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Gender Equality Committee  
General Assembly  
12 October 2019  
**Report by the ICA GEC chair**

## 4. Report from the ICA GEC

**Work plan** approved by the Executive Committee has mandated by the ICA GEC General Assembly, 2017, Kuala Lumpur. The members of the GEC Executive Committee have approved a strategy for 2019. It is based in three pillars: membership, visibility and research:

- to increase the members of the Committee and the active participation of the current ones;
- to enhance the visibility of gender topics and to women cooperators in all the ICA events at the various levels : both gender related events and transversal events that should include the gender angle. The collaboration with the Communications Committee and the ICA Communication service was identify key to achieve this objectives;
- to increase knowledge and sharing of best practice, policies, case studies, legislation, etc. in collaboration with the Committee on Cooperative Research.

It has been highlighted the need to identifying resources in order to determine the activities to be financed in 2019.

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- The following has been implemented:
  - a Membership strategy to enlarge ICA members participation in the GEC activities. A letter addressed by ICA President and ICA-GEC President was sent to ICA regional organisations to coordinate the efforts according to their own membership structures rules.
  - the visibility and communications plan approved by the GEC Executive Committee in order to promote equality between women and men and gender integration in the cooperative movement and society. Regular social media messages have been shared throughout ICA channels. The GEC section on the ICA website has been improved and it is now available in English, Spanish and French.
  - a programme for the organisation of the GEC General Assembly in Kigali and a workshop entitled 'Feminism in the XXI century: what does it mean for women cooperators?' to be held on 12 October.

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- In 2018 and 2019 a message for the **Women International Day** was launched and communication efforts were put to promote it in the different ICA channels. The members of the Executive Committee of the GEC elaborated together the message for 2019 Women International Day. A strategy was put in place together with the ICA Communication and Policy service, its sectors and regions to promote the cooperative impact on gender equality ahead of Women International Day.
- A call was launched to the members of the GEC to invite them to take part in the 2018 and 2019 **Commission of the Status of Women (CSW63)**:
  - A delegation led by the chair of the GEC, Maria Eugenia Pérez Zea took part from 11 to 14 March in this event organised by the United Nations, which counted with the participation of Nandini Azad, ICA - Asia Pacific GEC Chair and in 2018 also with the presence of Xiomara Nuñez de Cespedes, Americas GEC chair.
  - The Executive Committee GEC also approved to prepare the path for the participation in the 2020 edition of the CSW and the possibility to present a session organised by the ICA.

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- active participation on the consultations launched by the ICA Global Office about the **'Draft ICA Strategic Plan'**
- modifications to the Recommendations to the ICA Thematic Committees and the Youth Network Rules, proposed by the GEC Chair.

The ICA Gender Gender Equality Committee (GEC) organised 2 meetings of its Executive Committee in 2018: June and August. The second one could not be held as a result of lack of quorum.

In 2019, the GEC has organised 3 online meetings and 1 physical meeting in Geneva on 21 June.

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### - A focus on 2019 CSW63 chair participation:

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. The sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 11 to 22 March 2019. Representatives of Member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like the ICA, attended the session.

The priority theme for 2019 edition was “Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls”. The CSW is instrumental in promoting women’s rights, documenting the reality of women’s lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Representatives from the International Cooperative Alliance Gender Equality Committee (GEC) took active part in the different plenary sessions and side events from 11 to 14 March. The GEC delegation was composed by:

Maria Eugenia Pérez Zea, chair of the ICA GEC

Nandini Azad, chair of the ICA AP GEC (**information on her participation will be provided in the regional reports**)

The secretary of the GEC, Leire Luengo supported the delegation and facilitated the exchanges with partners prior and during the event.

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Maria Eugenia Pérez Zea lead the voice of women cooperators throughout a rich diversity of sessions facing themes like gender violence, gender gap, domestic workers, microinsurance, etc. while raising the voice on how cooperatives empower women. She also supported and reinforced the position of cooperators that were at the panel of divers' sessions.

The chair of the Gender Equality Committee shared the engagement of the cooperatives movement towards decent work and against harassment mentioning the ICA declaration during a session where the ILO presented its roadmap for gender equality. Representatives from ITUC, UN women and also from the governments of Uruguay, Canada and Belgium were at the panel and heard the GEC intervention. Ms Pérez Zea took the floor highlighting how “fighting gender-based violence is not only the role of governments and the family. Enterprises should also help to tackle it. Cooperatives are a very good tool that based on cooperatives values and principles can guarantee that women rights are respected”. See the video [here](#)

The ICA facilitated the participation of Weeffect representatives in the CSW63 and also strengthen the collaboration with them. A meeting was held among the ICA GEC chair, secretary and Weeffect team present in the CSW63 (Americas and Africa regional offices together with the global office based in Sweden) where participants exchanged about the possibility to organise an event for the 2020 edition of the CSW. Two side events were organised by Weeffect, both were supported and had the participation of the GEC chair and secretary: a session on how Microinsurance can protect people against risk and the mutual and cooperatives microinsurance example with participation of ICMIF and CIC Insurance from Kenya and “It’s time to care! Providing solutions to achieve gender equality” with testimonies from women cooperators in Bolivia.



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The GEC chair also supported the SPASDI event where the story of a women cooperative in Bum, Iran created after the quake suffered in the region 15 years ago was presented. SPASDI is a Legacoop Iranian Partner in the SPRING project (<http://spasdi.ir/index.php/en/home-en>, Society for the protection and Assistance of Socially Disadvantaged Individuals).

Maria Eugenia Pérez Zea also took part in the session where the ILO report 'A Quantum leap for gender equality' <http://bit.ly/2XMfFpG>, the Road map for gender equality and decent work was launched. It was stated that "Women's voices and representation is vital to establish a positive future in the world of work" and the cooperative way forward was shared with the audience. She also attended the session organised by UN women **Legislando para el Empoderamiento Económico de las Mujeres en Iberoamerica**.

WIEGO and UN Women organised an event in the UN headquarters where a representative from SEWA was part of the panel explaining how in the 1970's SEWA built its innovative approach to tackle issues related to poverty especially for women.

Providing care solutions for all is key to women's empowerment, the GEC secretary attended the Weeffect session showing how the Cochabamba municipality in Bolivia is promoting corresponsability of care work through cooperatives, men's participation and new laws.

Nandini Azad, Chairperson, ICA-AP Committee on Women represented ICA-AP as part of the ICA Delegation from March 9-15, 2019. Dr. Azad made an intervention to the UN Secretary General (SG), António Guterres, during a Town Hall meeting between the SG and civil society organizations (CSOs). Dr. Azad introduced the Working Women's Forum and the Indian Cooperative Network for Women in South India and highlighted the work being undertaken to reduce the incidence of gender-based violence cases as well as provision of loans to members of cooperatives. Dr. Azad may share more information on her participation.

Dr. Azad further informed the SG about how cooperatives have proved their sustainability, especially, at a time when several other forms of CSOs are struggling due to lack of funds. The SG responded by saying, "Cooperatives are excellent mechanisms for organizing low income communities for economic and social resources but also are a strong political force for transformation." Dr. Azad also made a presentation as part of the official Indian panel on the topic of 'Khadi- the organic weave', with the parameters of organising women weavers into cooperatives as envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi.



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Thanks!

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