

ICA-AP NEWSLETTER

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

March Newsletter

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Asia Pacific Cooperative Youth Summit 4.0 – Registrations Open!



The Asia Pacific Cooperative Youth Summit (APCYS 4.0) will be held in Sabah, Malaysia from 27 - 30 July 2023. APCYS 4.0 will focus on the theme “*Cooperation for Sustainable Lifestyles*” and the role youth can play in furthering sustainable lifestyles for a greener planet.

Over the four days of APCYS 4.0, participants will get the opportunity to

- Explore** the picturesque and **culturally diverse Sabah**
- Learn and Get Inspired** by Youth-led Sustainable Practices and Ventures
- Experience **Hands-on Cooperative Activities** through Community Immersion and Climate Action
- Pitch** Innovative Cooperative Business Ideas through [Coop Pitch](#) and stand a chance to win cash prizes and mentoring support
- Enjoy the Spirit of **Youth Cooperativism**
- Interact and Network** with inspiring peers from the region

The registrations for APCYS 4.0 are open at <https://apyouthsummit.coop/> till 18 June 2023. If you would also like to make a pitch, then you need to apply separately for it [here](#). The registrations for Coop Pitch are open till 20 May 2023.

We encourage you to spread this information among your network.

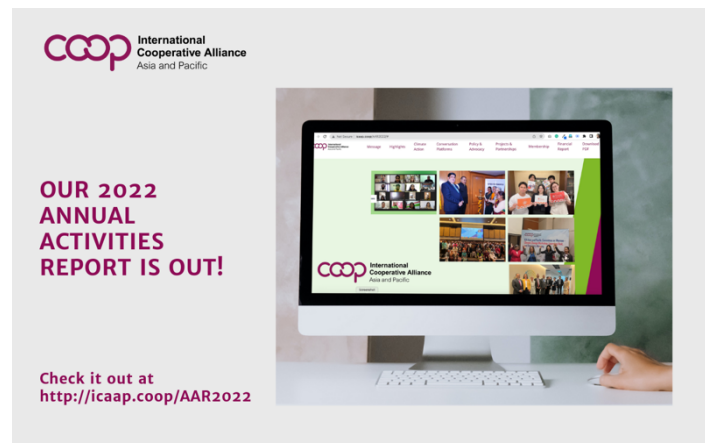
Follow #APCYS for regular updates.

16th ICA-AP Regional Assembly – Save the Date



ICA-AP will hold its 16th Regional Assembly in the Philippines from 6 to 10 November. The Philippines is hosting the Regional Assembly after two decades under the aegis of the Philippines Cooperative Movement. The Regional Assembly under the theme, “Cooperatives: Our Common Agenda” will comprise of the 11th Asia-Pacific Cooperative Forum, Regional Board Meeting, various events organized by the Regional Sectoral and Thematic Committees, and the statutory meeting of the Regional Assembly.

ICA-AP Annual Activities Report 2022



We are pleased to present the 2022 Annual Activities Report (AAR), which highlights our activities, projects, and events over the past year. The 2022 AAR showcases our work with members to address climate change, the platforms used to engage in conversation with them, the avenues to broaden reach and influence policy, and new partnerships to expand the scope of our work. [Read the AAR 2022 here.](http://icaap.coop/AAR2022)

ICA-AP Updates

Webinar on Key Takeaways from the Committees' Workshops and Training Programs



ICA-AP Committee on Consumer Cooperation organized its first webinar in 2023 on March 14 to discuss the “Key Takeaways from the Committee Workshops & Training Programs.” It was attended by 41 participants from 20 countries in Asia and Africa.

The webinar aimed to look at the past training programs and workshops which the Committee co-hosted with its member organizations before the pandemic. By reviewing and finding what the participants learned there and how they applied the learnings to their businesses and activities in their co-ops, the committee tried to understand how to strengthen the

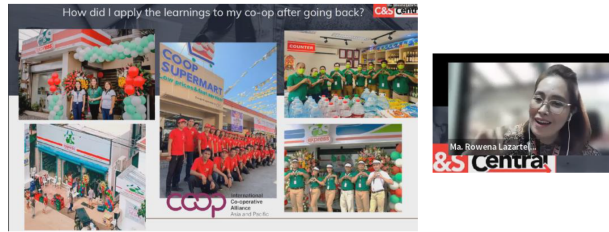
cooperative movements in the Asia-Pacific region and organise effective workshops and training programs in the next few years.

Mr. Akihiro Yamakoshi, Committee Chair and Manager of the International Relations Department of the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union, JCCU opened the webinar. He noted that the ICA-AP Consumer Committee's activities have been affected by the pandemic which forced them to suspend the on-site trainings and workshops for 3 years. Since the world is starting to return to a pre-pandemic lifestyle, the committee is planning to resume its training programs and workshops this year. He hoped that the webinar will help in understanding the training needs of the members.

Ms. Itsumi Hishinuma, the Committee Secretary provided an overview of the committee and its training programs and workshops. She said that the Consumer Committee was established in 1977 with the aim to help promote consumer coop activities in the Asia-Pacific region. Currently, the committee consists of 17 organizations from 12 countries. On-site training programs in Japan have been conducted every year since 1991 where about 5 trainees were invited to a two-week program. Its aim is to make participants learn and expose them to the management systems and practices of Japanese consumer cooperatives and adapt the experiences and skills gained to their own cooperatives. Regional workshops have been also organized in several countries in the region since 2000 for the participants to visit consumer coops of other countries and learn from good examples and practices of consumer coops.

Five guest speakers made a presentation on their learnings from the training programmes, how they applied learnings to their own coops and their expectations from future programs and workshops.

Ms. Ma. Rowena Lazarte, Brand Manager of C&S Central, Philippines was the trainee in the *"Training Programs for Managers of Consumer Co-ops in Miyagi prefecture in Japan in 2019."* She mentioned learning a lot about the retail industry such as consumer behaviour, emerging technology, customer service (how to deal with complaints and meet customer expectations), and team management (collaborative team effort and feedback system between management, employees and customers). She noted that she was inspired during the workshop and was motivated to increase the number of C&S stores in the Philippines. As a result, despite the pandemic and with limited resources, the number of modern generation stores of C&S increased from 1 to 5 and another one would also open at the end of March 2023. Relationship between coop members and coop staff was also learnt in Japan and she upgraded the C&S service to be more member oriented. Her expectations of JCCU and ICA-AP are to open an investment/ partnership with them, to be supportive, to provide education about new generation stores and to increase the opportunities of exchanging coop products among coops in other countries.



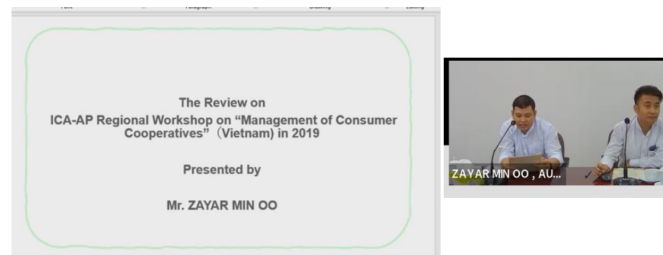
Ms. NGUYỄN ĐẮC ANH UYÊN from Saigon Coop, Vietnam interviewed the trainees from Saigon and reported on their behalf. Many of the trainees were impressed with the mindset of responsibilities and inner discipline of Japanese consumer coops, the mail ordering business (home delivery service), the automatic warehouse of Coop Kobe and recycling factories. The participants felt the most important thing for the cooperative is caring about members as well as staff. Thus, they started to organize activities for members and staff such as giving gifts on their birthdays, financially supporting staff in difficulties, and providing special prices for members. They also have plans to establish a new distribution centre to improve the logistic system which serves the network of over 800 stores of Saigon Coop. The centralized kitchen or food factory has been planned to be established with the aim to reduce the difference in the quality of cooked products depending on staff and each store. They have also tried to develop organic food products. She requested that the training programs and workshops in the future should focus on specific topics and not the operation in general so that participants can learn from the experience and knowledge of the organizers more productively.



Dr. Norlaili Mohamed Yatin from ANGKASA, Malaysia participated in the ICA-AP Regional Workshop for Managers on “*Management of Consumer Co-ops*” in Singapore in 2016, co-hosted by NTUC FairPrice. She was pleased to see the whole process of the supply chain of NTUC FairPrice and to get the opportunity to pick products from its distribution centre. She said NTUC’s motto is “Service from the heart” and with this, staff can happily serve their customers and bring more profit. They also learned the importance of trainings for operation teams to enhance effectiveness in retail operations as well as a marketing plan to provide special prices on public holidays such as Mother’s Day. She transferred her knowledge and information gained during the workshop to her staff in her department. She expects future workshops to be strategically planned to learn the management and operation of logistic systems. In addition, she would like to have an event which gives opportunities for coops in the Asia Pacific region to market their coop products to each other.

Mr. Zay Yar Min Oo, Board of Directors of Hlaing Thar Yar Township Cooperative Federation, Myanmar was a participant in the Regional Workshop for Managers on “*Management of Consumer Co-ops*” in Vietnam in 2019. After his brief explanation about the workshop in

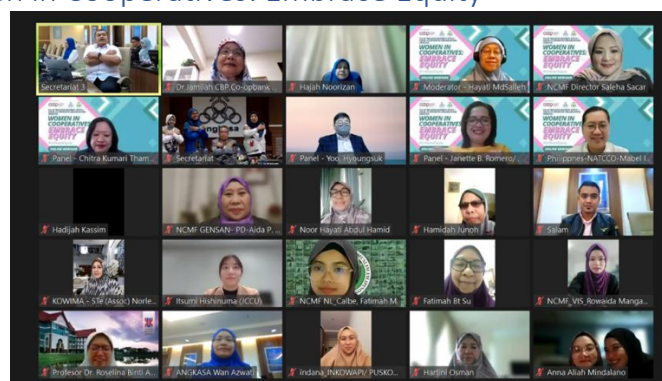
Vietnam, he mentioned that Saigon Coop is a representative retail of multipurpose cooperatives and is leading in modern retail technologies and has many store formats to attract customers in Vietnam. In Myanmar, consumer coops are not very active and some have very traditional retail stores without modern technology. Therefore, he planned to introduce technologies such as computer software for display, tried to provide one-stop services to meet customer needs and has planned to launch new coop stores in collaboration with other township cooperatives in the Yangon region. He expects future workshops to provide learnings of merchandising (effective display and selling), market analysis and supply chain.



Ms. Siti Hajar Saeey from the Cooperative Institute of Malaysia, (CIM) was a participant in Regional Workshop in Korea, in 2019. She said she was impressed with the contribution of iCOOP to the community, its communication with members, organizations, and farmers; and to provide consumers with reliable and eco-friendly agricultural products. iCOOP also puts ethical consumption into practice by establishing National Dream Park and integrating its supply chain management. Since she works in an institution that provides training and cooperative knowledge, she shared her knowledge and learnings with people in her class and her workshop session. There, she emphasized that members of iCOOP not only put in money but also enrol in each activity and meet the needs of members through their services and products. In future events, she would like to learn about cooperative sustainability, especially after the pandemic era, how staff can gain knowledge on entrepreneurship and management, how to get support from existing members, and how to increase their new members.

All the speakers said that they had valuable experiences in the training programs and workshops. Ms. Itsumi thanked all speakers and participants for attending the meeting and said that the Committee will reflect on what was learned from the presentations to prepare for future events in working together with committee members.

Webinar on Women in Cooperatives: Embrace Equity



On 8 March, a webinar on *'Women in Cooperatives: Embrace Equity,'* was held in a collaborative effort between the ICA-AP Malaysia Business Office (ICA-AP MBO), the ASEAN Cooperative Organisation (ACO), and the Malaysian National Cooperative Movement (ANGKASA) to mark International Women's Day (IWD).

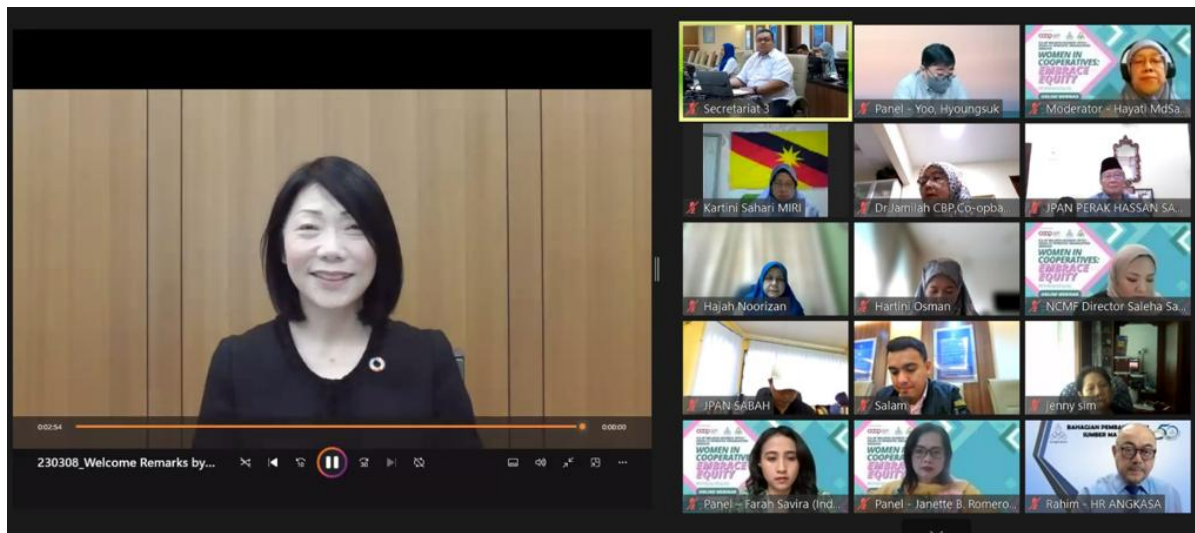
The webinar aimed to seek opportunities for increasing women's membership in cooperatives, address the social and cultural barriers that hinder women's progress towards achieving their economic rights, discuss the opportunity for leadership roles, and provide potential solutions for women cooperative members' psychological well-being. These are very much aligned with current issues revolving around gender mainstreaming. Gender equality and women's empowerment are challenges both within cooperatives and in countries where cooperatives operate. Multiple barriers impose limitations on women, hinder their access to opportunities, and often translate into legal restrictions that institutionalise women's marginalisation. Gender equity is increasingly seen as a pillar for sustainable economic development and broad social well-being, people-centred economic models that promote the human rights of women and girls need to be reinforced at all levels. Ultimately, eliminating those barriers that thwart gender equality is a critical target for cooperative action and a key priority for cooperative movement in the Asia-Pacific region.

The webinar was divided into two sessions, each with its sub-theme. It featured eight speakers from Asia-Pacific countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan, and Korea.

Session 1 on the theme "Economic, Social, Culture, and Governance Barriers against Women Progression in Cooperative" was moderated by Pn. Hj. Noorizan Abd. Latiff. It had four speakers – Ms. Akiko Yamauchi, Executive Director, Co-opdeli Group; Ms Sarah Savira, Regional Chairperson, Indonesian Women Entrepreneurs Cooperative (INKOWAPI); Ms. Christina Rowena Plantila, Chief Executive Officer, Federation of People Sustainable Development Cooperative; and Mr. Suroto, Leader Representative, Induk Koperasi Rakyat Indonesia (inKUR).

Session 2 on the theme "*Support System Network in Embracing Equity in Cooperatives*" was moderated by Dr. Hayati Md. Salleh. It had speakers like Ms. Jurika Fratiwi, Head of Certification and Compliance, the Indonesian Co-operative Council; Ms. Evangeline Lopez, Head of Credit, National Confederation of Cooperatives Philippines; Ms. Chitra Kumari Thamsuhang Subba, General Manager, National Cooperative Federation of Nepal and an ICA-AP MBO representative from Korea.

The participation was open to all and drew 188 attendees (from Malaysia, Indonesia, Korea, Japan, Nigeria, the Philippines, and Nepal) from 80 organizations.



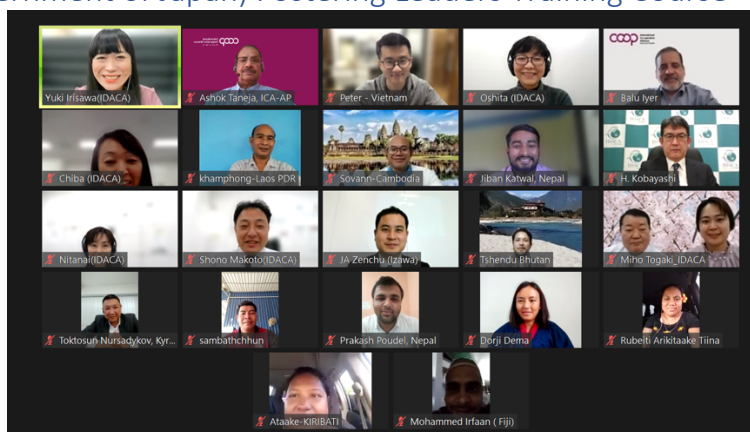
Ms. Chitose Arai, Chair of the ICA-AP Women Committee, delivered the welcome remarks via a video message. Ms. Arai highlighted the gender gap in technology access, emphasizing how it widens inequality and hinders women's progress in various domains. She called attention to the IWD theme of 'Digital: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality,' set by the United Nations to investigate the impact of the gender gap in digital on economic and social inequality.

The speakers shared valuable insights and potential solutions for increasing women's membership in cooperatives and addressing the barriers hindering their progress towards achieving economic rights. The webinar highlighted the need for people-centred economic models that promote gender equality and women's empowerment, emphasizing the critical target for cooperative action in eliminating barriers that thwart gender equality.

In his closing remarks, Datuk Seri Dr. Abdul Fattah Abdullah, President of ANGKASA and ACO, Chairman of ICA-AP Malaysia Business Office, and Vice President of ICA-AP, emphasized the crucial role of women in ensuring a more sustainable future for cooperatives. He noted that their involvement in the decision-making process contributes significantly to the success of cooperatives. As such, promoting and advancing women's participation in cooperatives is a critical priority that requires continued efforts from all stakeholders.

It is hoped that this webinar will serve as a catalyst for further discussion and action towards achieving gender equity within cooperatives and beyond.

ICA-MAFF (Government of Japan) Fostering Leaders Training Course



The ICA-MAFF training course on "Strengthening Management and Development of Agricultural Cooperatives and Farmers' Organizations in Asia and the Pacific-2022" was held online by ICA-AP in Feb-March 2023. The training course aimed to assist in fostering leaders of farmers' organisations including agricultural cooperatives, who are expected to play central roles in promoting the agricultural cooperatives' formation and strengthening organizational and business management, thus contributing to enhancing the competitiveness of agricultural products and income leading to the sustainable development of agricultural production.

The training program was implemented by ICA-AP in collaboration with the Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA) India and the Institute for the Development of Agricultural Cooperation in Asia (IDACA), Japan. The course was funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) of the Government of Japan.

The first part of the two-part training course was held online from 1 to 20 February. The opening program was inaugurated by Mr. Ikko Watanabe, First Secretary, Embassy of Japan in India, in the presence of Mr. Balu Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP, Mr. Hirofumi Kobayashi, Executive Director, IDACA, Dr. Umakant Dash, Director of IRMA, Prof. S.N. Biswas, Coordinator from IRMA, Mr. Satyendra Pandey, Associate Dean (Management Development Programs), IRMA and Mr. A.K. Taneja, Project Coordinator of ICA-AP, New Delhi, India.

The module at IRMA consisted of segments focusing on improving the conceptual, analytical, and leadership capabilities of managers of agricultural cooperatives/farmers' organizations to help them in developing their skills in improving the management of their cooperatives.

There were 12 participants from Asia and the Pacific countries – Bhutan, Cambodia, Fiji, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Nepal and Vietnam.



After completing Part-I of the program, the participants assembled again to attend Part-II of the program online from 6 to 30 March onwards. It was inaugurated by Mr. Takashi Yoshioka, Counsellor, Export and International Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), in the presence of Mr. Kobayashi, Mr. Iyer, and Mr. Taneja. Ms. Yuki Irisawa and Ms. Oshita were the coordinators of this part of the program from IDACA.

Some of the subjects covered by IDACA were the functioning of agricultural cooperatives in Japan in the areas of farm guidance, joint collection and shipment, and business management methods. Here, the participants presented their Job Reports and finalized their Action Plans under the guidance of IDACA experts and on the basis of their learning in Part-I and Part-II of the Training Course.

Before the start of the actual training program on 1 February, the participants were placed under the charge of their respective Chief Executive Officers for a period of two weeks to undertake Home Country Assignments (HCA). During this period, they were asked to prepare (i) a Job Report, and (ii) a Draft Action Plan for the development of their organization, according to the guidelines provided by the course organisers.

The concluding session of the program was addressed by Mr. Iyer and Mr. Kobayashi, in the presence of all participants and IDACA staff. A video message of Mr. Baba Toshihiko was played at the closing ceremony. Mr. Tshendu, a participant from Bhutan and Mr. Tuan Luong Do, a participant from Vietnam shared the vote of thanks and the participation certificates were distributed online by IDACA to each participant.

Based on the learnings and knowledge gained from the training course, the participants finalised their Action Plans to be implemented by them with the help of their respective organizations in due course.

ICYC Empowers Youth in Asia-Pacific Region with Financial Literacy Program for Cooperatives



The ICA-AP Committee on Youth Cooperation (ICYC) organized a webinar on Financial Literacy for Youth in Cooperatives: Empowering Youth from the Asia-Pacific region on 22 March. The webinar attracted around 30 participants from 10 countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

The webinar focused on budgeting, investing, maintenance of accounting records, and financial reporting. It aimed to equip young cooperative members with the knowledge and skills to effectively manage their finances and make informed decisions. ICYC invited two expert speakers, Ms. Caramel Rowena, Strategic Communication officer from MASS-SPECC, Philippines and Mr. Anurag Dhang, Secretary, NCUI Youth Committee.

Ms. Rowena introduced the concept of financial literacy and highlighted its importance for youth in cooperatives. She emphasized the need for effective budgeting and investing strategies to ensure financial stability and growth. Her presentation covered various topics, including creating a budget, setting financial goals, and developing investment plans.

Particulars	Amount (₱)
INCOME	
Revenue from Operations	
+ From sale of Goods	40,000
+ From sale of Services	20,000
Other income	
+ Interest on investments, etc.	10,000
TOTAL INCOME (A)	70,000
EXPENSES	
Cost of Goods Sold	35,000
Administrative Expenses	8,000
Operating Expenses	11,000
Depreciation	3,000
Interest	2,500
Miscellaneous	2,000
TOTAL EXPENSES (B)	60,500
PROFIT BEFORE TAX (A-B)	9,500

Mr. Dhang stressed the importance of loans and interest in cooperative finance, explaining how cooperatives can leverage these financial instruments to achieve their goals. He also spoke about the significance of maintaining accurate accounting records and financial reporting to ensure transparency and accountability.

The webinar was well-received by the participants, who appreciated the valuable insights and practical advice shared by the speakers. They found the program to be informative and relevant and expressed their interest in attending similar events in the future. The Committee plans to continue its efforts to empower young cooperators with financial literacy skills,

contributing to the growth and development of the cooperative movement in the Asia-Pacific region.

G20 India - ICA-AP Participates in B20 Task Force Meeting



Business 20 (B20) is the official G20 dialogue forum with the global business community. Established in 2010, B20 is among the most prominent Engagement Groups in G20, with companies and business organizations as participants. The B20 leads the process of galvanizing global business leaders for their views on issues of global economic and trade governance and speaks in a single voice for the entire G20 business community.

In 2023, the G20 presidency is being held by India. B20 India operates through Task Forces and Action Councils in streamlining the B20 strategic vision and translating it into policy deliverables on key topics of the global economic agenda. The priority areas are being discussed and deliberated during B20 India under seven Task Forces. One of them is in the area of Inclusive Global Value Chains (GVCs) for Resilient Global Trade and Investment.

The Task Force on Inclusive Global Value Chains (GVCs) for Resilient Global Trade and Investment had its meeting on 15 March in New Delhi which was attended by 80 experts having comprehensive discussions. Mr. Mohit Dave, Head (Partnerships & Resource Mobilisation) at ICA-AP is part of the Task Force and was invited to the meeting.

The meeting started with welcome remarks and an introduction by the Chair, Dr. Mallika Srinivasan, Chairman & Managing Director of Tractors and Farm Equipment Limited. It was followed by a special address by Dr. V. Anantha Nageswaran, Chief Economic Adviser, Government of India. He mentioned that recent developments in the global arena have accentuated the vulnerabilities of supply chains and highlighted the imperative for a smooth and efficient flow of goods and services that is impervious to localized disruptions. Keeping trade open across borders and establishing coordinated mechanisms for risk monitoring and crisis foresight will be crucial to preventing future roadblocks.

The floor was then open for discussion on policy recommendations and suggestions from the task force members. The draft policy document makes 13 recommendations under 4 areas: (1) Resilient and Sustainable GVCs, Technology and Trade 4.0; (2) Crossing Borders with Industry 4.0; (3) Diversifying and Advancing Services Trade and (4) Fostering Inclusive Trade for LDCs, MSMEs, Women and Youth. Mr. Dave highlighted the work being done by

cooperatives under policy action 4.1 citing some of the examples of the top 300 coops active in G20 countries.

Through this Meeting, all members of the Task Force discussed the preparation of their most important deliverable, the Policy Paper. Inputs collected from each member will be integral to the process of outlining policy recommendations and specific policy actions that the B20 Secretariat will incorporate into the B20 Recommendations in the Final Communiqué. This final document is expected to be presented to the G20 leaders at the B20 India Summit from 25-27 August 2023.

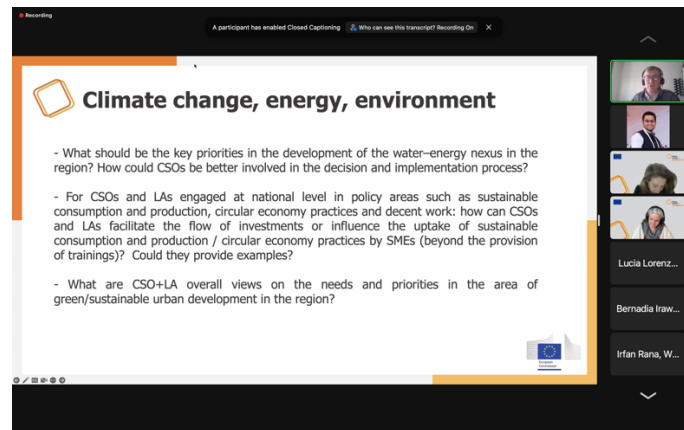
PFD Virtual Consultation on the Asia-Pacific Regional Programme



In May 2021, a consultation meeting was held between the European Commission’s Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) and members of the Policy Forum on Development (PFD). During the meeting, a series of recommendations was provided by PFD to DG INTPA concerning the Asia-Pacific Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme (“Asia-Pacific regional programme”, “regional programme”, or RMIP).

The regional programme establishes a set of strategic priorities to be pursued during the financial period of 7 years. It operates its own regional budget for the Asia-Pacific region, complementing the EU’s thematic and bilateral programmes covering partner countries in the region. A few months after the meeting with PFD, in November 2021, the Commission adopted the current Asia-Pacific regional programme 2021-2027, funded by the EU’s Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE).

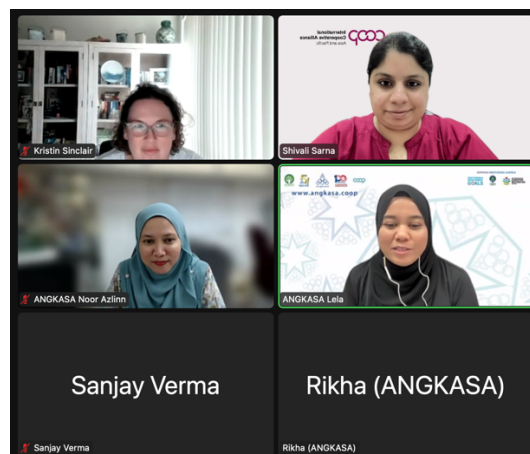
DG INTPA and PFD organised a (virtual) consultation on the Asia-Pacific regional programme on 6 March 2023, which offered a platform for further discussions on the policy priorities pursued by the RMIP and the ways to engage civil society, local authorities and other social partners in their implementation. ICA-AP Regional Office participated in this CSO-LA Online Consultation on the RMIP for Asia and the Pacific (2021-2027).



The meeting discussed key priorities in the development of the water–energy nexus in the region and how CSOs could be better involved in the decision and implementation process. Participants shared their views on the needs and priorities in the area of green/sustainable urban development in the region. The discussion also included how the EU can best support CSOs operating in shrinking spaces regarding areas and topics to work on, who face increasing barriers to collaborating with INGOs and other actors. Addressing the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change on human mobility was also mentioned to be a priority under the RMIP.

ICA-AP staff actively participated in the discussions and highlighted that the office has been working closely with various structures under SAARC and ASEAN to give broader recognition to cooperatives in their policies. A dedicated roadmap for the promotion of cooperatives is a key priority area for more inclusive multilateralism. ICA-AP brings rich experiences from the grassroots as well as international forums to strengthen the capacity and engagement of coops, in partnership with local authorities, to mitigate climate-related risks and build resilience. This can be done by investing in green livelihoods, while fostering self-employment and promoting the dignity of labor, particularly of women, youth and the most vulnerable and marginalized sections of society.

Asia Pacific Communication Network



The ICA-AP Regional Office has established the Asia-Pacific Communication Network comprising of communications personnel from its member organisations. The network aims

to facilitate knowledge exchange among the members and cooperatives in the region and collaborate for collective outreach of important events and activities.

Led by ICA-AP, the network has members from the Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals (BCCM), Australia, the National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI), India, the Malaysian National Cooperative Movement (ANGKASA), Malaysia, and the National Cooperative Federation of Nepal (NCFN), Nepal.

Member Updates

[ESAF Swaraya Multi-State Agro Cooperative Society Limited Joins ICA](#)

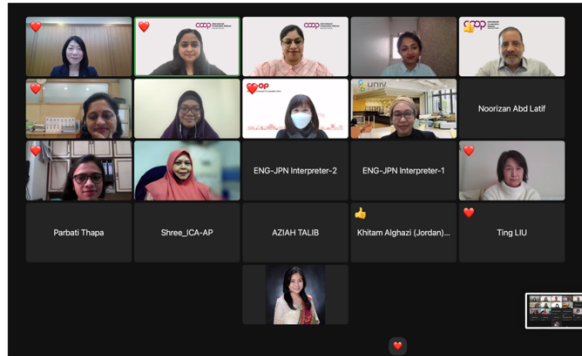


[ESAF Swaraya Multi-State Agro Cooperative Society Limited \(ESMACO\)](#) from India joined ICA in March as an Associate Member.

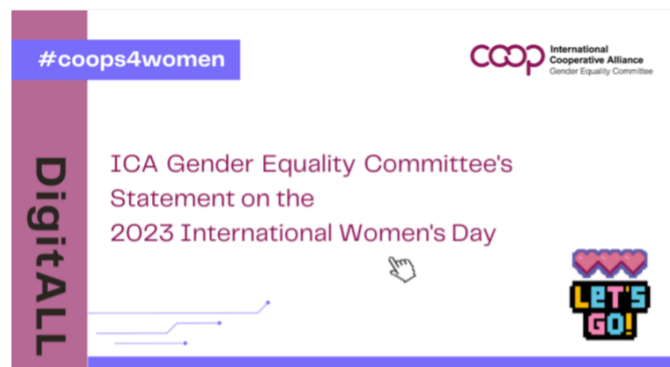
ESMACO is a national-level cooperative whose members are social enterprises. It was registered in October 2011 and has a presence in the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Haryana & Delhi. ESMACO aims to provide financial services to promote sustainable livelihood and economic development. It provides skill training for rural youth and women. As an agro cooperative, it gives special attention to community farming, organic cultivation, etc. ESMACO provides capacity building to farmer producer organisations and manages warehouse facilities and organises farmer interest groups to be able to apply for loans. Its subsidiary Rhema Dairy is actively involved in the supply chain and value-added products.

[International Women's Day Celebrations](#)

International Women's Day (IWD) is observed every year on 8 March to celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The theme for this year's IWD was "*DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality*". It focused on the impact of the digital gender gap on widening economic and social inequalities and the importance of protecting women and girls in digital spaces.

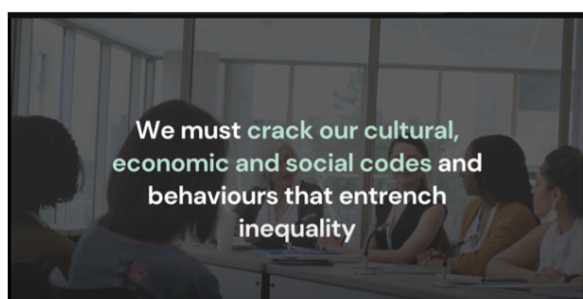


The ICA-AP Committee on Women organized a [virtual lecture](#) to commemorate International Women’s Day (IWD) on 7 March to discuss the theme, “*DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality.*”



ICA Gender Equality Committee (GEC) published an [official statement](#) and a [message by the GEC members](#) on 8 March. It also released [coop stories of women participating in innovation and technology](#) from across the globe. From the Asia-Pacific region, [KAYA](#), a cloud-based shared digital platform designed for cooperatives in the Philippines was featured among these stories. KAYA enables more efficient coop operations and ease of transactions for individual members and businesses through a range of payment and financial services. Led by Ms. Sylvia O Paraguya, CEO, National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO), an ICA member, KAYA was created in 2016 together with ACCU and PFCCO to reinforce the vision of an integrated network, where services such as digital payments and technology solutions are ideally provided by the cooperative federations.

Our members observed IWD in different ways.



Australia:

Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals (BCCM) – UN Women Australia declared this year’s theme to be, ‘*Cracking the Code: Innovation for a gender-equal future*’. BCCM published a special message – “*Co-ops and mutuals are #CrackingTheCode* this International

Women’s Day by leveraging inclusive technologies, embracing disruptive innovation and ensuring access to education. We must crack our cultural, economic and social codes and behaviours that entrench inequality.” [Read more.](#)



China:

All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives organised a learning visit, spring outings and fun games for women. This year, they gave half-day leave to all women workers and organized various activities. A learning visit was organized to the former residence of Ms. Rosamond Soong Ching-ling, a political figure in China. Other activities included flower arrangements, fun games, and spring outings for women to enrich their daily lives.



India:

The National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI) released a special issue of their publication ‘The Cooperator’ with women-centric articles. The publication can be read [here](#).

Malaysia:

The Malaysian National Cooperative Movement (ANGKASA) along with ICA-AP Malaysia Business Office (MBO) and the ASEAN Cooperative Organisation (ACO) held a webinar on 8 March to discuss the theme, ‘Women in Cooperatives: Embrace Equity’. The webinar aimed to seek opportunities for increasing women’s membership in cooperatives, address the social and cultural barriers that hinder women’s progress towards achieving their economic rights, discuss the opportunity for leadership roles, and provide potential solutions for women cooperative members’ psychological well-being.



Philippines:

Philippine Cooperative Center (PCC) observed the month-long celebration with the [2023 National Women's Month](#) from 1-31 March with the theme "*DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality*". The aim of National Women's Month is to (1) highlight women's achievements and contributions to the country, (2) raise awareness of ongoing inequality, discrimination, and barriers faced by women, (3) inspire the new generation of women to reach their utmost potential, and (4) promote equality and inclusivity in our society.

PCC published messages from the women cooperators during the month, which can be read on their [Facebook page](#). It also held an online event on 31 March to delve deeper into the gender issues surrounding technological innovation. The event can be watched [here](#).

The Gender and Development (GAD) unit of the National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO) held a one-day event on 3 March to celebrate IWD with the theme '*DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality*'. The event aimed to promote gender equality in the industry.

Singapore:

The Singapore National Cooperative Federation (SNCF) published an interview and an inspirational story of a women cooperator to inspire the cooperative movement in Singapore.

1. [Interview with Miss Universe Singapore 2022](#) on how she advocates for the underbanked communities and how cooperatives play a part in helping them too.
2. [Story of Maria B Amri, a women cooperator and an Inspirational Figure and Mentor](#) – As a veteran leader, Maria B Amri, who is on the Board of Directors at the TCC Credit Co-operative (TCC), has been dedicated to giving back to her community and serving the needs of others.

NCUI Incubation Center Helping Women Become Smart



The Incubation Center set up by the National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI) in 2022 has been training women into becoming smart women. In less than a year of its inception, the center has organised more than 50 community meetings and over 2,000 women from the economically weaker sections of society in Delhi have been mobilized through awareness drives.

According to Sudhir Mahajan, Chief Executive of NCUI, “Over 150 women from South Delhi have been trained so far in four batches. Many of them have come forward to register a multipurpose cooperative society too. In addition to this, Cooperative Entrepreneurship Development Cell (CEDC) has collaborated with renowned institutions like the Rural Technology Action Group of IIT Delhi, the National Institute of Fashion Technology, NITCON Limited, and PYXERA Global to enrich the training framework with low-cost technologies and innovative marketing approaches and product design options.”

Read the full report [here](#).

Policy and Legal Watch

[ILO Governing Body decides to include a standard-setting discussion on decent work in the platform economy](#)



Picture credits: ILO

In March 2023, the ILO Governing Body discussed the platform economy and the existing gaps in current ILO standards. The Governing Body decided to include a standard-setting discussion on decent work in the platform economy on the agenda of the International Labour

Conferences in 2025 and 2026, which might lead to the first global normative instrument in this area. [Read more.](#)

How Policy Is Building a Social Economy in South Korea?



Picture credits: [Gsef.net](#)

South Korea was one of the world's poorest countries in the 1950s. Today, it has the tenth-largest gross domestic product in the world. Korea's conglomerates, which control two-thirds of all Korean exports, also played a major role in catalyzing the Korean [financial crisis in 1997](#). Facing this crisis, new social economy movements emerged in Korea, not only as an immediate response to the neoliberal economic crisis, but also as a visionary long-term alternative for building a different kind of economy. Over the past quarter century, a second economy, known variously as the "social economy" or "social and solidarity economy (SSE)", has emerged.

Cooperatives are an integral part of the larger SSE and the passage of the 2011 Framework Act on Cooperatives (FAC) played a critical role in the expansion of a solidarity economy in Korea. Before the FAC, it was hard to launch a cooperative at the grassroots level because forming a cooperative required at least 200 members and a capital of \$300,000. The FAC reduced the minimum required number of people to five and established a simple process to apply for cooperative status, which only requires residents to submit articles of association to their home city or a related jurisdiction. [Read more.](#)

ICA-AP interviewed Ms. Juhee Lee, Manager of the International Team, Sapenet Development Center, iCoop, Korea (an ICA member) on the Intersection of Legal Frameworks for SSE and Cooperatives: Perspective from the Republic of Korea as part of [COOP Dialogue 1](#). The audio interview can be accessed on [ICA-AP's YouTube Channel](#).



UPCOMING EVENTS

- 5th Coop Colloquium on *'Promoting Inclusive and Quality Cooperative Education'* by ICA-AP Committee on Cooperative Research – 21 April 2023. [Register here](#).
- Pilot Training of Trainers on Climate Change and Action in Moc Chau, Son La Province, Vietnam by ICA-AP Committee on Women (only for committee members) – 18–19 May 2023 (TBC)
- Training Program on Consumer Cooperatives Business Models by ICA-AP Committee on Consumer Cooperation in Japan (only for committee members) – May 2023 (TBC)
- International Day of Cooperatives – 1 July 2023
- Asia Pacific Cooperative Youth Summit (APCYS) 4.0 in Sabah, Malaysia – 27 to 30 July 2023. [Register here](#).
- ICA-AP Committee on Women 25th-anniversary celebration in Tokyo, Japan (hybrid) - 19 & 20 September 2023
- 16th ICA-AP Regional Assembly in the Philippines – 6 to 10 November 2023