

The Independent Commission for People's Rights and Development (ICPRD) Newsletter

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International Events

The 10th International Co-operative Alliance - Asia and Pacific Co-operative Ministers' Conference (APCMC) was held in Hanoi, Vietnam, 18–21 April, 2017. Fifteen ministerial delegations, diplomats, regional co-operative leaders participated at the APCMC organized by the International Co-operative Alliance – Asia-Pacific (ICA-AP) with over 200 participants from 25 countries. Dr. Nandini Azad, President, Indian Co-operative Network for Women (ICNW, Chennai HQ) and Chairperson, ICPRD Trust, as the Vice - Chairperson of the ICA-AP Women's Committee, during the five-day event, presented the findings of the ICA-AP–ICPRD study on gender in co-operatives, entitled "Gender is more than a Statistic - Status of Women in Co-operatives in the Asia-Pacific Region." She also attended the Regional Board meeting, read out the Women's Committee declaration, served on the drafting committee and co-presented the final resolution.

The study had 28 apex cooperatives as respondents from 26 countries in the region (Japan, China, Philippines, India, Korea, to name a few). The sectors represented in the study included agriculture, consumer, credit and savings, fishery, fertilizers, finance and banking, land and land settlement, service and informal sectors.

A pioneering and comprehensive document on the importance of gender disaggregated data (both qualitative and quantitative data) to enhance the status of women in co-operatives of the Asia Pacific region, the study is replete with pie-charts, graphs, country reports, laws and policies, best practices. The ICA-AP role in engendering co-operatives through various ministerial conferences and regional assemblies is also highlighted.

(Details of study on page 2)

The Asia Pacific Co-operative Ministers' Conference (APCMC) provided a platform for co-operatives and governments to discuss current and emerging issues and set a common agenda towards establishment of new forms of cooperation within the framework of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UNSDGs). The SDGs recognize co-operative enterprises as important players within the private sector to achieve the goals. Reaffirming this was the 10th APCMC theme: "Visioning Ahead to 2030: Promoting Stronger Partnerships between Government and Co-operative Stakeholders in realizing the SDGs."

The Draft APCMC Hanoi Resolution on Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships in realizing the SDGs calls on cooperatives in the Asia Pacific region to pledge to achieving the goals and devise relevant instruments.



At the plenary session at the 10th Asia-Pacific Co-operative Ministers' Conference at Hanoi, Vietnam. Dr. Nandini Azad, Chairperson, ICPRD Trust read the Conference Resolution

Dr. Azad honoured the Vice President of Vietnam, Her Excellency, Madam Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh at the Conference at the inauguration with a silk shawl woven by famed Kanchipuram weavers, members of ICNW.



Dr. Azad, Greeting Her Excellency, Vice President of Vietnam, Madam Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh, 18th April, 2017 at the Inaugural of the 10th Asia – Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference at Hanoi, Vietnam

The Hon Prime Minister of Vietnam, His Excellency Mr. Nguyen Xuan Phuc invited the Senior Ministers, Diplomats, and select regional leaders such as Dr. Azad for a discussion on the recommendations at his residence.



At the residence of Hon Prime Minister of Vietnam, Nguyen Xuan Phuc, who is seen in visual with Dr. Azad, 20th April, 2017.

Study Highlights: Gender is more than a Statistic

The study undertaken to assess the gender quotient in co-operatives highlighted interesting data, facts and case studies and mirrored the challenges and limitations of being the region's women citizens, tempered by patriarchal tendencies. Yet it highlighted strong women's/

social/people's movements, co-operatives engendered by far-reaching government policies and laws that spur women's participation in co-operatives. The draft study was presented at the ICA-AP Tagaytay + 20 Conference in Philippines in February, 2016

Co-relation between Women, Co-operatives and Gender Equality

Investing in women's empowerment in co-operatives leads to gender equality, economic growth, poverty reduction. Being democratic and voluntary, co-operatives are ideal mechanisms for building gender equality but only when women have equal access including to/at decision-making levels. Cooperatives facilitate women's mobilization for collective bargaining, productive assets (land, labour, training, wages, technology, markets). Millions of women in the region have access to social protection, housing, health and child care, financial services through co-operatives.

Overall Findings

While women's representation in co-operatives at higher echelons is not significant at decision-making levels – new trends, decisions, issues indicate new threshold of change for women. A glimmer of hope can be attributed to the level of international awareness, conventions, gender networking in co-operatives and success of new age women-only co-operatives such as the Indian Co-operative Network for Women (ICNW) that are trendsetters.

Nineteen out of 26 countries in Asia Pacific represented in the study revealed that while the ratio of women chairpersons increased from 7 percent in 2005 to 10 per cent in 2016, the number of leaders at the top remained low. However, the ratio of women vice chairpersons increased from 18 percent to 23 percent in 2005 and 2016 respectively. Lack of women representation at the top attributed to patriarchal values and lack of education and skills that restricted access to leadership positions.

Some Further Findings

Gender is More than a Statistic

Participation of Men & Women in Board Meetings & General Body Meetings (Increasing in last 3 years)



Frequency Distribution of Measures Adopted by Federations to Enhance Participation of Women



Overall Study Recommendations

- Sensitize cooperative leaders to grasp the complexity of women's issues
- Mainstream gender analysis in all aspects of cooperatives
- Establish "gender equality committees" or cells/units to identify gender-related problems, develop gender awareness trainings and capacity building.
- Increase the membership of women and youth in co-operatives particularly on the board.
- National census/organizations/networks to support in collecting gender disaggregated data
- Partner with cooperatives for actualizing UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Track equality indicators such as women's participation in governance, management membership, asset ownership and income

parity on an on-going basis to ensure accountability

- Support cooperatives to face challenges of the open market economy, globalization, and technological change
- Recognize cooperatives as a legitimate form of business (e.g. include the co-operative model in educational curricula and entrepreneurship training programs).

International Co-operative Unions and Alliances

Japan: Gender Integration in Co-operatives - An Office Bearers' Meeting of the ICA-AP Women's Committee and a Seminar on Gender Sensitization was held in Kobe, Japan in March, 2017 with the Japanese Consumers' Cooperative Union (JCCU). The JCCU is one of the largest co-operative movements with nearly 37% households subscribing to it and women play an active role in it. All Office Bearers of the Women's Committee along with other resource persons were present. There were 35 participants and the majority were Board representatives, Vice Chairperson, the Head of the International Division, Senior Officers and Managers of JCCU.

The Japanese Consumer's Co-operative Union (JCCU) is an apex of consumer co-operatives in Japan (1951) with 619 member co-operatives – regional retail, institutional, university, health, and insurance (mutual-aid) co-operatives. A Gender Equality Committee/Advisory Committee was initiated from September 2015 in the board.



Seen in the picture are Head, International Division, Mr. Amano, JCCU, Ms. Arai, Vice President, ICA-AP and Office Bearers of the ICA-AP Women's Committee, Kobe, Japan.

Dr. Nandini Azad as Vice Chairperson of the ICA-AP Women's Committee made a presentation at the Kobe Seminar on 'Gender Integration in Co-operatives' with best practices from Philippines, Japan, Korea, China and the Indian Co-operative Network for Women models (with translation in Japanese given below).

Presentation on the Indian Co-operative Network for Women promoted by Working Women's Forum (India)

- Objectives to engage poor women in productive activities, ensure overall empowerment.
- First women's co-operative in South India for, by and of poor women initiated in 1981.
- It facilitates access to credit, providing opportunities to learn new skills, and securing employment for women.
- Disbursed loans worth over INR 3000 million so far to 5,6,790 women entrepreneurs.
- Record recovery rate of 99.6%, even though many beneficiaries are urban slum dwellers and landless poor in around 6,000 slums and villages.
- Has 14 branches in the three southern states of India – Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.
- Members are vendors, hawkers, fisherwomen, landless women, cigarette rollers, silk weavers, incense and lace makers, and several other micro-entrepreneurs (276 occupations).

Japanese Translation of Presentation

ICA-APが2015年に実施したアジア太平洋地域 26ヶ国の協同組合の女性の地位に関する調査

◆アジア太平洋地域の26ヶ国のうち19ヶ国から回答があった。

◆回答があったセクターは、農業、消費者、信用・貯蓄、漁業、肥料、ファイナンス・銀行、土地、サービス関連であった。

調査の目的
協同組合のあらゆるレベルにおいて女性の参加を促すため、ジェンダー別データ収集の重要性を評価し、意識を喚起する。

協同組合における男女共同参画



ICA-AP女性委員会副委員長
ナンディニ アザド

Switzerland: Special Invitee on Gender Diversity - The XIIIth General Body Meeting of the International Raiffeisen Union (IRU), the oldest co-operative union – based on the values of Mr. Wilhelm Raiffeisen, was held on September 14-16, 2016 at Lucerne, Switzerland. Participating in this meeting, Dr. Nandini Azad, ICPRD Secretary as President of the ICNW was privileged to be invited as Special Invitee on Gender Diversity to the IRU Board. She made a presentation on the 'Gender and Equity Model – Indian Co-operative Network for Women.'



At the International Raiffeisen Union (IRU) Meeting in Lucerne, Switzerland (September, 2016)

ICA-AP Women's Committee – Vice Chairperson: In November, 2016, ICPRD Member-Secretary was elected as Vice Chairperson of the Women's Committee of the International Co-operative Alliance – Asia-Pacific (ICA-AP).



ICA-AP Women's Committee

Ho Chi Minh City: WeEffect (formerly the Swedish Co-operative Centre), in Vietnam invited Dr. Azad in April, 2017 to make a presentation on 'Gender and Equity Model – Gender in Co-operatives in Specific countries of the Asia-Pacific Region.

At the **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)** workshop on ‘Promoting Micro-finance for Economic Development in IORA Region’ at Bangladesh in April 2015, Dr. Azad chaired the first Plenary on the relevance of micro-finance and financial inclusion for poverty reduction in the region (after the Finance and Foreign Ministers address).



The Hon. Finance Minister of Bangladesh (seated in middle) at the IORA workshop alongwith Dr. Nandini Azad and other Delegates.

National Events

It was a privilege and honour for ICPRD and WWF ICNW when **Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi, Hon. Minister for Women and Child Development, Govt. of India** visited the Channapatna branch on October 29th, 2015. She expressed her joy in meeting the representatives of the youth forums against gender based violence (an ICPRD project in the district) and women entrepreneurs of ICNW who displayed different products made by them. The Hon. Minister congratulated Dr. Nandini Azad on the achievements of the two organizations she heads.



Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi, Hon. Minister for Women and Child Development with members of the ICPRD youth forums against gender based violence and the Indian Co-operative Network for Women at Chanapatna

The **Ministry of Women and Child Development, Govt. of India**, invited Dr. Nandini Azad, to be a Jury member for the category “Commerce, Industry, Entrepreneurship” to select 100 women achievers through a contest organized alongwith Facebook. The selected achievers and Jury were hosted by the Hon’ble President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee on 22nd January, 2016 at the Rashtrapati Bhawan.

A **Selection Committee under the Chairmanship of the Hon. Minister for Women, Government of India** was set up to select women achievers for the Nari Shakti Puruskar Award that were awarded on March 8, 2017 (International Women’s Day) by the Hon’ble President of India at the Rashtrapati Bhawan. Dr Nandini Azad was invited to be on the Selection Committee.



Madam Shrimati Maneka Sanjay Gandhiji, Hon. Minister for Women and Child Development at the General Body Meeting of the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (National Women’s Credit Fund). Dr. Azad, a non-official Board member of the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (National Women’s Credit Fund), Government of India is seen here, at her right.

On 7th March, Dr. Nandini Azad was invited as a former Director General of the **Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan** by the Hon Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports to a meeting of former and current Director Generals to discuss future thrust areas for youth in NYKS. She presented an action plan to mobilize youth for nation building.



Hon. Minister of State for Sports and Youth Affairs, Shri Vijay Goel and Hon. Minister of State for Home Affairs, Shri Kiran Rijju at the National Integration Camp, NYKS. Dr. Nandini Azad speaking on the occasion at the Gandhi Smriti Darshan, New Delhi.

The pioneer Vaikunth Mehta National Institute of Co-operative Management, Pune, on International Women’s Day (March 8, 2017) organized a 3-day Regional SAARC Workshop on “Good Governance for the Women Board of Directors of Cooperatives and Rural Financing Institutions” from Nepal and Sri Lanka. Dr. Azad addressed the SAARC training program as Guest of Honour alongwith Police Commissioner, Mrs. Rashmi Shukla on Women's Day. Excerpts from the presentation on the Indian Co-operative Network for Women (ICNW) (given below).

It was in an environment of powerlessness that the WWF-Indian Cooperative Network for Women (ICNW) intervened to help poor women create a development model based on altered gender relations, by challenging structural poverty, spearheading social integration, and by transforming labour into capital with the surplus retained for poor women’s needs.

Accumulation at the Base: Poor are Efficient

Stage I: Moving away from indebtedness – ICNW Credit Strategy

Stage II: Diversification/growth of enterprises, household food security, improved quality of living

Stage III: Asset creation, education standards, sanitation, housing, social status, dignity, community leadership/management roles/generating civic demand

Requisite social protection through group delivery savings, training, legal awareness, and insurance products are provided.

IT Operations in ICNW

Key benefits of IT process (Computerization in 2000)

- Banking operations made easy
- Doubled its outreach; giving field workers more time
- Dramatically reduced processing time of micro-finance; more efficient field operations.
- Daughters of poor fisherwomen/wage labourers (second generation members) trained in IT software as co-operative staff

Grassroots women occupy important positions in the ICNW all-women board and are part of decision making process.

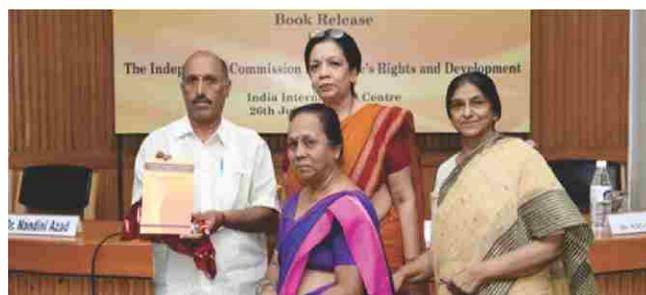
Dialogues with poor fisherwomen were held at the Adirapattinam branch of ICNW (Tanjore District), during demonetization (December, 2016) by **Dr. Azad, President, ICNW.**



Dr Nandini Azad, President of ICNW with Fisherwomen in Adirapattinam, Tamilnadu

UN Women Office Representative for India, Bhutan, Maldives & Sri Lanka - Dr. Rebecca Tavares visited the ICPRD Men and Boys project in Channapatna in August 2015 for a Street Theatre cum Interactive Workshop by the male youth forums as well as the beneficiaries in terms of combating gender based violence at the grassroots.

A new monograph entitled “**Innovative Governance Mechanisms for Women’s Safety and Security – Engaging Men and Boys Against Gender Based Violence**” on engaging men and boys against gender based violence in Karnataka and Rajasthan was released in July 2016 at the India International Centre, New Delhi. The monograph highlights innovative approaches and governance mechanisms for women’s safety and security by transforming men and boys as powerful partners to combat gender based violence. Authored by Chairperson, ICPRD Trust, Dr. Nandini Azad.



Seen here at the Book Release are Dr. Nandini Azad, Member Secretary and ICPRD staff

Highlights of the Book

- Innovative Governance Mechanisms for Women's Safety and Security are urgently required to address the increasing incidence of violence against women in India.
- The innovation of engaging men and boys in the ICPRD project in Karnataka and Rajasthan highlights that resocialization against patriarchy is possible, i.e a futuristic preventive measure against gender based violence. This requires scientific methodology, creative training, community spirit and an enabling environment.
- Since 2005, ICPRD initiated an innovative program, 'Youth Forums for Gender Equality' engaging male youth to address the violence against women and enhancing the rights of women and girls. The project was spread across rural Karnataka and Rajasthan in which young men of 14-24 years from low income communities were engaged in combating violence against women at household and community level.
- The project built alliances with young men to actively participate in reducing gender discrimination and inequality through a process of re-socialization. The main outreach programs included street theater, public events such as cycle rallies, cricket matches, debates, poster competitions etc. The project invested in skills and capacity building of Youth Forum Leaders on gender based violence. Using Information, Education and Communication (IEC) tools, youth forums organized several events for mass awareness on such issues as alcoholism, dowry, girl child discrimination, female foeticides, child marriages and domestic violence.
- Youth Forums for Gender Equality has been a unique project for motivating men to act against gender based violence at household and community level. Through this unique methodology, young men are transformed into allies and promoters of the rights of women. Youth Forums connected women with various SHGs and financial institutions, thus supporting women's empowerment, both social and economic. Nearly 200,000 have benefitted from this initiative.

Some Recommendations

- It is essential that women's safety and security issues become a national agenda. At the community level this has become possible through a protective grid of stakeholders (gender equality platforms) namely youth forums, self help groups, girls' clubs, protection officials, panchayats/ nagarpalika, health workers, teachers etc. through the ICPRD model.
- Parents/family are being influenced by the project and power equations in the family require constant changing. School changes are also critical-the syllabi, the orientation of the teachers, stemming of girl child drop outs etc.
- Mainstreaming this holistic approach into government programs is very essential to create an enabling environment for women's safety and security.

Leipzig University, Germany

26 Students from the Leipzig University led by Prof. Brunhild Landwehr visited ICNW, Chennai on February 16, 2017 to study the model. Dr. Nandini Azad, President, initiated them into various aspects related to women's empowerment in ICNW. They left for a field visit to Kancheepuram to meet the silk weaver members.



Dr Nandini Azad, President, ICNW interacting with students from the Leipzig University, Germany

Awards

The Asia-Pacific International Award, Bangkok from the Global Achievers Foundation was awarded to Dr. Nandini Azad, President ICNW by the Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, His Excellency Korn Debbansri for her work on women's empowerment and financial inclusion (in absentia).

About Us

The Independent Commission for People's Rights and Development (ICPRD), a national advocacy coalition was formed in 1996 to protect the rights and development of the vulnerable constituencies particularly women, workers, farmers, youth and indigenous people. It is a broad coalition of development practitioners, advocates, academia, policy makers, international and national opinion makers, and the media. ICPRD's main activities include policy advocacy, mobilization at the grassroots, capacity building, attitudinal research, training technologies, building alliances and networking.

Over two decades, ICPRD has engaged approximately 1,000 voluntary agencies, CBOs and civil society agencies participating in 21 states and 158 districts in India. Undertaken such activities as transforming indigenous and poor women into social entrepreneurs through group building, micro credit programs, citizen's interface with Parliamentarians on good governance, combating trafficking of women and children etc. ICPRD developed a pioneering model in Karnataka and Rajasthan wherein male youths have been mobilized to combat gender based violence.

ICPRD's focus has been on gender and pro-poor issues, particularly empowerment of women, both economic and social; resocializing male youth to combat gender based violence, financial inclusion through co-operatives for informal sector workers, revolving credit funds and multifaceted credit plus strategies, combating agricultural distress caused through droughts, pro-poor advocacy in states of India where the poorest live.

ICPRD is involved in international, regional, national advocacy through research and training on gender in co-operatives. Training and capacity building of co-operative leaders, gender sensitization of co-operatives in the region and elsewhere, developing gender manuals, case studies and best practices are a forte. Training on gender disaggregated data collection is also being undertaken.



Youth Forum members performing street theatre

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