

**Role
Of Government In
Promoting
Cooperative Development
In Asia
Regional Consultation**

**SINGAPORE
JUNE 4-7, 1988**

Conclusions

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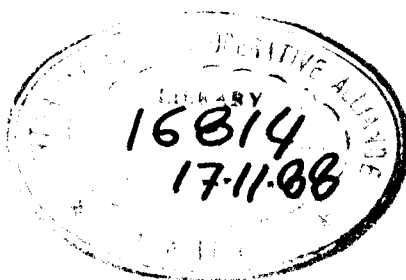
Role of Government in Promoting Cooperative Development in Asia

Regional Consultation

CONCLUSIONS

SINGAPORE

June 4-7, 1988



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE ALLIANCE
Regional Office for Asia, I



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The full report of the Regional Consultation on the Role of Government in Promoting Cooperative Development in Asia will be released shortly.

International Cooperative Alliance, Regional Office for Asia

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ACRONYMS

AARRO	Afro-Asian Rural Reconstruction Organisation
ACDI	Agricultural Cooperative Development International
FAO	Food & Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
ICA ROA	International Cooperative Alliance, Regional Office for Asia
IDACA	Institute for the Development of Agricultural Cooperation in Asia
ILO	International Labour Organisation
SCC	Swedish Cooperative Centre
SNCF	Singapore National Cooperative Federation

INTRODUCTION

1. The ICA Regional Consultation on Role of Government in Promoting Cooperative Development in Asia took place in Singapore from 4th to 7th June 1988. The ICA Regional Office for Asia (ROA) held the Consultation in collaboration with the Singapore National Cooperative Federation (SNCF). Permanent Secretaries/Senior Officers responsible for Cooperative Development, Cooperative Leaders, Chief Executives of National Cooperative Organisations and ICA Consultants attended.
2. Mr. Eric Cheong, Chairman, Singapore National Cooperative Federation, inaugurated the Consultation. Representatives of Food & Agricultural Organisation (FAO), International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Agro-Asian Rural Reconstruction Organisation (AARRO) as well as representatives from cooperative movements from Sweden, the USA and the USSR attended the Consultation.
3. The participants and representatives of the International Organisations felt that the Consultation was a timely one and complimented the ICA for its initiative in organising a high level discussion on this important subject.
4. The Consultation also commended the three-year ICA Project on the subject of Role of Government in Promoting Cooperative Development in Asia and appreciated the move to hold a Ministerial Conference on the subject in early 1989.
5. The Consultation considered the paper on the theme of the Consultation presented by Dr. R.C. Dwivedi, Regional Consultant. The Consultation had the benefit of Country Papers prepared by Country Consultants commissioned by ICA ROA, the papers prepared by the participants and another regional paper by Mr. J.M. Rana who had prepared the paper as a Consultant to the UN Global Seminar on the same subject held in Moscow in May 1987. The various sessions were presided over by Mr. A.S. Lozada, Chairman, ICA Regional Council; Mr. C.S. Sastri, Permanent Secretary to the Government of India and Mr. Hasinur Rahman, Additional Secretary to the Government of Bangladesh. Mr. S.S. Puri, Assistant Director General and FAO Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific addressed the Consultation.

6. Besides reviewing the present situation of government's role in promoting cooperative development in various countries, the Consultation discussed the following subjects : (i) Cooperative Legislation and Development, (ii) Cooperative Principles, Philosophy and their application, (iii) Cooperative Policy and Government's Promotional, Technical and Financial support for building genuine and strong cooperative movements, (iv) Building Cooperative Autonomy, (v) Role of Governments and National Cooperative Organisations, and (vi) Role of International Organisations including the ICA.

CONCLUSIONS

7. The Consultation arrived at the following conclusions :—

Presentation of Country Situations

8. The Consultation took note of the existing roles of government in promoting cooperative development in the different countries of the region as presented by the participants.

Cooperative Legislation and Development

9.1 The Consultation reviewed the role of cooperative legislation in the organisation and working of cooperatives and expressed a need for making it development-oriented; and suggested that a broad frame-work of cooperative legislation which could serve as guidelines to the movements and governments be prepared by the ICA ROA.

9.2 The Consultation suggested that the ICA ROA should undertake a study of cooperative laws in the region in order to recommend deletion of restrictive provisions and addition of new provisions needed for facilitating cooperative development.

10. The Consultation suggested that cooperative legislation be simple and written in such language as would be understandable to ordinary persons; and that cooperative legislation which at present is generally more regulatory in character be so revised as to make it an effective instrument for cooperative development. It should not include matters which properly come under regulations, bylaws and the development plans and programmes.

11. The Consultation also suggested that the following Principles of Cooperation as adopted by the ICA Congress in 1966 be

incorporated in the cooperative laws of those countries where it has not yet been done.¹

- (1) "Membership of a cooperative society should be voluntary and available without artificial restriction or any social, political or religious discrimination, to all persons who can make use of its services and are willing to accept the responsibilities of membership.
 - (2) Cooperative societies are democratic organisations. Their affairs should be administered by persons elected or appointed in a manner agreed by the members and accountable to them. Members of primary societies should enjoy equal rights of voting (one member, one vote) and participation in decisions affecting their societies. In other than primary societies the administration should be conducted on a democratic basis in a suitable form.
 - (3) Share capital should only receive a strictly limited rate of interest, if any.
 - (4) Surplus or savings, if any, arising out of the operations of a society belong to the members of that society and should be distributed in such manner as would avoid one member gaining at the expense of others. This may be done by decision of the members as follows:
 - (a) By provision for development of the business of the cooperative,
 - (b) By provision of common services, or
 - (c) By distribution among the members in proportion to their transactions with the society.
 - (5) All cooperative societies should make provision for the education of their members, officers and employees and of the general public, in the principles and techniques of Co-operation, both economic and democratic.
 - (6) "All cooperative organisations, in order to best serve the interests of their members and their communities should actively cooperate in every practical way with other cooperatives at local, national and international levels."
-

1. Report of the ICA Commission on Cooperative Principles, p. 37. Report of the 23rd Congress of the International Cooperative Alliance, p. 183.

12. The Consultation suggested that the definition of the term "cooperative" be included in the cooperative laws and noted the following definition as incorporated in the ICA Rules and Standing Orders.²

"Any association of persons, or of societies, shall be recognised as a cooperative society provided that it has for its object the economic and social betterment of its members by means of the exploitation of an enterprise based upon mutual aid, and that it conforms to the Cooperative Principles, as established by the Rochdale Pioneers and as reformulated by the 23rd Congress of the ICA".

13. The Consultation took note of the fact that the Philippine Movement has suggested a legal definition for inclusion in their cooperative law and suggested that this definition be circulated when incorporated in the cooperative law.

14. The Consultation suggested that the Principles of Cooperation be reflected in various provisions of the cooperative law and that the cooperative law should facilitate the operationalisation of the Cooperative Principles. Cooperative laws should also facilitate promotion of the cooperative system.

Application of Cooperative Principles

15. It was expressed that cooperatives are not only economic institutions but they have a strong philosophical base and social purpose. The aim of the cooperative movement is greater than merely satisfying the common economic needs of the members. The following reference to the Report of the Commission on Cooperative Principles, supports this view.³

"The common element at all times has been that Cooperation at its best aims at something beyond promotion of the interests of the individual members who compose a cooperative at any time. Its object is rather to promote the progress and welfare of humanity. It is this aim that makes a cooperative society something different from an ordinary economic enterprise and justifies its being tested, not simply from the standpoint of its business efficiency, but also from the standpoint of its contribution to the moral and social

2. ICA Rules and Standing Orders, as amended by the 28th International Cooperative Congress at Hamburg, October 1984, Article 8, p. 3.

3. Report of the ICA Commission on Cooperative Principles, 1967, p. 9.

values which elevate human life above the merely material and animal.”

16. It was emphasised that the cooperative organisations should be strong, effective organisations, professionally managed so that they are able to render efficient services to the members and community at large.

Cooperative Policy & Government's Promotional, Technical and Financial Support

17. The Consultation noted that the governments and the cooperative movements have common objectives of improving the socio-economic conditions of the people and national development. They should support each other to achieve these common objectives on the basis of mutual trust, confidence, respect and social justice.

18. Cooperatives by their nature are autonomous institutions. The government should play the role of a facilitator through policy initiatives and should nurse and nurture them to play their full role as people's organisations. Giving and receiving of assistance—financial, managerial or otherwise—itsself is not infringement of autonomy provided it is done on mutually agreed terms.

19. It was suggested that keeping the above principles in view, the government should provide the following support to the cooperative movement:

- incorporation of the role and importance of cooperatives in the Constitutions of the respective countries;
- formulation of national policy in consultation with cooperatives;
- creation/building of environment for cooperatives to play their full role;
- extending support in building a self-reliant strong cooperative sector to supplement the public and private sectors;
- enactment of progressive cooperative law in conformity with Cooperative Principles;
- taking steps for de-officialisation and de-politicisation of cooperatives;
- assisting cooperatives to generate and build their resources;

- assisting cooperatives to build their professional management personnel;
- transfer of functions of audit, inspection, supervision and responsibility for elections etc. to cooperatives;
- promotion of cooperative values/spirit;
- *encouraging development of dedicated cooperative leadership from within the movement and giving public recognition to distinguished/dedicated cooperators by conferring appropriate national distinctions and awards for their contributions towards cooperative development;*
- strengthening of cooperatives as a system establishing integrated inter-cooperative linkages;
- promotion of democratic participation of members in decision-making;
- supporting cooperative education and training;
- supporting the involvement of cooperatives in community development;
- providing or arranging financial assistance to cooperatives in the form of soft loans/guarantees, grants and subsidies, tax exemptions etc. In a manner as would not infringe upon the autonomy of cooperatives. Financial aid to cooperatives should be given to the maximum possible extent indirectly and through their federal institutions so as to prevent **formation** of pseudo cooperatives and abuses;
- regarding cooperatives as community institutions and **consulting** them on matters involving them e.g. fixing the prices of agricultural commodities, manufacture of consumer goods and measures for consumer protection as well as giving due weightage to their views;
- involving cooperatives in planning from village upwards for achieving more realistic and committed planning;
- discontinuation of the practice of ex-officio holding of elective offices by government officers;
- instead of dissolving the entire elected board for any irregularities, erring individual members of the board of directors/office bearers should be brought to book. In the

event of inevitability of removal of board, the management should be entrusted to the concerned federal organisation;

- encouraging and assisting cooperatives to develop their own key/top management personnel instead of seconding government officers;
- introducing curricula on Cooperation in general education courses in schools, colleges and universities; and
- ensuring that competition between the public sector and cooperative enterprises is avoided. The working of public sector enterprises should be such as would strengthen the cooperatives.

20. In some countries governments have set up Cooperative Development Corporations to have more flexibility in assisting cooperative development. Other countries may also study the working of these Corporations to assess desirability of establishing similar institutions in their countries. However, care should be taken that these Corporations do not duplicate the functions of the national cooperative organisations.

21. The Consultation was of the opinion that the main strength of the cooperative movement lies in the membership who have the right and the duty to elect competent people to board of directors. In view of this the Consultation suggested that it was essential that a massive programme of education of members and their elected leaders should be carried out by cooperative movements and governments should render needed assistance for the purpose.

22. The Consultation was of the opinion that an important requirement for building facilitating environment was change in the attitude of government personnel. The Consultation felt that it was necessary to develop positive attitudes and skills in government personnel to support cooperatives. It was, therefore, essential in cooperative concepts, principles, implementation of essential that adequate programmes of training of government personnel in cooperative concepts, principles, implementation of cooperative law and cooperative operations should be established.

23. The Consultation was of the view that there is also need for orientation programmes for top level policy makers to keep them aware of the changing environment and the needs of cooperative movement.

24. The Consultation suggested that a Conference of the Ministers in charge of Cooperative Development and national level cooperative leaders of the region be convened in early 1989 and the results of the Consultation be placed before them for their consideration.

25. The Consultation welcomed the offer of the representative of the Movement in Australia to host the proposed Ministers' Conference and suggested that the ICA ROA to pursue this matter with the Australian Association of Cooperatives and the Government of Australia. The Consultation also appreciated the invitation extended by the Government of Indonesia to hold the Ministerial Conference in Indonesia.

Role of National Organisations

26. The Consultation felt that the national cooperative organisations have important role in strengthening the relationship between the government and cooperatives and also ensuring the development of genuine cooperatives. The Consultation suggested the following role for national cooperative organisations.

- to evolve continuing dialogue between cooperatives and the government;
- to strengthen training and education of employees, members and leaders of primaries;
- to represent problems of primaries to the government;
- to involve intelligentsia in the process of cooperative development;
- to undertake supervision and auditing and provide guidance to the members;
- to develop innovative approaches to face new socio-economic challenges;
- to organise orientation programmes for policy-makers and senior government officers;
- to promote inter-cooperative trade within the country and at international level;
- to project the achievements of cooperatives;
- to develop strong links, unity and integration among the

cooperatives both vertically and horizontally for building an effective performance-oriented cooperative system;

- to formulate and adopt a code of conduct for the office bearers/board of directors to prevent the misuse of cooperatives;
- to enhance and monitor from time to time the share of cooperatives in various sectors of the national economy; and
- to develop effective and adequate arrangements for conducting on-going research in various aspects of the cooperatives including government/cooperative relationship.

Role of International Organisations

27. A panel discussion was held on the Role of International Organisations in promotion of cooperative development. The members of the panel were:

- i. Mr. S.S. Puri, Assistant Director General and FAO Regional Representative for Asia and Pacific.
- ii. Dr. M.A. Khan, Regional Adviser on Cooperatives and Rural Institutions, ILO.
- iii. Mr. B.C. Gangopadhyay, Secretary-General, AARRO.
- iv. Mr. G.K. Sharma, Regional Director, ICA ROA.
- v. Mr. Bernt Adelstal, Programme Officer, Swedish Cooperative Centre (SCC)
- vi. Mr. Ron G. Gollehon, President, Agricultural Cooperative Development International (ACDI).

28. Each of the members made a brief presentation of the work carried out by his respective organisations in the field of cooperative development. There was a lively exchange of views between the panel members and the participants. The following paragraphs give a gist of this discussion.

29. The panel members were in agreement that in the present situation of Asian region, government assistance in the promotion of cooperative development was essential.

30. Appreciating the initiative taken by the ICA, the representatives of AARRO, FAO and ILO assured of their support to the

activities of the ICA, particularly in respect of its Project on Role of Government in Promotion of Cooperative Development and in the fields of exchange of information and experience, development of research, and international training facilities.

31. The Consultation felt the need of an arrangement at the international level, among representatives of governments and cooperatives movements, and international agencies interested in cooperative development, for dialogue and discussions on matters pertaining to cooperative policies and development.

32. Mr. B.C. Gangopadhyay, Secretary-General, AARRO, *interalia*, endorsed the need of an international forum on permanent basis and stated that AARRO would extend its support to ICA efforts. He, however, felt that FAO possibly may consider to initially service such forum. Appreciating the training programmes of IDACA, which are being availed of by the African countries as well, he suggested that international organisations should encourage training institutes like the Institute for the Development of Agricultural Cooperation in Asia (IDACA)

33. Dr. M.A. Khan, Regional Adviser on Cooperatives and Rural Institutions, ILO, suggested that the Consultation should work out realistic programmes to strengthen international collaboration and government-cooperative relationship. He affirmed ILO support to ICA in formulating such programmes.

34. Mr. S.S. Puri, Assistant Director General of FAO, offered that in case the Consultation agrees for the creation of a Regional Network for Development of Agricultural Cooperatives and Policy Formulation, FAO would be happy to service it by providing office and secretarial facilities, while the ICA may provide technical input. The broad framework of the proposed Network could be as under:

I. Objectives

- (i) to sensitize governments for the need to recognise potential of cooperatives role in various sectors;
- (ii) to provide forum for exchange of information;
- (iii) to promote TCDC; and
- (iv) to demonstrate and disseminate success stories in regard to innovative interaction between governments and cooperatives.

II. Membership

- (i) Government Departments/Bureaus for Cooperatives at national level;
- (ii) National Cooperative Organisations; and
- (iii) National level organisations concerned with cooperative development.

III. Secretariat

- (i) FAO Regional Office would provide office accommodation, logistics support; and
- (ii) FAO Regional Cooperation Officer to act as secretariat.

IV. Obligations of member institutions

- (i) to provide information on the status of national cooperative situation; and
- (ii) to attend meetings of Network as far as possible, at their own expense.

35. The Consultation appreciated the offer of the FAO and suggested that the FAO and ICA may work out details of setting up a Network. The above proposals should be placed for consideration at the Regional Conference of Ministers in-charge of Cooperation proposed to be held in early 1989.

36. Mr. Bernt Adelstal, representative of the SCC, emphasised the need for building up management efficiency for effective cooperative performance and indicated that this is an area in which SCC would be willing to assist.

37. Mr. Ron G. Gollehon, President, ACDI, indicated that his organisation would be willing to assist in the areas of food marketing, processing and distribution in which it has capabilities.

38. The Consultation suggested that the ICA ROA may periodically convene on regular basis meetings of top level policy makers in the government and cooperative leaders.

39. The Consultation suggested that the ICA ROA, inter alia, should undertake the following activities :-

- i. Conduct studies on impact of cooperatives on economic development, production and pricing;

- ii. Carry out a yearly review of cooperative developments in the Asian region for information of and use by the Movements and the Governments;
- iii. expand its cooperative development programme with the assistance of donor agencies. Concerned Ministries of the Governments and national level cooperative movements should be fully kept informed about such programmes; and
- iv. formulate and carry out "Exposure Programmes" for the cooperative policy makers in the Governments of countries of the region to acquaint them with the developments and working of cooperatives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

40. The Chairman of the Regional Council expressed his thanks to the representatives of governments, Regional Councillors, Executives of Member Organisations and Consultants for sparing their valuable time and their contributions for making the Consultation to achieve its objectives. He also expressed his high appreciation to the Singapore National Cooperative Federation and its Chairman, Mr. Eric Cheong, for their excellent hosting facilities and hospitality during the Consultation. The Chairman also expressed his high appreciation for the regional paper prepared by the Regional Consultant and his contribution to the discussions.

41. The Regional Director in his closing remarks indicated that the report of the Consultation would be finalised soon and circulated. On his part he assured that necessary follow-up action would be taken by the ICA and expressed the hope that the required follow-up action will be taken by the Governments and the Cooperative Movements in the Region.

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PROGRAMME

4th June 1988

0930-1030 Inauguration
Tea break

1100-1230 — Introduction of Participants
— Aims and Working Methods.
— Adoption of the Programme.

Presentation of the Regional Paper on Role of Government in Promoting Cooperative Development in Asia by Dr. R.C. Dwivedi, Regional Consultant.

Discussion

1230-1400 Lunch

1400-1700 Presentation of country situations on Role of Government by participants.

Statements by Representatives of International Organisations and Movements outside the Region

1930 Dinner at Prosperity Room, Plaza Hotel.

5th June 1988

0900-1030 Address by Mr. S.S. Puri, Assistant Director General & FAO Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific.

Discussion

1030-1100 Tea break

1100-1230 Cooperative Legislation and Development

1230-1400 Lunch

1400-1630 Cooperative Principles and Ideology and their Application — Panel Discussion.

6th June 1988

0900-1030 Cooperative Policy and Governments Promotional, Technical and Financial Support for building genuine and strong cooperative movements.

Discussion

1030-1100 Tea break

1100-1230 Discussion

1230-1400 Lunch

1400-1700 Building Cooperative Autonomy — Role of Governments and National Cooperative Organisations

Discussion

2000-2045 Cultural show at Raffles Hotel

7th June 1988

0900-1030 Role of International Organisations including the ICA in Cooperative Development.

Discussion

1030-1100 Tea break

1100-1230 Open

1230-1400 Lunch

1400-1700 Adoption of Consultation Report
Conclusion.

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