southern Asia, women hold 5-6 per cent of senior positions, but in other regions of Asia women hold not more than 2 per cent women most represented in social, law and justice ministries 1991 formation of International Association of Women Judges

Source: United Nations, 1995. **The World's Women 1995. Trends and Statistics.** United Nations: New York

### Women's Participation in Decision-Making 1990 and 1995

Country	HDI Rank	Women in Government 1995			Administrators and Managers 1990 (Per cent female)	Professional and Technical 1990 (Per cent female)
		Ministerial	Sub-ministerial	Total		
Japan	3	6.7	8.8	8.3	9	42
Australia	11	13.3	26.7	23.7	43	25
New Zealand	14	7.4	20	16.8	32	48
Thailand	52	3.8	4.5	4.4	22	52
Korea, Rep of	29	3.4	1.2	1.5	4	4.5
Singapore	34	0	7.1	5.1	34	16
Fiji	47	8.7	10.7	9.8	10	45
Malaysia	53	7.7	4.7	5.8	12	45
Iran, Islam	66	0	0.5	0.4	4	33
Philippines	95	8.3	26.3	23.9	34	63
Lao PDR	138	0	4.1	2.7	-	-
Vietnam	121	6.5	2.4	3.9	-	-
Myanmar	133	0	0	0	-	-
Pakistan	134	3.7	1	1.6	3	20
India	135	4.2	6.3	6.1	2	21
Bangladesh	143	4.5	3	3.4	5	23
Nepal	151	0	0	0	-	-
Papua NG	126	0	3.1	1.6	12	30
Indonesia	102	3.6	1.4	1.8	7	41
China	108	11.1	21.1	16.2	13	48
Samoa (West)	88	6.7	7.4	7.1	12	47
Mongolia	113	0	8.7	4.7	-	-
Korea DP	83	1.2	0.6	0.6	-	-
Sri Lanka	89	12.5	7.9	8.7	17	25
Cambodia	156	0	6.6	5.1	-	-
Developing Countries		7.7	8.5	7.6	10	36
Industrial Countries		12.6	11.3	10.8	27	48

Source: UNDP, 1996. UNDP Human Development Report 1996.

Country or Area	Election year (to 1987)	Upper chamber of bicameral assembly			Unicameral assembly or lower chamber of bicameral assembly			As at 30 June 1993			Upper chamber of bicameral assembly			Unicameral assembly or lower chamber of bicameral assembly		
		Total number seats occupied of		by	Total number seats occupied of		by	Total number seats occupied of		by	Total number seats occupied of		by	Total number seats occupied of		by
		seats	men		seats	men		seats	men		seats	men		seats	men	
Australia	1987	76	60	16	148	139	9	76	60	16	147	135	12			
Azerbaijan	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	50	49	1			
Bangladesh <sup>2</sup>	1986	...	...	...	330	300	30	...	...	...	330	286	34			
Bhutan	...	...	...	...	150	148	2	...	...	...	150	150	0			
Brunei Darussalam <sup>3</sup>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...			
Cambodia	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	120	115	5			
China	1983	...	...	...	2978	2346	632	...	...	...	2978	252	626			
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	1986	...	...	...	655	517	138	...	...	...	687	549	138			
Fiji	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	34	31	3			
India	1987/84	245 <sup>4</sup>	213	28	544	472	43	...	...	...	232	215	17			
Indonesia	1987	...	...	...	500	438	62	...	...	...	500	439	61			
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	1984	...	...	...	270	265	4	...	...	...	...	...	...			
Japan	1986	252 <sup>4</sup>	229	22	512	505	7	...	...	...	252	215	37			
Kazakhstan	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...			
Kiribati	1987	...	...	...	41	41	0	...	...	...	41	41	0			
Kyrgyzstan	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	350	328	22			
Lao People's Democratic Republic	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	85	77	8			
Malaysia	1987/86	69 <sup>4</sup>	48	10	177	168	9	...	...	...	69	59	10			
Maldives	1984	...	...	...	48	...	...	...	...	...	48	46	2			
Marshall Islands	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	33	32	1			
Micronesia (Federated States of)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	14	14	0			
Mongolia	1986	...	...	...	370	278	92	...	...	...	76	73	3			
Myanmar	1985	...	...	...	489	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...			
Nauru	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	18	17	1			

Unit: Number

Country or Area	Election year (to 1987) <sup>a</sup>	Upper chamber of bicameral assembly			Unicameral assembly or lower chamber of bicameral assembly			As at 30 June 1993			Upper chamber of bicameral assembly			Unicameral assembly or lower chamber of bicameral assembly		
		Total number seats occupied			Total number seats occupied			Total number seats occupied			Total number seats occupied			Total number seats occupied		
		of seats	by men	by women	of seats	by men	by women	of seats	by men	by women	of seats	by men	by women	of seats	by men	by women
Nepal	1986	140 <sup>d</sup>	129	8	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
New Zealand	1987	97	83	14	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Pakistan	1985	87	87	0	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Papua New Guinea	1987	24	22	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Philippines	1987	200	182	18	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Republic of Korea	1985	276	268	8	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Samoa	1985	47	45	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Singapore	1984	79	76	3	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Solomon Islands	1984	38	38	0	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Sri Lanka	1977	168	160	4	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Tajikistan	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Thailand	1987/86	260 <sup>e</sup>	255	5	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Tonga	1987	29	29	0	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Turkmenistan	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Tuvalu	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Uzbekistan	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Vanuatu	1987	46	44	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Viet Nam	1987	496	408	88	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

Sources: United Nations Women's Indicators and Statistics Microcomputer Database (WISTAT), Version 2.1 (May 1991).  
Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Women in Parliament, 1993.

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION  
IN CO-OP BOARDS AND MANAGEMENT

Regional/Local Levels	Board Members
Belorussian Republican Union of Consumer Society	28% to 61%
JCCU	66% to 94%
Latvian Central Co-operation Union	28%
Union of Agricultural Co-operatives	7.9% to 21.3%
Centrosoyuz (chairwomen of regional unions/soc.	58.90% 36%
General Union of Consumer Societies (Ukraine)	44.1% to 55.3%

Source: Women in Credit Unions, WOCCU Statistical Report, 1992

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION  
IN CO-OP BOARDS AND MANAGEMENT

National Level	Board Members
Centrosoyuz (Russia)	50%
JCCU (Japan)	6%
CWS (United Kingdom)	13%
The Union of Agricultural Co-operatives (Norway)	13.90%
Co-op Elanto (Finland)	42.80%
Tradeka Corporation (Finland)	14.30%
SOK Corporation (Finland)	16.70%
Regional S Co-operatives (Finland)	9.30%
The Folksam General Insurance (Sweden)	33.00%
The Folksam Life Insurance (Sweden)	31.00%
The Belorussian Republican Union of Consumer Societies	26.00%

Source: Women in Credit Unions, WOCCU Statistical Report, 1992

## WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN CO-OP BOARDS AND MANAGEMENT

Country & Organization	Employees
<i>Belarus</i> - Union of Consumer Societies	70%
<i>Costa Rica</i> - Federacion Nacional de Cooperativas Ahorro Credito y Servicios Multiples	30%
<i>Finland</i> - Elanto Corporation	76%
Co-operative Tradeka Corporation	90%
<i>Honduras</i> - Federacion de Coop. De Ahorro y Credito	35%
<i>Hungary</i> - Co-op Hungary	80.00%
<i>Korea</i> - National Credit Union Federation of Korea	65%
<i>Latvia</i> - Central Co-operation Union	74.00%
Turiba	
<i>Japan</i> - Japanese Consumer Co-op Union	65.70%
<i>Russia</i> - Centrosoyuz	70.00%
<i>Sweden</i> - Folksam	50.00%
HSB Riksforbund	47.00%
<i>Switzerland</i> - Coop Switzerland	59.00%
<i>Uganda</i> - Uganda Co-operative Alliance	9.60%
<i>Ukraine</i> - General Union of Consumer Societies	70.80%
<i>UK</i> - Co-operative Wholesale Society	60%

Source: Women in Credit Unions, WOCCU Statistical Report, 1992



Annex 4

**PROFILE OF MEMBERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP IN CO-OPS**  
**ICAROAP Meeting, September 1996 Bangkok**  
*(For the period 1994-1996)*

Country	Name of Organizations	Member-ship	No. of Women	No. of Men	Board of Directors	No. of	
						Women	Men
MYANMAR	Membership at Primary	2,789,374			60,703	22,687	38,056
	Membership at Syndicate	5,821					
	Membership at Union	301					
NEPAL	National Co-operative Federation and affiliates	1.3 million	7.59%	92.41%	25,290	835	24,455
PHIL.	National Confederation of Co-operatives in the Philippines (no breakdown of sex)	282,651 -37,212	146,382	99,057	1,173	411	762
THAILAND	from 4,828 Primary Co-ops Co-op employees	6,779,340			42,000	4,200	37,800

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## The International Co-operative Alliance Statement on the Co-operative Identity

### DEFINITION

A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

### VALUES

Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. Co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others.

### PRINCIPLES

The co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice.

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Principle:** *Voluntary and Open Membership*

Co-operatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political, or religious discrimination.

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Principle:** *Democratic Member Control*

Co-operatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-operatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote), and co-operatives at other levels are also organized in democratic manner.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Principle:** *Member Economic Participation*

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. They usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their co-operative; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

**4<sup>th</sup> Principle:** *Autonomy and Independence*

Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

**5<sup>th</sup> Principle:** *Education, Training and Information*

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public – particularly young people and opinion leaders – about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

**6<sup>th</sup> Principle:** *Co-operation Among Co-operatives*

Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional, and international structures.

**7<sup>th</sup> Principle:** *Concern for Community*

While focusing on member needs and wishes, co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities.

## Empowering People

Co-operatives become more effective when they give people more control over their lives. Traditionally and most importantly co-operatives give members the opportunity to consume more wisely and inexpensively; when they give producers the opportunity to control more completely the production and distribution of their wares; when they give all kinds of people the chance to save, invest, and borrow money in honest, secure and competitive financial institutions; when they allow people to create their own health care. There is an important kind of dignity in enlarging such kinds of empowerment. It is the most noble activity in which co-operatives are engaged.

Empowerment is also about knowledge; indeed, in the “information age” that is the most important kind of power. Consequently, when co-operatives provide their memberships with accurate, honest information they are empowering them, be that information about consumer goods, appropriate pesticides, the level of fish stocks, or the fine print in a loan application.

But empowerment within a co-operative is not just concerned about the specific economic relationships it has with its members. It should be expanded to include all the human resources associated with the organization. Indeed, it is regrettably all too true that the greatest underutilized assets within many co-operatives are their human resources. Too many co-operatives generally ask too little of their members, expect too little of their employees, undervalue the contributions of their managers, and inadequately prepare their elected leaders.

There are untapped resources in many memberships, especially among women and young people. Much of the future success of the co-operative movement will depend upon a willingness to recognize true equality between women and men in the deliberations of co-operative organizations; much of the vitality will come from the involvement of young people. Many employees should be given more responsibilities and made aware of the fact that, in most co-operative structures, they are the most prominent faces, the most important representatives. Managers need to be recognized for their successes in carrying out the demanding work required to make any co-operative successful; in many ways, the managing of a co-operative is the supreme test of management skills, and it should be recognized as such. Directors need to be given the depth and breadth of understanding so that their stewardship of co-operatives is meaningful, rewarding and expanding. Considering such matters systematically and regularly in any co-operative would inevitably bear dividends – in all senses of the word.

“People are our most important resource” is a trite saying, but it speaks to a particular truth within co-operatives. It is unfortunate that there is no way to recognize on a balance sheet how much the people associated with a given co-operative have grown within a year: in the final analysis, it would be among the most important test of co-operative effectiveness, one of the best indicators of what the future likely holds.

**(Source:** ICA, 1995, Review of International Co-operation, Vol.88 No.3, ICA pp. 50-51)

### **Resolution on Gender Equality in Co-operatives**

Gender equality is a global priority of the ICA. A better balance between female and male co-operators and employees would be a re-energizing force and source of competitive advantage to co-operatives and improve their image as democratic, people-oriented enterprises. The ICA European Council proposes that co-operatives commit themselves to active promotion of equality between women and men.

A pre-requisite is that we accept that women and men are different and that we respect their differences. Mixed co-operative governance, reduced gender segregation of employees at all levels, and appreciation of the different priorities of women's and men's values, strengths and competence all contribute to a positive development as well as to the improved entrepreneurship and efficiency of co-operatives.

To improve such gender balance co-operatives are requested to set an action plan which should include targets, with a clear idea of what should be achieved and by when.

Women and men must have equal participation and job opportunities, the same working conditions and equal pay for equal work, as well as equal training and educational opportunities. Progress in achieving objectives must be monitored regularly to identify successes and shortfalls.

Shared influence and shared responsibilities between women and men are a key to co-operative excellence.

(Source: ICA, 1995, *Review of International Co-operation* Vol. 88 No. 4 p. 92)

**Recommendations  
on ICAROAP Conferences/Meetings**

**TOKYO 1993 :** Statement on Gender Integration in  
Co-operatives and call for Action

Participants from Asia-Pacific countries met in Tokyo during 01-06 March, 1993, under the sponsorship of ICA ROAP/JCCU/SCC/ICA Women's Committee to deliberate gender integration in co-operative development and to find more effective methods and strategies which will enable women to have equal opportunities as man to participate actively at all levels in co-operatives.

**THE CONFERENCE,**

- Realizing that women have a vital role to play in all socio-economic spheres of life: In the family, the community, the nation and the world, and therefore, women's skills, energy and values must be utilized,
- Understanding that while sex is a biological factor determined at birth, gender describes a social relationship between women and men, which can be changed,
- Recognizing that women constitute half of the population of the world, they should become equal partners in social and economic development to achieve a better quality of life,
- Taking into account the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and that discrimination against women is incompatible with human dignity, preventing women's participation on equal terms with men in co-operatives is a negation of the spirit of the declaration as well as belief of the principle of democracy of co-operatives,
- Acknowledging that customs, traditions, legislation as well as lack of education and training can be obstacles for women to develop and utilize their potential,
- Understanding that a growing number of women are suffering from poverty, starvation and war, and recognizing the

obligations on the part of the co-operatives to meet the needs of such groups of women in accordance with the basic co-operative values.

THE CONFERENCE CONCLUDES:

It is imperative that co-operatives at all levels formulate policies of gender integration for sound co-operative development, thus contributing to peace, social justice and a sustainable Earth. It is vital that co-operatives in every country promote affirmative actions to achieve gender integration.

CALL FOR ACTION

- § Set up an information system to collect and disseminate gender statistics and other related information.
- § Make women and men aware of practical and strategic needs.
- § Provide informal and formal vocational training which widens the choice of women and men.
- § Create and utilize networks among segregated and mixed co-operatives in primary, secondary, national and global levels.
- § Organize national and international co-operative markets for co-operatives' products and handicrafts, especially among co-operatives.
- § Encourage entrepreneurship by providing access to other services through co-operatives.
- § Mobilize international support for technical and financial resources for achieving gender integration.
- § Each co-operative develops a co-operative Master Plan for gender integration within a certain time frame to reach a realistic and measurable goal.
- § Introduce better-living programmes such as health awareness, child care, and nutrition, to help women become active participants in co-operative development.



- § Expose co-operative leaders to values such as concern for eradication of poverty, work for peace and sustainable environment.
- § Establish a regional human resource pool of volunteers and officials for providing experiences and training
- § Set up committees committed to gender issues at all levels – vertical and horizontal.
- § Organize segregated women co-operatives in the instances of customs, traditions and religious constraint.
- § Undertake affirmative actions to ensure and support women's active and effective participation in the decision-making of their co-operatives.

## **COLOMBO 1992**

The ICA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, the ICA Women's Committee and the Swedish Co-operative Centre organized a "Regional Consultation on Gender Integration and Women in Co-operative Development in Asia and the Pacific in Colombo from 27 April to 2 May 1992. The National Co-operative Council of Sri Lanka hosted the Consultation.

Thirty-two women and men from nine countries participated in the Consultation. They included selected leaders, researchers and representatives of ICA member organizations, UN agencies, organizations promoting gender integration in co-operatives from Sweden and Canada, representatives of the Asean Women in Co-operatives Development Forum and representative of the ICA Head Office in Geneva and the Regional Office for Asia and Pacific in New Delhi. Fourteen countries participated in the survey of gender integration in their respective countries.

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. Critical Issues in Planning for Gender Integration in Co-operatives

##### 1.1 Gender Relations in the Family

Recognizing that gender roles and relations in the family have direct implications on gender roles and relations in the co-operatives, co-operatives should pursue programmes/activities that will:

- § Involved all members of the family;
- § Bring about, through education and other means, new values regarding the roles of men and women; and
- § Demonstrate the co-operatives as an institution dedicated to the development of the whole family.

1.2 Prepare Women for leadership roles

Most women need to be prepared/trained to develop the capabilities and competencies necessary for leadership. Affirmative action such as quotas on board-level or managerial positions will work effectively only when there are capable women to fill these positions.

1.3 Gender Awareness of Co-operative leaders

To be conceptually and spiritually prepared to work with women on gender-related issues, gender awareness training must be given to all leaders, especially the male leaders, of co-operatives at all levels, including the ICA.

1.4 Re-orientation of Co-operatives

Co-operatives were established to help bring about a more just society; both socially and economically. In reality, however, they have been carrying out poverty alleviation activities without really questioning the causes of poverty or the power structure that perpetuate poverty. Gender programmes are mostly directed at poverty alleviation (e.g. income generation activities) but they cannot have long-term impact unless they address questions of the power structure and the empowerment of women.

1.5 Segregated and integrated approaches

Present realities are such that both segregated and integrated approaches are necessary in the co-operative movement. Women's groups and co-operatives must be promoted/supported and, wherever possible, integration must be aimed at.

ANNEXES

1. Mechanisms for Gender Integration in Co-operatives

Below are the prevailing gender issues/concerns (left column) and various mechanisms (right column) for countering them to try to achieve gender integration in co-operatives. Which mechanism or combination of mechanisms to use will depend, to a large extent, on local realities;

Gender Issues/Concerns		Mechanisms
1	Cultural, Social, Political restrictions on women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Advocacy</li> <li>* Formal/non-formal education</li> <li>* Training, capability building in leadership and management</li> </ul>
2	More men than women in co-operative directorship/committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Gender sensitivity training</li> <li>* Seminars, for a</li> <li>* Allocation of a percentage of seats/positions (quota)</li> </ul>
3	Women have limited access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Special programmes/projects addressing women's strategic needs</li> </ul>
4	Gender-blind policies, practices and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Review/Revision, formulation of policies and programmes</li> </ul>
5	Lack of institutional (co-op) Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Government legislation</li> <li>* Policy on gender</li> <li>* Dissemination of gender information, material</li> <li>* Gender awareness training</li> </ul>
6	Lack of government support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Advocacy, lobbying</li> <li>* Legislation</li> <li>* Coordination within the GO and NGO sector</li> </ul>

3. Roles of UN-affiliated organizations and international Co-operative Organizations on Gender Planning in Co-operatives

- 3.1 Adequacy and promotion of equality of participation and benefits between women and men in the co-operative movement.
- 3.2 Provision of regular and continuing technical assistance in;
  - a. Education and training (in gender analysis and planning)
    - § Training materials (curriculum, modules)
    - § Resource persons/experts
    - § Funds
  - b. Monitoring:
    - § Tools
    - § Systems
  - c. Development of comprehensive and long-term plan on gender in co-operatives:
    - § Coordination among the committee
    - § Specialization/focus on gender issues
  - d. Institutional strengthening for the ICA:
    - § Funds
    - § Experts
  - e. Policy on gender with benefits reaching grassroots co-operative women.

The ICA must encourage member organizations of the ICA to carry out gender programmes, in order to make women's activities visible. Providing technical assistance in gender awareness, gender analysis and gender programme training in the form of funds, experts, training materials, development of monitoring tools and systems. This technical assistance must be regular and continuing.

The ICA should co-ordinate with UN organizations and other international co-operative organization for gender integration. For this purpose, it should constitute a committee with the

representatives of the UN organizations and other international co-operative organizations active in the region. Develop a comprehensive and long-term plan on gender integration in co-operatives and specify the areas where the organizations could focus on, in order not to duplicate efforts and to maximize resources.

The ICA can consider establishing contacts or links with other regional/sub-regional co-operative organizations to coordinate with them efforts to gender integration in co-operatives. Each of the UN-affiliated organizations should allocate funds for the ICA to promote gender integration in co-operatives. The ICA must be strengthened.

The ICA must make a policy to make sure that its efforts (policies and programmes) will percolate or have effect in the grassroots level.

## **BANGKOK 1996**

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Twenty-two women and men from ten countries participated in the ICAROAP Consultation Meeting on Gender Integration in Co-operatives from 17 to 20 September, 1996 in Bangkok, Thailand to review the activities of promoting gender equality in co-operative movement in the region to identify and analyze the achievements and constraints, and propose further actions to be undertaken at national and regional levels.

It was identified that, though not enough, gender awareness is rising among co-operatives, materials for gender training are being produced, women members and leaders are gradually increasing. However, the meeting concluded that it is imperative that co-operatives at all levels promote further actions to make co-operatives more gender responsive as follows:

I. Recommendations for Further Actions to be undertaken to Achieve Gender Equality in Co-operative Movements in the Region

1. *Setting Up a Gender-Disaggregated Data Base*

The availability of gender-disaggregated data would give a clearer picture of the real situation of women and men in co-operatives, which, in turn, would make planning for member services and other programmes more precise and responsive. Primary and secondary level co-operatives should now start to collect gender-disaggregated data to set up social indicators of co-operative gender effective

ness. To undertake this action, the following specific actions were recommended:

- a) organizing a working committee who would spearhead this project: the committee would meet to share whatever gender-disaggregated data are already available, and determine what standard data should be collected by co-operatives in the region.
  - b) National and international co-operative organizations should process gender-disaggregated data and develop tools for gender analysis of co-operative policies, programmes and services.
  - c) As an initial step, this action be undertaken in the form of a pilot project and/or of the documentation of case of gender responsive co-operatives
2. *Increasing the Number and Participation of Women in Membership*

In some countries, women's membership in co-operatives is alarmingly low and where it is not, women's participation in members' activities are minimal and limited. Women are an important resource for co-operatives, thus, co-operatives need women for growth and stability; conversely, women need co-operatives for improvement and advancement. To address this need, the following specific actions are recommended:

Increase the number as well as participation of women in co-operatives by:

- § Organizing women's groups who could eventually become members of co-operatives, and thus, mainstreamed in the movement,
- § Start young by recruiting members from the youth sector (young females),
- § Gender sensitivity training must be part of youth programmes at national and international levels.



3. *Increasing the Number of Women leaders and Strengthening Women Leadership*

In most countries, the number of women leaders is very limited, so that women's voices are not well heard nor reflected in operation of co-operatives. Since women and men have different views and ideas and it is very difficult for one gender to represent the opposite gender's ideas; co-operatives need both men and women's representation. To solve this, the following specific actions were recommended:

Increase women leaders at all levels of co-operatives by:

- § Implementing existing gender policies, which focus on the importance of women's leadership,
- § Conducting leadership training for women: due to the traditional stereotyped norms of both women and men, women have had very less experiences as leaders than men, therefore leadership training is necessary for women,
- § Changing legislative policy, which may hinder women from leadership positions, the Ministry which is in charge of co-operatives should change legislative policy to create a conducive environment for women to become leaders,
- § Compiling and disseminating information on development issues affecting women, that National co-operative organizations and lobbying groups can utilize in their advocacy efforts to create a conducive environment for women's becoming leaders,
- § Promoting participatory/non-hierarchical approach in leadership processes of the co-operatives, thus it would be more easy for women to participate in the decision-making processes.

4. *Conducting Gender Sensitivity Training for Co-operative leaders, staff and members*

It is essential for co-operators to be gender sensitive when we try to make our co-operatives more gender responsive in all the spheres. More gender sensitivity training are necessary for co-operative leaders, especially policy makers. At the same time, conducting education programmes on co-operative values and principles is crucial, since these clearly indicate that co-operatives should contribute to the people, including both women and men.

To have more gender sensitivity training, the following actions were recommended:

- § Conducting trainers' training at regional and national levels,
- § Organizing trainers' conference to exchange experiences, materials and skills,
- § Establishing an information/resource centre to exchange and improve gender materials and utilize experts in the movement,
- § Institutionalizing programmes to be sustained by mobilizing budget for gender training from internal and external funds,
- § Establishing linkages with women NGO groups to strengthen gender related activities.

5. *Follow-up Programmes*

To follow-up the activities and programmes, following actions were recommended:

- § Specific activities should be undertaken to monitor and coordinate progresses of national, regional co-operative organizations such as a review meeting after a few years,

- § Update ICAROAP country studies in 1991 for discussions on gender issues such as the Ministerial Conference.

II. Recommendations for further role of the ICAROAP in Contributing to Gender Equality in the Co-operative Movement in the region, including the Linkages with the Regional Women's Committee. ☺

It is recommended that generally ICAROAP should become the overall coordinating body for all Gender Activities in the region. Specifically, following actions were recommended as the role of the ICAROAP as well as linkages with the newly established Regional Women's Committee.

1. *Modification of Restrictive Co-operative Legislation including By-laws*

In some countries, there are some restrictions on women to become members such as provisions on "head of household", "holder of immovable properties", etc., in the legislation and co-operative by-laws. To resolve this problem, the following actions were recommended indicated therein the role of ICAROAP and the Regional Women's Committee:

a) *Review the co-operative laws in each country*

Representative from each member country will conduct a review of co-operative legislation and ICAROAP will collect information and analyze from them.

b) *Consultation Meeting*

ICAROAP will call a consultation meeting to identify the problems concerning co-operative legislation and consult to draw the strategies to solve the problems.

*c) Lobbying (Strategizing)*

Country representatives will lobby with its respective governments and co-operative authorities and the ICA Office and Regional Women's Committee will lobby at the regional level, for instance, at the occasion of the Regional Ministerial Conference in Chiangmai, Thailand, in March 1997.

*d) Information Exchange*

ICAROAP will collect information on co-operative legislation and disseminate among the member organizations to promote activities to make co-operative legislation gender sensitive.

*e) Monitoring*

ICAROAP will monitor the progresses on actions taken on this matter.

*1. Increasing Women's Participation in Decision-Making*

At the regional level, it was recommended to develop a leadership programme especially for women to increase women's participation in decision-making processes as follows:

§ ICAROAP will seek appropriate technical assistance grant to develop a Women Leadership Training Programme in collaboration with organizations such as AWCF. Leadership Programme should have strategies for procedural, developmental, self-awareness and co-operative aspects, and also to motivate and convince women to become leaders.

2.. *Create More Awareness of Gender Issues in the region*

It was recommended that ICAROAP would conduct Regional training for trainers of local trainers in collaboration with partner organizations like AWCF.

3. *Setting Up a Gender-Disaggregated Data Base*

As a regional organization, it was recommended that ICAROAP should take necessary actions to initiate to set up a Gender-Disaggregated Data Base as following steps:

a) *Preparatory Activities*

- § ICAROAP will identify an expert for data system development, who will visit member countries and consult with country representatives to identify what kind of data should be collected.
- § ICAROAP will draw up a proposal, based on the result of in-country consultation by the expert.
- § ICAROAP will seek fund for development of data base system in collaboration with member organizations.

b) *Consultation Meeting*

- § ICAROAP will call consultation meetings to discuss the system of Gender Disaggregated Data Base with member organizations.

c) *Implementation of the Project*

- § ICAROAP will develop tools for gender disaggregated data system in collaboration with the expert.
- § Representatives of member countries will collect data according to the tools.

- § Representatives of the countries and ICA ROAP will process and analyze the data in collaboration with the expert. A regional consultation meeting for database may be organized for consultation, analysis of data.
- § ICAROAP will publish the data and disseminate among the member organizations.

1. *Produce more materials/publications on Gender Activities and Women's Contributions to Co-operatives*

Materials of case stories on gender activities and women's contribution to co-operatives would help people in recognizing the importance of gender related activities and to make visible the invisible contribution of women to co-operative development. To have more materials available, following actions were recommended:

- a) ICAROAP should conduct case studies on how women are contributing to co-operatives and how gender issues have been addressed in the co-operative movements and document them in collaboration with AWCF.
- b) ICAROAP would publish stories in collaboration with AWCF in various forms and cover some stories in its news bulletin and magazines.
- c) ICAROAP would produce an animated film which shows the situation of women and men in Co-operatives, so that people can enjoy and understand the issues easily.

**CHIANG MAI 1997**

***A. Gender and Development***

For Governments at all levels and Co-operatives to:

1. review, identify and eliminate all legislation, regulations and policies which hinder the full participation and leadership of women in leadership roles in co-operatives.
2. create and provide training opportunities to ensure that gender issues in co-operatives are properly recognized by government officials, co-operative members and leaders.
3. set up gender disaggregated database and carry out proper gender analysis in collaboration with ICA and other partner organizations.
4. allocate funds for gender and women's activities such as data collection and training (e.g., gender sensitivity training, women leadership training, women's entrepreneurship development programmes, etc.) where such funds do not yet exist.
5. create a conducive environment in which women could gain access to, and control over, resources — such as credit business opportunities — within the co-operative

**(Sources: ICAROAP Conferences/Meeting Reports: Colombo 1992, Tokyo 1993, Bangkok 1996, Chiang Mai 1997)**

**A CALL TO CHALLENGE AND ACTION:  
A Declaration of the Regional Conference on  
“A Showcase of Gender-Responsive  
Co-operatives in Asia”  
Bangkok, Thailand, April 1995**

Preamble

We, women and men co-operators from Asia, aware of the pressing and important economic, social and political issues that confront co-operatives today amidst shifting trends in economics and politics in society, and reflecting on how these issues impact on co-operative members, women and men specifically in their relationship, role and work arrangements, status and power have come together and resolved to propose undertake and promote collective action on gender and co-operative development.

In solidarity with other co-operators in the world, we affirm our beliefs in the co-operative values of democracy, justice and equality, and in the spirit of these values, as partners in the promotion and development of the co-operative movement, we declare the following:

Co-operatives, as socio-economic institutions founded on the principles, justice and equality, have been in the forefront of development work for more than a century, committed and effective in improving the lives of millions of men and women all over the world. In its unique nature and structure as organizations established around needs, mostly with limited resources, co-operatives serve as alternative structures that benefit the disadvantaged groups in society. Through their innovative actions, they proved to be effective socio-economic enterprises where larger, mainstream and regular economic and social institutions have failed. Strongly rooted in human values, they have proved to be effective instruments



and vehicles for socio-economic development.

Growing globalization, increasing liberalization and the advent of the market economy put together demands on co-operatives. As these conditions impact on women and men differently, putting more burden on women specifically, co-operatives must in turn, take on other roles and perspectives that would ensure equitable benefits for their members, specifically the women.

Despite co-operatives' successes, they have been generally blind to the differences in the conditions of women and men. Considering the present environment, co-operators must, more than ever, be aware and accept the reality that the wider and stronger forces of culture and tradition, economics and politics, foster stereotypes of women and men limiting their opportunities and capacities, especially women.

Women are an important resource which, when recognized and mobilized, would further increase, in large measure, co-operatives' growth and effectiveness.

#### CONCERNS

The Conference recognizes the validity of the following gender and co-operative development concerns and commits to act on them:

Stereotyped perceptions of the roles of women and men essentially confining women subordinate roles and limiting their potentials for growth;

Low self-esteem of women brought about by constant conditioning of their subordinate roles and society's traditional beliefs and practices that undermine their dignity and capability as human beings;

## ANNEXES

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Consequent triple burden carried by women as a result of the desire to improve the socio-economic lot of their families and their overall status in society while at the same time being held solely responsible for the maintenance of their home and families;

Invisibility and lack of appreciation of women's contribution to the co-operatives and society at large;

Marked contrast in women's participation in the co-operatives as members and decision-makers. While women may form half of the co-op membership and provide half the capital, they are hardly represented in the co-op's leadership, putting a division between the members and users of services and decision-makers in the co-ops;

Inappropriate policies and mechanisms that serve as barriers to women's participation in the co-operatives such as the design and implementation of co-operatives' activities without conscious regard for the situation of women; and

Lack of deliberate programmes to help the women co-op members overcome their overall disadvantaged position in the co-operatives and society at large.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recognizing that women form half of the co-operative's total human resources and are a vital resource that contribute to the overall productivity and efficiency of co-operatives, the Conference recommends to co-ops at all levels in the Asian region to take the following actions:

Amend co-operative laws that restrict women's organization and participation in co-operatives;

Create more opportunities to facilitate women's active and effective participation in all spheres in society, especially in the public

## WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

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spheres of paid work and community involvement such as in the co-operative, to enable women to realize their full potential;

Make more appropriate arrangements and support facilities to enable women to participate more fully in co-operative affairs by reducing constraints on time and home responsibilities;

Undertake programmes and activities aimed at liberating women and men from their stereotyped roles, thereby, changing attitudes and giving more space and opportunities for women;

Allocate funds for the implementation of women and gender programmes in co-operatives;

Act as an incubator, and not just as a source of loans, for member-entrepreneurs in the co-operatives, especially women;

Recognize the role and contributions of informal co-operative structures where many women are members;

Enhance visibility of women's contribution to both society and co-operative movement;

Create and utilize networks among co-operatives promoting the gender agenda in the Asian region;

For agricultural co-operatives, in particular, to recognize that more than 74 percent of the agricultural operations are done by women. Therefore, restrictions in their membership in the co-operatives because of land ownership should be removed; and

For national co-operative organizations, to take the leadership in the implementation of these recommendations.

Done this 27<sup>th</sup> day of April, 1995 in Bangkok, Thailand

(Source: Proceedings Report, A Regional Conference /Workshop on A Showcase of Gender-Responsive Co-operatives in Asia, AWCF, 1995)

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## The Publishers

The **Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum (AWCF)** is an umbrella organization of national co-operative organizations and non-government social development agencies promoting co-operatives in the Asian region. It serves as an advocacy and resource body in promoting gender equality and equity in and through the co-operative movement.

AWCF has five major thrusts: Institution Capacity-Building, Women Leadership Development, Women Enterprise Development, Advocacy Support Services for Women, and Regional Co-operative Networking.

The **International Co-operative Alliance (ICA)** is the international body of co-operatives. Sixty-six percent of the 700 million individual co-operative members of the ICA come from the Asia and the Pacific region. Co-ops affiliated to the ICA are of various types: multi-purpose, workers, savings and credit, consumers, housing, service, insurance, agricultural and fishery co-ops. The ICA Regional Office for Asia and Pacific (ICAROAP) presently provides services to members and undertake programs to strengthen co-ops in the region.

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